

Summary of the dissertation entitled: Personal Identity in the Context of Mass Art: Extending the Theory of Narrative Identity

The subject matter of the dissertation is positioned at the meeting of ruminations in the field of philosophical anthropology, the philosophy of culture, and aesthetics. The purpose was to supplement the theory of narrative identity with an analysis of mass art by scrutinizing the world's top-grossing films. The dissertation consists of three parts. Firstly, a unified concept of narrative identity is extracted from diverse accounts thereof. In the second part, the concept of mass art is clarified. Lastly, a qualitative analysis of a sample from the one hundred top-grossing films was presented.

Narration is defined as a structure of understanding. Identity is said to be constructed in a process of self-understanding. People integrate their life experiences into a story, they understand themselves, their place in the world, and events over a lifetime through the prism of those tales. They interpret their actions and create depictions, maintaining continuity in their sense of identity. The concept of narrative identity is helpful for better understanding a human being and their world-perspective.

In the first chapter of this dissertation the method of the history of ideas is employed. Following some prominent narrativists, primarily Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and Anthony Giddens the main aspects of narrative identity are identified: temporality, reflectivity and the immersion in the social world. From the point of view of this dissertation, the third aspect is the most important. In their theories, the quoted authors take into account a description of the realities of the social world and culture in which contemporary people shape their identity.

Mass art is one segment of culture that most people, most often, come into contact with. It influences the shaping of both the personality of a modern person and her/his attitudes related to interpersonal relations. Mass art is characterized by simplicity and universality, and appeals to the experiences and lifestyles familiar to the audience. It provides them with models of behavior and descriptions of reality in a digestive form. That is why the analysis of this province of art should be included into the reflection on narrative identity.

The final part of the dissertation presents the results of qualitative and quantitative research into a selected sample of films. The analysis is carried out along the lines of Joseph Campbell and Włodzimierz Propp. Its aim is to identify role models and models of interpersonal relations offered by mass art. The 100 top-grossing films in the world are chosen because they promote specific behavior patterns and lifestyles across the world.

The analysis results in, a typology of characters of seven types of male characters and five types of female characters. A significant underrepresentation of women and minority groups in the selected sample is acknowledged. These findings may rise self-awareness in some groups of people. The impact of the discussed models on shaping an individual's identity requires further empirical research. Nevertheless, this analysis may serve as a theoretical background for further research. The issue of the impact of mass art on the formation of an individual's identity also opens up a discussion in the field of ethics, regarding the responsibility of authors and creators as well as consumers.