

BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Considering Procreation: Arguments from Philosophy and Economics
Student's name:	Josef Bialas
Referee's name:	Doc. Ing. Vladimír Benáček, CSc.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	48
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	14
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	14
Total		80	76
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	10
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	5
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	5
Total		20	20
TOTAL		100	96

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria (min. 1800 characters):

It was a pleasure to read this thesis flashing with ideas and a critical systemic approach to such a fundamental topic as the natality and procreation of a new life. The writing style has a "feel" of a maturity of the researcher and is highly readable.

The topic itself is one of the most intrinsic economic questions. Rearing a child in Germany costs parents alone some 600€ per month, plus the high government expenditure. This means that children are the most expensive goods (assets) the humans have. Most probably more than housing. Children are also the next human capital of the country – the most important economic factor of development and progress.

The systematic search for literature must be also appreciated. But the found resources would deserve to be pre-selected in order not to glut the references. If the author read all of the reported literature, he would deserve another acknowledgment of praise.

Some comments that cropped out during my reading:

- 1) The mysterious terms "Global North" and "Global South" should be defined and their purpose explained (p. 1).

- 2) The microeconomic theory of the procreation of a child as a consumption product, as derived from Varian, should be subjected to a critical assessment for validity. While admissible for a comparison of simple products like "butter versus shirt", I am not sure if humans really are able to assess a bundle like "car versus child" since "child" is a completely heterogeneous unknown "product" whose utility and wellbeing in the next 25 (or 50?) years cannot be estimated. An axiomatic model of the latter can be logically unimpeachable but, from real behavioural and biological points, it looks like a lampoon. The Becker's more intelligent approach holds a bit more water.
- 3) So, one must appreciate the dexterous soft-critical interpretation of Becker's too economic theory of child procreation by extracting the crucial conclusion: "With rising income, parents choose to invest more money into their children rather than having more children".
- 4) It somehow escaped the author's attention in the macroeconomic chapter that it is the Cobb-Douglas function (extended for the human capital), which is the main explanatory model of demographic changes and impacts of quantity-quality of children on the economy.
- 5) The usage of the capital letters in headings should be unified.
- 6) Chapter 3.3.4: Disrupting the environment is not the only negative aspect of procreation. The people can be bad in themselves: causing even more negative externalities than the positive ones: some are destructively selfish, liars, robbers, murderers, etc. Philosophically, your research questions seem to be even more complicated. Future is always uncertain and deciding about the concrete new life by future probabilities is absurd.
- 7) The three conditions mentioned on p. 33 are too hasty (even smug) and easily refuted empirically.
- 8) The idea that adoption is a perfect substitute to having an own child sounds to me like a dream of all totalitarians.
- 9) The statement on p. 35 "The macroeconomic part established that economically advanced countries with large human capital and low fertility rates may experience an economic downturn in the future" is not correct if the rate of economic growth per capita is greater than the rate of natality.
- 10) Any theory should aim to be universal. In your case the procreation theory should have general implications for both the North and South.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): A

Suggested questions for the defence are:

Vis-a-vis your conditions for having a child would it be rational and moral for the United Nations to enforce policies of one child (or even no child) in the countries stressed by poverty and violence?

I recommend the thesis for final defence.



Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.