

Social Markers of Consumption in the 21st Century by Ella Rozman Supervisor's Review

I find it rather difficult to take a definite stand on Ms. Rozman's thesis. If I consider the critical point of view first, I have to admit that the thesis is certainly not flawless. It is a bit too closely connected to its main inspirations, Veblen and Frank, without always clearly distinguishing between Veblen's and Frank's ideas and Ms. Rozman's own contributions. The summary of Veblen's and Frank's works tends to go astray at times, failing to distinguish to core concepts from less important ones. The thesis is highly theoretical, speculative at times – an empirical research is missing that would help to keep it connected with some tangible evidence. The author makes it easy for the reader to disagree with her assertions by often providing too little support for them. Also, the thesis tends to syncretism, bringing together many different sources of inspiration – Hofstede, Bauman, hyperconsumerism as a religion etc. – without properly binding everything together into a coherent whole.

However, Ms. Rozman's work is, in my view, not bereft of positives for which I do not consider it a failure. The topic itself is not easy to manage, especially Veblen's works being rather difficult readings. The thesis shows the author's deep engagement with the topic. The author has exerted considerable effort to tackle the problems at hand and to steer the original argument in new, interesting directions. The thesis deals with multiple recent papers and books and it does so in very good English. The author writes in vivid and passionate way that keeps the reader interested. Although Ms. Rozman could have highlighted her own contributions better, I have enjoyed especially chapters 3.1 Darwin's Contribution & 3.2 Point of Consumerism that show her ability to synthesize broad range of literature and provide a persuasive argument. From the point of view of the supervisor I also need to appreciate a significant positive development between the first draft and the final version of the thesis.

All things considered, there are many pros and cons of Ms. Rozman bachelor's thesis – from my point of view, however, the positives prevail over the shortcomings. **I recommend to thesis for the defense. If persuasively defended, the thesis may be graded as "very good".**

Questions

What is the difference between a positional good and a positional externality? Is it the same thing?

In your opinion, what are the status symbols among the students of the Faculty of Humanities? Are the students today prone to conspicuous consumption?

Prague, August 23rd

Petr Špecián, Ph.D.