

Short referee report; paper: "Aggregate effects of behavioral anomalies a new research area"

The paper is concerned with the aggregation of behavioral anomalies at the societal level. The paper is quite short and takes the form of a *pamphlet* instead than the standard format of a scientific report. For this reason it is very hard to formulate a judgment about its potential for a publication.

The core idea suggested by the paper is interesting but the Authors do not sustain it in a fully convincing manner, either because of a lack of literature support – the quotations are almost always refereed to quite standard Behavioral Economics papers, which are not specifically addressed to the point discussed by the paper – and because of a total absence of empirical evidences. Some few case samples from the real world are mentioned by the Author but they are poorly convincing. An example of this lack of efficacy of the "real world situations" used in the paper is the one of the Falklands war, the Authors state that: "...Margaret Thatcher exploited the fact that the Falkland Islands were under British administration. Had the British been asked whether they wanted to acquire a quite resource-poor piece of land located in the South Atlantic Ocean in the first place, they would have almost surely refused." (p. 3). I was living in England during the Falklands war and I can assure the Authors that the majority of the UK citizens would have approved the military initiative of Mrs. Thatcher independently from the framing used to present it. Obviously the point here is not about who is right – the Authors or myself – the point is that there is no way to prove that the Authors' prediction is true or false.

Other points needed to be better clarified and discussed by the Authors along the paper. An example is at page 5 where the Authors claim that anomalies can survive to the market selective process without fully explain the reasons of this lack of efficacy of the market as a selector of "wrong behaviors". This is a very complex issue because it rises the problem of defining market efficiency in a "behavioral fashion". For example, still remaining in the standard neoclassical frame of the market as a perfect Darwinian mechanism, one could argue that the market assures the best possible allocative function even when the population of agents is made of sophisticated ones and naïve ones. In a context of this kind the sophisticated agents can use the weaknesses (the cognitive biases) that afflict the naïve ones' behavior to expand their utility (or profits) but, like opportunistic parasites, looking carefully to find an optimal level of exploitation of the naive to avoid their death. In this sense the anomalies are cannot be properly considered anomalies because they make part of an efficient social organism.

My conclusion is that a paper of this kind can be published only if the Editor believes that is it worth to be diffused as a seminal contribution, even if it cannot be considered a fully scientific product.