

OPINION

for the doctoral dissertation of the PhD student Marco Crosa

SU “St. Kl. Ohridski”, Philosophical faculty

“Cultural identity from the perspective of the complexity theory”

for obtaining of the educational and scientific degree “doctor”

professional direction 2.3 “philosophy”

by Prof. Em. DSc. Vesselin Petrov (IFS-BAS)

The doctoral dissertation of the PhD student Marco Crosa *“Cultural identity from the perspective of the complexity theory”* is 185 non-standard pages (25 lines each) and consists of introduction, three parts each of which has several chapters with their paragraphs, conclusion and bibliography of 160 titles preliminary in English. The PhD student has three publications and he covers the minimal national requirements. The dissertation has been checked with the program for anti-plagiarism of SU and the results are entirely within the required norms – fact which is confirmed also by his supervisor Prof. Plamen Makariev. That is why the official defense can start.

The author approaches to the theme stemming from the necessity to overcome classical postmodernism (which is not however the only version of postmodernism) and in fact he attempts to develop a version of the recently born but non-homogeneous after-postmodernism. I also have pointed ten years ago the need to develop after-postmodernism¹, but the dissertation student is directed to another flow of the after-postmodernism. He makes an attempt to integrate the philosophical thought of Edgar Morin (1921 -) with the approach of the Santa Fe Institute. He first presents a short description of the essence of both approaches each of which has its own pre-history (by the way, the idea of noosphere considered by Edgar Morin originates from 1920ties in the works of the Bergsonian philosopher Le Roy (1870-1954) and Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), and then the idea has been developed in the works of the famous Ukrainian and Russian scientist akad. Vl. Vernadsky (1863-1945) – the first president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, but it is pointed in the dissertation only cursorily in the footnote No 74 on p. 65 of the dissertation, but it would be better to trace out the succession and to point what Edgar Morin has upgraded over the theories of his predecessors). Anyway,

¹ **Petrov, V.** (2014). After post-modern ontology from a process philosophical point of view. – in: **Petrov, V., Vihren Busov, Dimitar Tsatsov** (Eds.) (2014). *Philosophy in after post-modern situation – applications and perspectives*. Veliko Tarnovo: St. Cyril and St. Methodius Univ. Press, ISBN 978-954-524-990-7, pp. 147-156. (in Bulgarian)

the author stems from and makes an attempt to develop further Edgar Morin's approach using it basically as a methodological presupposition in his dissertation, while the Santa Fe Institute's approach concerns rather to the social complex systems (p. 12 of the dissertation).

The first part of the dissertation is devoted to the understanding of complexity. In fact, the last one is connected with the idea of infinity, but not the infinity of space and time, but infinity in depth – namely the infinite depth of the universe is characterized with its complexity. The author refers to the existing in the specialized literature differentiation between general and limited complexity. Inevitably, here the system theory, self-organization and non-linearity intervene. The careful tracing out of the thought of the author shows that he in fact directs himself to the dynamicity as important characteristic of the universe, though he has only hinted about that in the dissertation without deriving it as a main principle of his methodological approach. Anyway, the author's approach to the topic of the dissertation, i.e. methodology which he has marked out inevitably falls to the contemporary channel of the dynamic methodological framework (which is not homogenous in itself – there are different modifications and variants, but what is common between them is the general approach to the description of the world that not just rejects the static approach, dominating in the epoch of modernism, but exceeds also the initial process approach through an attempt for its upgrading and extending to a broader understanding of dynamicity). That is why I definitely think that the methodological approach of the author undoubtedly belongs to the general flow of the dynamic approaches (in the specialized literature it is discussed about dynamic ontology, dynamic metaphysic, etc.) that has been developed in the last twenty years in the philosophical literature (to which I also have a marked affinity and which I consider as most perspective for the philosophical methodology of our contemporary epoch²). The dissertation student mentions also Whitehead's process approach as one of the dynamic approaches (pp. 33-34 of the dissertation), but he calls it incorrectly procedural approach (p. 33) instead of process approach.

The second part of the dissertation is focused on the theme of identity though the title is "Complexity and Identity" that underlines the connection with the first part of the investigation. It is not occasional that the author makes a stress on the concept "identical

² **Petrov**, Vesselin (2015). Dynamic and Process-Relational Ontologies. – in: **Petrov**, Vesselin, Adam Scarfe (Eds. and preface). *Dynamic Being: Essays in Process-Relational Ontology*. Series of European Studies in Process Thought, Vol. 2. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015 – 435 p., ISBN 978-1-4438-7695-7 (in English), pp. viii-xxxvi; **Petrov**, Vesselin (2015). Dynamic Aspects of the Development of Process Ontology. – in: **Petrov**, Vesselin, Adam Scarfe (Eds. and preface). *Dynamic Being: Essays in Process-Relational Ontology*. Series of European Studies in Process Thought, Vol. 2. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015 – 435 p., ISBN 978-1-4438-7695-7 (in English), pp. 44-66.

complexity” and on the need of complex approach to the specific field of identity, after the short review of available points of view about identity in the philosophical literature. Complexity is inseparable from the problem of intercultural relations and as the author points “Any approach to intercultural relations must deal with the universal and the essential” (p. 93 of the dissertation and p. 21 of the abstract), from where it follows the need to stem from a proper general philosophical methodology which is described in the first part of the dissertation. The author puts an accent on the concept “salientization” which is described as “the individual's ability to stabilize identity in a precise self-theory and narrative by catalyzing the identitarian complex around specific modularities” (p. 104 of the dissertation and p. 22 of the abstract).

The third part of the dissertation is entitled “Complexity and Society” and it is devoted to the theories of social-political philosophy. Honestly, my own power is not in the field of social-political philosophy – a field in which I am not a specialist. Rather, I am interested here in the application of the chosen methodological approach to that field. Besides the review of different philosophical theories that are available in the specialized literature, the author points that he considers “multiculturalism as a very complex picture of reality” (p. 127 of the dissertation and p. 25 of the abstract). He points as a deficiency of multiculturalism its static character, because the focus is on the preservation of the different cultures. According to him, in our contemporary epoch it is more perspective a re-orientation to “pluriculturalism” in which people are not considered as unchanging essences (here we again can see an accent on the dynamic approach!), but as “rather developing agents who can continuously adapt their self-concept and narrative through modular competencies, cultural transitions, and salient identification ... pluricultural perspective allows for a planning approach that is not based on unnatural interventions, but rather on constraints-driven management.” (p. 131 of the dissertation and pp. 26-27 of the abstract). Indeed, in our contemporary world that in fact powerfully enters into a new stage of globalization (and not a rejection of globalization as some analyzers point erroneously) this idea seems much more perspective because of its flexibility and practical applicability.

In the conclusion of the dissertation the author points that its main idea is “to create a resilient infrastructure that can deal with both the uniqueness and multiplicity of the phenomenal horizon” (p. 172 of the dissertation and p. 32 of the abstract). Of course, it hardly could be considered that such ambitious task can be achieved in one investigation only, but I definitely think that the chosen approach by the author is correct and that following that way it will be possible to reach to some positive result.

The abstract of the dissertation has 47 pages and it describes correctly the text of the

dissertation. Its only small and purely formal insufficiency is the lack of the full table of contents of the dissertation itself (only the table of contents of the abstract itself is available).

The doctoral student has pointed **four contributions in his dissertation** and in principle I agree with all of them. In fact, the third and the fourth of them concern more social-political philosophy – an area in which I am not a specialist. I entirely support the first two contributions, and for me the most important from the methodological point of view is the second contribution, where it is the most essential contribution of the author to the development of the contemporary theories on the theme of the dissertation.

My critical notes to the dissertation were pointed in the course of my exposition above. I would add to them also some incorrect moments in the quotation: there are some places marked as quotations, but their original source is not pointed or it is pointed only as a title without pointing to the exact pages (for example, notes No 61 and 62 on p. 56 of the dissertation). This remark is however a kind of appeal to correctness and does not have a decisive role for my general positive evaluation for the dissertation. I would add also that we cannot expect to find in only one dissertation an exhausting presentation of such vast theme as the theme of dynamicity, complexity, systematic, though in relation preliminary to the social context. The own contributions of the doctoral student entirely cover the requirements for a successful dissertation and are enough for the obtaining of the educational and scientific degree “doctor”.

Finally, let me note that I do not know the author in person and I have no common publications together with him, so I am not in a conflict of interests.

In conclusion: On the basis of all that have been said up to here I convincingly vote “for” the obtaining by Marco Crosa of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in the professional direction 2.3 “philosophy”.

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