REVIEW

of the thesis of **Marco Crosa** on the topic

Cultural Identity from the Perspective of Complexity Theory

submitted for awarding the educational-scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy"

The dissertation covers 180 pages, divided into an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography of 155 titles in Latin (mostly in English or Italian). The first chapter contains four sections, and the second and third - three each, which makes the structure not only perspicuous but also aesthetic. The dissertation represents a generalizing view of a pressing problem of our time – the nature and possible management of sociocultural identity, including personal identity, and an attempt to offer a solution to this problem through the application of a similarly generalizing theory, namely the theory of complexity of the French thinker E. Moren.

Already in the introduction, the main goal and main motivation of the work is stated. The motivation lies in the dissatisfaction with extreme relativism, which "reduces the linguistic functions to a socio-pragmatic level, specifically resulting in self-centered and self-justifying conversations that hinder social constructivism, collaboration, and mutual understanding. " (p. 4 of the dissertation). These features are attributed to the postmodern discourse and the aim is, by overcoming it, to lay the foundations of a post-postmodern discourse within the framework of (theory of) complexity so that mutual understanding between people is facilitated, encouraged and fully realized. In other words, an approach is sought that "can accommodate the emerging multitude, plurality, and multipolarity of contemporary society within a renewed interactional environment." (Ibid.) Again, the aim is to develop an anti-reductionist approach

(understood traditionally as a refusal to explain complex phenomena or concepts by redescribing them in terms of simpler ones), by using as a starting point will be the integration of two recent research lines: the philosophical thought of Edgar Morin and the more pragmatic approach of the Santa Fe Institute (SFI)." (p. 3 of the abstract). Next, the introduction describes the structure of the work, briefly sketching the main ideas. From the point of view of academic standards, there is a lack of description of the tasks that must be solved in order to achieve the set goal, and of the methods used. The reasons why these particular sources were used must be inferred by the reader himself based on cursory references to difficulties and challenges in the work process. In short, the introduction is too narrative. Such is generally the argumentation in the work, too, which places it in the context of contemporary continental philosophy. The introduction of new and non-standard concepts, commented in the introduction, deserves praise, but the list should be expanded. I venture to suggest a translation of the word salientization as "giving prominence." Leaving the English neologism in the text is an understatement, but at least its meaning is explained in detail, which also applies to other special words such as intersectionalism, pluriculturalism, etc. under.

The so-called methodological part (chapter I) introduces the thinking about complexity according to the French philosopher Morin, who declares that it is based on Prigogine's works on dissipative systems and other related developments in the field of natural sciences, such as the theory of dynamical systems. The concept of complexity is analyzed - dialectically - in its interrelationship with its (according to the author) opposite: simplification and the cognitive model of essentialization derived from it. Morin's distinction between general and restricted complexity is then used, the former being "a philosophical method and approach that rejects reductionism and resorts to an integrated but unintelligible system of knowledge" (p. 11 of the abstract) and "bracketing the principle of simplification and rejecting reductionism. It presents a global understanding of phenomenal

reality as an endless nesting of dynamic emergent systems." (p. 21 of the dissertation) The role of the evaluation "unintelligible" is not clear here. I ask the author for further clarifications. "Limited complexity refers to the development of systems theory that embraces various kinds of permanent amalgamations of integrated individual agents." (Ibid.) The concept of "system" can work as an ideal type according to the second main concept in the work, namely that of the Santa Fe Institute, drawing certain ideas from cybernetics. On this basis, Moren developed his approach, called dialogics, to describe the complex relationships between multiple elements, starting from the reality of physics and ending with the reality of the social sciences, including ethics.

The second chapter is devoted to the application of Moren's method to the problem of identity, which, according to the author, has marked our entire modernity to the point of speaking of an "identity turn" (p. 79 of the dissertation and p. 17 of the abstract). Today's identity debate is analyzed in the fields of the public sphere, postcolonialism, and psychology. An overview and cursory analysis of feminism, of the various theories dealing with the problem of race as the final of the triad of class, gender and race, is made. It turns out that the application of the complexity approach identifies many more elements such as disability, ethnicity, age, culture and speciesm (a rather unfortunate neologism, in my opinion). Next follows a critique of the postcolonial idea from the standpoint of Moren's approach in the light of the universalism-essentialism dichotomy, analyzing the reasons for the enormous acquisition of prominence by the concept of cultural identity: the situation of insecurity, threat and isolation that followed the symbolic and literal fall of the Berlin Wall and the restructuring of the world (p. 81 of the dissertation). The three sections of this chapter trace the identity debate in the three areas mentioned above. Complexity as an approach, according to the author, excludes the primacy of any of the used categorizations and replaces it with the so-called intersectionality: it is borrowed from K. Crenshaw, but is left to the intuitions of

the reader (p. 92 ff. of the dissertation). I am asking the author for a more focused definition or at least an understanding. The main drawback of essentialism in relation to identity is the transformation of the latter into something fixed and unchanging, which contradicts the dynamism of both the phenomenon itself and the approach of complexity. The critique of universalism (put in Kantian terms such as "essentialist reason and universalist reason") emphasizes its consequences for "the self-confidence and self-consciousness of European civilization": the exaggeration of the role of the liberal stage on a global scale (p. 98 of the dissertation). I think here the logic of bounded and unbounded quantifiers would make the analysis considerably more convincing. The fourth section deals with the "identity turn" in psychology, the development of which, according to the author, shows the need for a processual approach to identity both on an individual and social level. The primacy of group membership over individuality is defended, with a separate section nevertheless devoted to the individual agent. The claim is that these are two sides of the same coin, as required by complexity theory, and the Self is relational and 'plurilingual'. (p. 104 of the dissertation) The roots of such a concept were searched not only in the history of psychology, but also of philosophy. Of particular interest is the idea of language differences as a measure of social complexity analysis. Considering that one language disappears from the world every 14 days[1], does the author think we are witnessing simplification and how does the complex approach propose to counter it?

The section on the social characterization of identity concludes with an examination of the symbolic interactionist perspective.

The final chapter is the main focus of the work and examines how complexity enables an innovative analysis of the state of contemporary society on a global scale. An overview of the debate between neoliberalism and communitarianism

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[1] [1] https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/article/vanishing-languages, accessed on 7.02.2025

is made, and instead of the doctrine of multiculturalism, the so-called plurilingual, pluricultural and plurisocial approach is being proposed. The two criticized perspectives are declared to overlap, while still favoring communities with an evolutionary argument. The resulting preference for multiculturalism, however, turns out to be exhausted. Therefore, a transition to multiculturalism, multilingualism and linguistic multi-competence is required so that a modular approach to identity and action planning through constraint-aware management takes place. This justifies the placement of the final section with the dissertation's specific recommendations for political practices based on complexity. The second section of this chapter shows how history would look from the perspective of complexity theory in a comparison with the so-called natural state: it is a complex of nested, intertwined and overlapping micro- and macrospheres (p. 26 of the abstract). I would like to ask the author what is primary in the analogy between social models of organization and those of the objects of physical science? And in general, how reliable is the inference by analogy? Because after all, this is an important element of the motivation of the theory developed by Moren and the author.

Recommendations for corrective political practices begin with the statement that "the promotion of pluri-socioculturalism can help to overcome postmodern incommunicativeness and create conditions for the full development of social dialogue." (p. 30 of the abstract) These conditions also include attention to the factors of the natural environment, which is in harmony with the ideas of embodied and situated knowledge and the new eco-rationality that have dominated in the last twenty years. Adaptation efforts are, after all, ongoing over time and necessary.

The conclusion declares the philosophical nature of the work, using complexity theory for a new look at cultural, social and individual identity. I find it important to pay attention to the incompleteness of knowledge and the uncertainty of the

factors influencing the actions and the minds of social and individual agents. I can agree with the conclusion that our understanding of nature - physical, biological and social - cannot be absolutely complete and absolutely true. This supports the interdisciplinary nature of the work and gives it additional value.

The main goals of the work are fulfilled in the framework of the narrative argumentation characteristic of some schools of European philosophy. On the other hand, the humanization of a number of discoveries and theories from the philosophy of science is a good achievement. The literature used is wide-ranging in various fields of philosophy, social sciences and humanities and is based on academically reliable sources. The wording of the contributions is too parsimonious and could be expanded. Moreover, it does not touch on the specific recommendations for political solutions and restructuring of their mechanisms, which I understand as a separate fifth contribution. Planning for contingency, for example, is such a good recommendation borrowed from some urban theories (p. 159 of the dissertation). The same applies to planning in view of the complexity of time and against favoring short-term solutions (p. 160). On this occasion, it should be noted that the content has not been updated and the indicated pages of the relevant sections do not match their actual location in the text. This heading also includes traditional typos and spelling errors.

The demonstrated erudition of the doctoral student fully meets the requirements of the educational part of the degree sought. Research skills, which are shown in the discovery of relevant concepts and theories, as well as in the construction of the argumentation, complete the second "scientific" part.

Based on all that has been said so far, I will vote "yes" to the awarding of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor of Philosophy to Marco Crosa.

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