

# MASTER'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT

*IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies*

*Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University*

<b>Thesis title:</b>	<b>Self-interested individuals and social order in liberal thought</b>
<b>Student's name:</b>	<b>Naoki Kawada</b>
<b>Referee's name:</b>	<b>Jakub Franěk</b>

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
<b>Major Criteria</b>			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	<b>50</b>	24
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	<b>15</b>	7
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	<b>15</b>	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>80</b>	39
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources, literature	<b>10</b>	7
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	<b>5</b>	1
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	<b>5</b>	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	9
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	48

## Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score: 18

[NB:] If the plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score is above 15%, the reviewer has to include his/her assessment of the originality of the reviewed thesis in his/her review.

**Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria** (min. 1800 characters including spaces when recommending a passing grade, min. 2500 characters including spaces when recommending a failing grade):

The author has selected an interesting and in many ways relevant topic for his Master's thesis: the complicated and tensed relation between (the methodological assumption of naturally) *self-interested individuals* and the (need to legitimise and maintain) *social order in liberal thought*. In his thesis, the author makes some interesting points and raises a number of both theoretically and politically significant questions. He also demonstrates good knowledge of the relevant literature. As a whole, however, the thesis fails to be persuasive and suffers from a number of rather significant shortcomings.

To start with, the thesis is written in often confusing way and its overall argument lacks a clearly defined structure or, for that matter, a clearly defined research problem. Normally, the reader would expect to find both a clear definition and justification of the research problem as well as an outline of the thesis' structure in the Induction. The Introduction to the present thesis however completely lacks anything resembling an outline or an explanation of its argumentative structure; while it does

attempt to define its research problem or aim, it does so in a confusing way and on top of that makes some promises that are not fulfilled in the following chapters.

The author attempts to define and justify his research problem and the aim of his thesis towards the end of the Introduction:

*“I would like to describe the relation between self-interested individuals .... and social order in liberal thought. And I am sure that understanding the relation will lead to a refined description of other aspects of liberalism that could go beyond the criticism of contemporary liberalism and thereby counter the contemporary ‘crisis of liberalism’” (pp. 6-7).*

The definition of the research problem in the above cited passage seems reasonably clear. The problem is with its justification, which apparently refers to a previously discussed critique of contemporary liberalism by P. J. Deneen (pp. 5-6), or, rather with the fact that the author never returns to Deneen’s (or any other) critique of contemporary liberalism. Similarly, he argues in passing in a previous section of the Introduction that “One of the purposes of this thesis is to find the elements which connect the ancient or medieval concept of liberal thought with the modern and contemporary concept of liberalism.” Again, this topic is in fact never raised in the subsequent chapters.

The present thesis consists mostly of the interpretation of and comments upon selected canonical works of the key political thinkers from the past. The selection of the principal authors discussed in the thesis (T. Hobbes, D. Hume, J.S. Mill and L. von Mises in Section I and J.-J. Rousseau and J. Rawls in Section II) should be better justified. (This applies especially to J.-J. Rousseau. Does the author really consider him a liberal thinker? If so, in what sense? Isn’t he commonly considered rather an influential critic of liberalism?) The same applies to the inclusion of D. Hume among social-contract theorists. (As the author himself acknowledges, Hume is known for his rejection of the social-contract legitimation of political authority.)

The submitted and reviewed manuscript gives an overall impression of a work in progress rather than a final draft of an MA Thesis suitable for defence. This impression is amplified by rather frequent grammatical and stylistic errors.

I am afraid the present thesis cannot be recommended for the final defence.

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

**Suggested questions for the defence are:**

**I do not recommend the thesis for final defence.**

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**Referee Signature**

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

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