

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	The Ethical Obligation of Humanity towards Refugees
Author of the thesis:	Douglas Redcliff
Referee (<i>incl. titles</i>):	Jakub Franěk, PhD.

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the five numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

The thesis, which examines obligations towards refugees from an ethical standpoint, is by its very nature largely theoretical. Apart from ethical and philosophical questions (Chapter 2) it discusses also relevant political ideologies (Chapter 4), as well as theological and legal debates pertaining to refugees (Chapters 4 and 5). Most important for the author's argument are clearly the sections devoted to ethics and political ideologies (i.e. Chapters 2 and 4.1). While the theoretical discussion in these sections is very well informed and the authors main conclusions are convincing, some of the arguments appear superficial, confusing or simply unconvincing. Why, e.g. would the existence of an innate or unchangeable human nature, preclude the existence of free will? Or why should a belief in the existence of human nature lead to domination, subordination or genocides (p. 12)? On the other hand, if one accepts the argument that human beings are shaped largely by cultural and social environment, does it make sense to still use the term "human nature"? Can "human nature" strictly speaking have different forms (p. 24)? In the same vein, it is questionable whether we can maintain Locke's doctrine of natural rights while tossing away its theological grounding (p. 25).

2) Contribution:

Perhaps the most original and interesting aspect of the thesis is the way in which it combines theoretical discussion of the obligation towards refugees from the positions of ethics and political theory with empirical research focused on the attitudes towards refugees and "costs and benefits" of their acceptance for the host countries. The author of this review nonetheless believes that the thesis as a whole would have been more convincing if its author devoted more space to the discussion of the arguments of the opponents of the acceptance of refugees.

3) Methods:

The methods used are appropriate for this type of work.

4) Literature:

The list of literature is surprisingly long for a Master's thesis. The author is clearly well informed about the existing relevant literature. On the other hand, the engagement with the literature he cites from could be more critical. On some occasions, the author simply quotes or references (sometimes highly controversial arguments) without explaining his own position on the issue at hand or, for that matter without providing some context for the cited argument. E.g. on p. 18 he informs the reader that "Midgley believes humans are entirely without instincts..." without further explaining this highly counter-intuitive claim or, for that matter, without clearly stating what he himself thinks about this issue. Similarly, on p. 13 he states that "Louden describes Kant as looking at humans as chameleons, creatures who can, through their free choice, be whatever they choose to be." Again, this appears to be a highly counter-intuitive interpretation of Kant's moral philosophy, which would deserve some form of critical engagement.

5) Manuscript form:

The thesis is clearly structured and written in a clear and grammatically correct language.

Box for the thesis supervisor only. Please characterize the progress in the working out of thesis (e.g., steady and gradual versus discontinuous and abrupt) and the level (intensity) of communication/cooperation with the author:

...

Suggested questions for the defence are:

„... ..“

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20 points)</i>	13
<i>Contribution (max. 20 points)</i>	13
<i>Methods (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20 points)</i>	20
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	76
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	C

DATE OF EVALUATION: Sept. 14, 2019

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honour)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honour)
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.