

POSITION

By assoc. prof. Anna Ivanova, PhD, Department of "Philosophical Sciences," FF, St.Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, member of the academic jury;

Regarding: the dissertation of Marco Krosa on the topic: "Cultural Identity from the Perspective of Complexity Theory", submitted for the award of the academic and educational degree PhD in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy (Philosophy in English).

1. General information

The dissertation has a total size of 183 pages and consists of two title pages, a table of contents, an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and bibliography. A total of 159 academic sources in English and French have been used. The provided data regarding the publications during the PhD study period shows that the candidate conforms to the minimum national scientometric requirements for the academic and educational degree PhD in accordance with the Higher Education Act of Bulgaria. The Abstract is structured well and accurately represents the contents of the dissertation.

The topic, as formulated in the title, is cultural identity from the perspective of complexity theory. The text lays out an interdisciplinary study that explores several different perspectives on the issue of identity. In the work, the author in a sustained manner introduces a non-reductionist approach to understanding cultural identity and related concepts. The ethical motive of the inquiry as stated in the Introduction is “the possibility of establishing a justified approach that can accommodate the emerging multitude, plurality, and multipolarity* of contemporary society within a renewed interactional environment.”(p. 4). The concept of

complexity is viewed by the author as the means toward the provision of common framework for that. The theory of complexity is furthermore conceived as a non-reductionist approach toward social phenomena.

2. Analytic review of the main contributions in the dissertation

Chapter I criticizes simplification and reductionism as all-encompassing explanatory strategies and provides a general framework for the complexity approach. Furthermore, the author presents the six-volume work of the French author Edgar Morin and traces the relation between his metaphysics and the problem of cultural identity.

I generally agree with the contribution regarding the introduction of Morin's work to the Bulgarian academic audience. The most notable positive aspect however for me in this chapter is *the defense* of the thesis that essentialism is a simplifying cognitive model. This is the case as far as the model is not always fit for the nature and the genesis of the phenomena that are studied with its use. At the same time, one could argue, that the notion of general complexity that is presented in the text including by virtue of Morin's definition (p. 37) has mostly negative meaning of overthrowing reductionism, which provides little insight into what such a methodology would be in its own terms. Farther in the text, there are many suggestions for what would probably be labelled as restricted complexity – through systems theory, complementarity, diachronic analysis, modularity, self-organization. In relation to this, is my question to the PhD candidate: Is there a unity among these approaches beyond the overthrowing of simplification?

Chapter II explores the dynamics of identity. It fully reflects the current state of affairs in the study of the problem – multiplicity of discreet theories across the

social sciences with very few unifying approaches. Tracing the history of the “identity turn” in public and political perspective the author defends the view that: in the past there was no clear conceptualisation of the categories of identity, while today they have become a central topic of the political discourse (pp. 80-84). A positive feature in this part of the research is the way in which the author explores “the shift from class-based activism to activism based on other identities” (p. 81). Among other things, it includes a promising new methodology related to the domain of digital humanities. The analysis refers to data from digital databases showing how many times the word *identity* appears in academic records in two different periods.¹

Furthermore, in this chapter, intersectionality is rightly pointed out as the kind of understanding of identity that fits best the contemporary realities.

The third chapter “Complexity and Society” I take to be a broad review on various sociopolitical aspects of identity. It takes as a starting point the intrinsically social character of human development to discuss: first, the image of a person embedded into the political doctrines of neo-liberalism and communitarianism. The opposition between the views is very clearly explained and the conclusion about their mutual relations and limitations is well justified. Further in the text, the author defends a modular approach to identity through embracing pluriculturalism (p. 133) instead of multiculturalism. The focus is then shifted towards the implications related to the historical nature of societies.

I agree with the contributions listed in connection to this chapter. However, I take it that the broad scope of topics discussed in the chapter presents a challenge to in-depth scientific exploration and is thus in itself a testament to the thesis, (which the author shares, p. 21) that in the study of complex phenomena the complexity

¹ Though it should be noted that the numbers, presented on p. 81 would be more informative if the size of the respective records from the two periods was also taken into account.

approaches are more of a complement, than of a substitute to the principle of simplification.

3. Conclusion

It can be summarized, that Marco Crosa's dissertation meets the conditions for awarding the educational and scientific degree PhD. It is evident in the provided text that the candidate possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge on the topics studied by him and the ability to conduct independent scientific research. Based on the above, I offer a positive assessment of the doctoral student's work and declare my intention to vote "For" awarding the educational and scientific degree PhD to Marco Crosa for his research on the topic "Cultural Identity from the Perspective of Complexity Theory".

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