

REVIEW

For the Dissertation “*Cultural Identity from the Perspective of Complexity Theory*”

By **Marco Crosa**,

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Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

For the acquisition of educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

In the professional field 2.3. Philosophy

By Associate Professor Dr. Silviya Kristeva, SWU “Neofit Rilski”

Marco Crosa’s dissertation research offers a truly innovative and transcendental position towards one of the most important problems of the 21st century: the problem of the methodology of scientific knowledge and scientific research and, hence, the general worldview and discourse, relevant to the situation already at the end of the first quarter of the new millennium. This is a truly millennial perspective and with an ambitious and innovative view to discover the new beginnings and new trends in knowledge and reflection on the relationship between human and the world. The new perspective developed by M. Crosa is therefore transcendental – because it comes out on a new position – M. Crosa specified it in the abstract, but this is the perspective on which the entire dissertation is based: the derivation of the *post-postmodern* position to mark the state of philosophy, science and society. The justification of a new theoretical methodology – complexity theory, the rich philosophical and methodological supporting points working method, the diverse, in the spectrum of the entire modern scientific knowledge, examined topics and concepts, fully justify the author’s intentions and complete his approach to a new rationality: *complex rationality*. This is the intersection and the common field of the comprehensively conducted research and formulation by Marco Crosa of directions for solving the added wide spectrum of problems.

The dissertation fully covers the academic and legal standards for dissertation research. The volume is 185 pages, the dissertation is executed in a problematic introduction and three chapters, as M. Crosa defines them, constructing the problems from the general philosophical setting of the methodology of complexity in the first chapter, to the creation of this methodology in the vital sphere of the problem of cultural identity in the second chapter and creating a general discourse and complex construction of the social and political problems of modernity in the debate on the opposition between liberalism and communitarianism in the third chapter. The bibliography lists a significant number of sources in English: 159, which are actively used in

the course of examining each problem, demonstrating excellent knowledge and accounting for these and the author's persistent pursuit of understanding the origin, potential and concrete embodiment of the complex methodology for creating a new knowledge on the relevant problem, including as a construction of its ontology as a complex reality.

The introduction presents the theoretical framework of the dissertation research in its entirety and justifies the strategy chosen by the author to build foundations and procedural becoming of each problem in the general transdisciplinary approach, which demonstrates the points of transition beyond the postmodern platform. Which is perhaps guaranteed by the chosen complex methodology, since it clearly builds on the postmodern concept of knowledge, assimilates some of its features, returns to the fundamentals of the modern approach, but always emerges in a field that collects a spectrum of points of view and leaves and keeps the moment of uncertainty, of fuzzy boundaries. An approach and construction of the general picture of the structure of contemporary scientific knowledge is outlined: getting out of narrow specialization and unilinearity both in the direction of the relevant scientific knowledge and in relation to the shared general horizon of knowledge and the intentions of disciplines from one area or even in a broader context, to, according to M. Crosa completely overcomes the established division of natural sciences and spiritual sciences and especially the declaration of the method of the exact sciences as universally valid for the production of knowledge and science in general.

However, all this provokes and gathers the focus of the study in one most important point: what is the new methodology, to what extent is it precisely capable of solving the indicated problems, including in the field of social processes, not only in science. In the first chapter "Complexity" M. Crosa has devoted himself to a detailed derivation of the grounds and construction of complexity in this general methodological plan. Complexity is derived from its opposing approaches, which, according to M. Crosa, have been at the heart of philosophical and scientific methodology since the dawn of its development and essentially act as the generally accepted scientific method. This is the approach of simplification – a search for the simplest and most basic principles that are subject to reduction in validity to the smallest possible number. Reduction is applied even more extensively – in the reduction of each studied reality to certain, strictly verified knowledge, which according to M. Crosa leads to homogenization and simplification of scientific knowledge, to the erasure of the specificity of the studied objects. This is also reflected in the erasure of ontological reality as a rich, complexly layered, processed phenomenon, and this is related, according to M. Crosa, not only to the capabilities of the human mind, but is an ineradicable defect of the chosen methodology of simplification and reductionism. On this basis, M. Crosa also criticizes T. Kuhn's decision

to develop scientific knowledge towards new, building hypotheses, because in essence the features of the generally accepted scientific and knowledge approach are preserved.

Precisely to overcome the inherent features, M. Crosta proposes the solution in the method of complex reason and complex science. As the main representatives of this new methodology, M. Crosta considers the overall concept of the French philosopher Edgar Morin, who developed the idea of complexity in 6 volumes of works, with the general title “The Method” and based in the 1980s on the Santa Fe Institute (SFI), with a clear program for cross-disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge. M. Crosta also presents the general search for methods for building complexity, which gave rise to new scientific directions: cybernetics, information and communication theory, systems theory, and mainly in the revolution in modern physics with quantum physics and especially with the concept of entropy and causality of Ilya Prigogine.

E. Morin’s views are considered by M. Crosta as “general complexity” with deep philosophical roots. This philosopher and his theoretical system are certainly not known to the Bulgarian philosophical community and the presentation of E. Morin in the development of the entire theory of complexity is a contributing moment of Marco Crosta’s dissertation research. The paradigm developed by E. Morin rests on Hegel’s dialectic, constructed as *order*, *disorder* and *organization*. This triad also has procedural parameters – in the encompassing of many and different points of view and moments in the derivation of the complexity of the problem. E. Morin develops these points of view in the very emergence of the problem and in remaining with the specifics of each one, without seeking a common position, but instead relies on their dialogicity. In the general evolutionary process of the layers of world and human development proposed by E. Morin, M. Crosta brings out with particular emphasis the “noosphere”, encompassing the social, general mental and symbolic content of the entire cultural tradition of humanity, which will be an important moment in view of the thematic focus of the dissertation, and is also the common point with which Hegel’s dialectical and systematic method ends. Here I will pose a question to the doctoral student regarding the relationship of Hegel’s philosophy and methodology to the general problem of complexity and in particular to the methodology proposed by E. Morin. And how this methodology works in a procedural order.

M. Crosta makes a comprehensive and competent review of the basic features of complexity, derived in the concept of entropy by I. Prigogine. This is, first of all, the new understanding of entropy – not as an irreversible movement of matter towards decay and chaos, but in the exact opposite direction – from chaos to order and organization. M. Crosta wonderfully conceptualizes the concept of systems “far from equilibrium”, but which retain

their ability to self-organize and in the presence of a factor that acts as a “catalyst” to process to a completely new and unpredictable state of their own, created by the previous elements. Here, the main model of the ontology of this reality is both non-linearity and the fluctuation set and “indeterminacy” of the states and their emergence. M. Crosta emphasizes the inventive power of this paradigm, including as a new cosmological model, specifically the theory of emergentism. From the spectrum of the foundations and regulating principles of theorizing the complexity and reality of phenomena, according to M. Crosta, the legal basis of the complex theory also arises. These are, first of all, the uncertainty principle of quantum physics, which stipulates the inclusion of the uncertainty and incompleteness of our knowledge, and the principle of complementarity, which requires the preservation and non-hegemonization of the set of positions or states.

M. Crosta’s position is that complexity should work in this way in relation to all individual scientific disciplines, and this ontology of complex “sociocultural phenomena” should be sought both in the noosphere and in the sciences that study it. Therefore, the second chapter “Complexity and Identity” is dedicated to building complex rationality and complex knowledge in the field of culture and the current state of research in this field. M. Crosta places the problem of identity at the center here, justifying it with its significance for this field and its specific complex character. M. Crosta’s detailed tracing of the origin of the problem of identity from the socio-political debates on human rights, and especially those concerning personal identity, from the 1970s to the present day is valuable, as he clearly indicates that it is precisely the processes of globalization from the 1990s that have turned it into a supporting structure for the problematic sought in the field of culture and social processes. M. Crosta’s approach is against universalism and essentialism, leading to “global homogenization”, as a deep movement within these debates, but also against extreme relativism, excluding any cultural affiliation of the individual. This naturally creates a place for the application of the complex approach, including for a new ontologization of identity. It is understood as a complex, fluid and dynamic “self-construction”, which each individual freely and independently creates from the different layers, states and relationships of his/her self-determination, without essentially defining his nature and personal characteristics. This is a “relative” concept of identity, based on “self-categorization”, the common basis of the construction of identity according to M. Crosta lies deep in the “immemorial” relational becoming of individuality, in the earliest childhood period, which is a universal social connection with others of the entire human personality. The dynamic relational construction of identity according to M. Crosta is plastic and allows one to emphasize one or another aspect as the most significant, this is precisely the new concept of

“salientization” of identity, which M. Crosa justifies as central to the complex construction of identity. Salientization is realized in processes of “modularity” of self-identity through a rich complex and narrative manifestation in each individual.

Part of the construction of self-identity is also the attitude towards others and towards society, therefore the boundary of identity and personality cannot bypass the question of intersubjectivity and social dynamics in the relation individualism – collectivism. M. Crosa poses these problems in the third chapter “Complexity and Society”, constructing in detail their origin in the creation of the two opposing social and political platforms of liberalism and communitarianism. Here he demonstrates the possibilities of the complex methodology, which examines the positions of the two platforms and searches for their common continuum, in which they turn out to be two extreme poles. This continuum corresponds to the “hyper-complex” reality of the globalizing society and provides starting points in the construction of a field in which different cultures can be accepted as equal and from which the entire complexity of intercultural interactions can be seen. Basic typologies of cultures in terms of high and low culture have been introduced, according to the articulation of knowledge and respect for authorities, the theory of cultural groups has been defined – as embedded in the entire spectrum of cultural identity, or as free cultural formations, with a social, not ethnic and political essential nature and origin. On the static nature of multiculturalism, recognizing the rights and specificity of each culture, but without developing dialogue and interaction between them, which always results in stereotyping and imposing one culture as determining the cultural norm, M. Crosa proposes a new construct – “polyculturalism”. He bases it on the origin of *plurilingual* competence, for knowing and working with multiple languages and narrative forms, which the individual must change and respectively accept as leading in the relevant discourse and practice. The main thing in the proposed concept is the emphasis on personal activity in relation to many and different cultures, how the individual can “manage a different cultural environment”, and modulate his/her cultural praxis, value articulation and social skills and intercultural competences according to different cultures. Thus, “polyculturalism” can be assessed as the most current and personally sharpened manifestation and direction of a new competence in the field of the entire intercultural and global studies and social strategies.

Finally, I will conclude with a review and problematization of a particularly interesting aspect of the proposed dissertation work – the construction of complexity in relation to the understanding of history. Here Marco Crosa also constructs and maintains two positions – of universalism and existentialism. Universalism relies on a universal historical process, predominantly set as progressive since the Enlightenment, which is based on universal values

and hence on a process towards development towards a common progressive telos, a universal goal. This is also the cultural and historical teleology considered from the perspective of modern and even postmodern principles. On the other hand, there is the existential point of view – of the individual, even the mass, as a catalyst and hero of historical and cultural development. If universalism falls away, then the common goal and universal values must be removed. Their relativization brings out the individual and his/her freedom to manifest his/her values and to raise the question of his/her rights and social justice. And if in the complex dynamics of global social relations political management, and the deep pluralistic and complex political construction and real political process of democracy are embedded, then how in these conditions will the problem of universal human rights be solved and will there be a universal horizon, as one of the universal humanity, in terms of values and ethics? Can a question be raised here about a post-postmodern teleology of social and political global development, as a process of “global intercommunication” itself?

I fully accept the contributions presented by Marco Crosa, which are clearly formulated and demonstrated throughout the entire dissertation. The presented abstract corresponds to the dissertation. I have no joint publications with the doctoral student.

The doctoral student has fulfilled the national minimum requirements with three scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation research. A report on the lack of similarity with other works is presented. I did not identify any similarities with other works in the proposed dissertation text of Marco Crosa.

M. Crosa manages to implement in his dissertation research the establishment of a new theoretical horizon and a new type of methodology, presented under the general name “complexity theory”. These theoretical statements are deployed on an extremely rich thematic spectrum of problems, from the presented philosophical directions and concepts, on knowledge from various fields of modern science, which demonstrates the cross-disciplinary paradigm announced in the methodological framework of the study. New constructs are also proposed, which have the character of novelty and heuristics. Given the rich and philosophically grounded conceptuality and structure of the dissertation, based on the systematically researched thematic areas and resolved hypotheses of the study and the derived and argued original contributions, I will confidently vote with “**YES**” for acquisition to **Marco Crosa** the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**” for his dissertation “*Cultural Identity from the Perspective of Complexity Theory*” and I invite the members of the Scientific Jury to vote in the same way.

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