

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

MA thesis: supervisor's report

The student's name: Chukwudi Chukwu

The title of the thesis: What should be the Standard for Evaluating Political Representatives?

The supervisor: Matej Cívik

I. Formal criteria

	yes	partially	no
1. The overall project: - the thesis corresponds to the proposed topic - the topic is outlined adequately and not overly broadly	x		
2. Methodical and systematic quality - the text is logically and clearly structured	x		
3. Introduction and conclusion - the introduction duly states the aims and projected steps of the thesis, the state of the arts in the chosen topic, and the key works of existing scholarship - the conclusion adequately summarizes and evaluates the problem, and states the author's position and contribution	x		
4. The author met all the formal requirements of a Master's Thesis: - statement of the topic, the declaration, Introduction, the body of the work, Conclusion, Summary - word count/number of pages is appropriate	x		

Comments

The thesis nicely fulfills all the formal criteria for a successful defense. It is reasonably structured, with introduction and conclusion, the argument is easy to follow and the main concerns and motivations of the text are clearly laid out.

II. Contents-related criteria yes partially no

II. Contents-related criteria	yes	partially	no
1. The thesis shows the author's comprehension of the problem	x		
2. Cohesion and continuity of the text: - is satisfactory - the argumentation is adequate and does not lack foundation	x		
3. The thesis works with relevant resources			
4. Working with resources: - the thesis clearly shows that the author has worked with relevant academic literature and theses and arguments presented there - the author properly introduced their referred resources, compared, paraphrased, and cited them - clearly distinguished their own ideas and claims from those made by the cited authors	x		
5. The thesis is a philosophical text: - the author proved to be able to work analytically with concepts and ideas - the author did not only summarise or retell (in different words) the used resources - the thesis is not overburdened with non-philosophical (biographical, historical, etc.) contents	x		
6. The thesis shows the author's own contribution and individual framing of the topic	x		

The thesis asks the question about the standards for evaluating representatives, which is one of the most important questions in democratic theory. One very sympathetic aspect of this philosophical inquiry is that it is motivated by real-life concerns. The author is clearly dissatisfied by the standards of political representation in Nigeria and wants to understand, where exactly it goes wrong – to provide a theoretical diagnosis.

To this extent, the thesis takes Hannah Pitkin's concept of representation as its main starting point. Pitkin's theory is supplemented by other authors, including Melissa Williams and Iris Marion Young. The author thus shows a good grasp of relevant literature.

The bulk of the thesis is then dedicated to the case study of Nigeria, where the author's ambition is to apply the theoretical background developed in the first section to the reality of Nigeria throughout its history. This part is, to be frank, a little bit untidy. There are a lot of political facts about Nigeria provided, but it is often less than clear how we should think about these facts or how should we connect them to the theory provided in the first part.

However, the thesis as a whole does represent a valiant attempt at connecting theory and practice. The fact that there are loose ends and dead ends should not be terribly surprising. When attempting to apply theory to practice, some aspects that the theorists find uninteresting (like the persistent corruption, described in detail in the thesis) are the main reason why representation does not work well, regardless of more sophisticated theoretical categories.

All in all, the author proves knowledge of the literature and attempts to apply it in an original and highly engaging way. In this respect, I consider the thesis to be successful.

III. Language and grammar

yes partially no

	yes	partially	no
1. The thesis is flawless grammatically and stylistically and in other related respects (such as avoiding typos or unfinished sentences)	x		
2. The thesis is written in a proper academic language	x		
3. Terminology - the thesis uses its terminology with comprehension - it uses its terminology as needed and introduces its terms as needed	x		
4. References, citations and notes - referencing is adequate - the thesis uses a suitable citation format and sticks with it - footnotes/endnotes are used properly	x		
5. Citing - citations are neither too scarce nor overexcessive - quotations are sensibly chosen and illuminating	x		
6. Graphics - the thesis uses a suitable font, style of TOC, headings, paragraph styles, and so forth	x		

The references, notes, academic language and grammar in the thesis are adequate.

IV. Resources used

yes partially no

	yes	partially	no
1. a sensible and topic-adequate selection of primary texts	x		
2. a sensible and topic-adequate selection of secondary resources	x		

Further recommendations:

I think a better version of this thesis would make much deeper connections between the theories in the first part and the "facts" in the second part.

This is, however, an endeavor that goes well above an MA thesis project.

Cooperation between the student and the supervisor (to be stated by the supervisor):

The cooperation with Chukwudi was exemplary. He worked hard on this thesis, read and worked with the recommended literature, did his own research and came with interesting ideas.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis is fit for defence: yes

Suggested grade: **A**

Proposed questions and topics for the defence discussion:

Can you elaborate what are for you the key connections between the personal virtues of good representation and the institutional, political aspect of representation (what is the institutional setup, political system etc)?

In what senses are Dovi's and Pitkin's conceptions of (good) representation connected, and in what sense these two authors talk past each other?