

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University

Applicant

Mgr. Ing. Pavol Minárik, Ph.D.

Habilitation thesis

The Economics of Religion in Communist and Post-Communist Central Europe

Reviewer

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The habilitation thesis by Pavol Minarik consists of a collection of papers and commentary that explore the economic perspective of religion in the context of communist and post-communist Central Europe. The commentary provides an overview of the literature on the economics of religion, outlines the models and methods employed in the papers, and discusses their results and implications for further research. The papers cover various aspects, including economic models of religious organization under repression, the persistence of opposition in oppressive regimes, the development of religiosity in the post-communist period, church-state settlements, and the attitudes of Czechs towards churches.

The research represents original work in the field of the economics of religion in Czechia, offering new models suitable for the specific experiences of religious groups under communism and extending the economic analysis of religion into this specific area. The commentary begins by explaining the significance of studying religion from an economic perspective, emphasizing the influence of religion on interpersonal relations and the functioning of society. It highlights the distinct characteristics of economics as an "imperial science" that penetrates various areas of human life, including religion. The commentary then discusses the current state of knowledge in the economics of religion, distinguishing between the "economics of religion" and "religious economics," and outlining the application of microeconomic principles to religious behaviour and the effects of religion on the economy.

It provides an in-depth review of the literature, covering topics such as the demand for religion, supply in the religious market, competition and regulation, and the effects of state intervention on the religious market. Furthermore, the commentary sheds light on the methodology and models employed in the collected papers, showcasing a combination of theoretical and empirical approaches, including formal mathematical models, case studies, and statistical methods.

The findings from the papers demonstrate the applicability of economic models to explain religious phenomena in communist and post-communist Central Europe. The research provides insights into the behaviour of religious organizations under repression, the persistence of opposition in oppressive regimes, and the development of religiosity in the post-communist period. Moreover, the models offer explanations for the church-state settlements in Czechia and the attitudes of the Czech population towards organized religion, highlighting the complex interplay between economic incentives, government regulation, and individual preferences.

Overall, the habilitation thesis contributes innovative and inspirational research in the field of the economics of religion, offering valuable insights into the economic dynamics of religion in the context of communist and post-communist Central Europe. I appreciate that although the author uses a variety of scientific methods, his main theme is clearly defined and relevant. In my opinion, the author succeeds in filling the research gaps in the field of economics of religion and contributes to shifting our knowledge in this area.

Note: Due to the specific thematic focus of this text, I am not familiar with the nature and quality of the journals in which the author published his papers. However, I assume that these are standard scientific journals.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence:

1. What are the implications of the findings in Minárik (2022a) for understanding the persistence of opposition in an oppressive regime, particularly in the case of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia?
2. Why, according to the author, is the distribution of preferences in Czechia assumed to be bimodal, and how does it affect the church-state settlement in the post-communist period?
3. What insights do the conclusions of Minárik (2022b) provide regarding the attitudes of Czechs towards churches, particularly in relation to state-paid salaries of the clergy under communism and in the post-communist period?
4. In what ways do the conclusions of the individual papers contribute to the field of the economics of religion, and how do they extend the economic analysis of religion into the area of communist and post-communist Central Europe?

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled *The Economics of Religion in Communist and Post-Communist Central Europe* by Mgr. Ing. Pavol Minárik, Ph.D. **fulfils** requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Public Economics.

Date: 26.2. 2024

Vladimír Hyánek