

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University

Applicant

Mgr. Martin Lang, Ph.D.

Habilitation thesis

Why do religious people trust each other? A synthesis of experimental cross-cultural research on religious beliefs and behaviors

Reviewer

Piotr Sorokowski, PhD, habilitation, professor at the University of Wrocław

Reviewer's home unit, institution

Department of Psychology, University of Wrocław, Poland

Review

Before commencing the review, I must acknowledge that I have been closely following Martin Lang's progress and scientific work for several years. I am familiar with many of his outstanding published works, having invited him to lecture at my university and even attempted to persuade him to work at the University of Wrocław (offering excellent financial conditions and scientific position). Regrettably for Polish science, yet fortunately for Czech science, Martin Lang contributes significantly to scientific research at Masaryk University, specifically within the LEVYNA Laboratory for the Experimental Research of Religion.

Martin Lang's notable scientific achievement revolves around a series of works collectively titled "Why Religious People Trust Each Other? A Synthesis of Experimental Research on Religious Beliefs and Behaviors." This achievement comprises nine scientific articles published in prestigious journals with varying impact factors and scientific prestige, including Proceedings of the Royal Society, B, Cognition, and Biological Psychology. It is worth noting that Martin Lang is the first author in four of these articles, unequivocally establishing his substantial and decisive role in this body of work.

The aforementioned scientific series investigates the dynamics of trust among religious individuals through a multidisciplinary approach, encompassing nine studies organized into four thematic clusters. These studies explore the role of rituals in enhancing interpersonal trust, the impact of religious content on trustworthy behavior, the influence of belief in moralizing gods on normative conduct, and the ways in which trustworthy individuals connect for mutually beneficial exchanges. The findings highlight mechanisms such as mirroring, synchrony, associative learning, and beliefs in moralizing gods as significant contributors to fostering trust within religious communities.

Following a meticulous analysis of the papers, I stand by the positive reviews received before publication. The theoretical introductions exhibit the candidate's adept navigation of the latest, notably interdisciplinary, literature in the research field. The research questions are intriguing and innovative, with refined methodologies and structures aligning with contemporary scientific trends. The analyses are sound, allowing for accurate conclusions. These works already constitute a substantial contribution to the discipline, evident in their

numerous citations. The co-authors, distinguished scientists in religion research globally, indirectly underscore the significance of Martin Lang's contributions.

In summary, I hold Martin Lang's scientific achievement in high regard, confident that it not only meets but likely exceeds Czech requirements. While this information may not be pertinent to your considerations, I would like to highlight that such achievements would more than suffice for a Polish habilitation in any field of humanities and social sciences. At my university, it would be adequate for a professorial position, and in the discipline of cultural and religious studies, it could potentially warrant the highest academic degree in Poland, the "ordinary/belvedere professorship," awarded by the President of the Republic of Poland.

I trust that this succinct review suffices for your purposes. I firmly believe that reviews for promotions or academic degrees serve as evidence of merit, and in Martin Lang's case, the merit is self-evident, requiring little elaboration.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence

1. How could the insights derived from the studies contribute to discussions on the intersection of religious beliefs, social norms, and trust in a globalized world?
2. To what degree can the identified patterns in trust among religious individuals provide insights into broader questions of human behavior and cooperation?
3. Given the interdisciplinary approach, how might the synthesis of experimental research on religious beliefs and behaviors contribute to the broader fields of psychology and sociology?

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled *Why do religious people trust each other? A synthesis of experimental cross-cultural research on religious beliefs and behaviors* by Mgr. Martin Lang, Ph.D., fulfils requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Psychology.

Date: 19.02.2024

Signature: Piotr Sorokowski