

Peer Review

Review of: "To Be or Not to Be (Human): A Question of Economic Theories"

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Comments

I would like to congratulate the author for composing this commentary, "To Be or Not to Be (Human): A Question of Economic Theories". This manuscript requires **major revisions** before it can be accepted for publication in the 'Qeios'.

Major Comments

1. The methodology section lacks sufficient details about the analytical process. While it mentions using NVivo software to code Salomé's text, it provides no information about the coding framework, coding procedures, inter-rater reliability, thematic analysis approach, or how the "five experts" were selected and consulted.
2. The manuscript poses rhetorical questions ("why are we always dissatisfied?" and "What is the relationship between chronic human dissatisfaction and socio-economic structures?") However, it never explicitly states testable hypotheses or clear research objectives. The stated purpose, "to create a conceptual framework", is vague and lacks specificity about what this framework should accomplish.
3. The manuscript juxtaposes CEPAL structuralism and Salomé's existential philosophy without providing adequate theoretical or empirical justification for integrating these two disparate frameworks. This connection appears to be forced rather than organic.
4. The manuscript presents extensive historical and theoretical descriptions but lacks empirical evidence. There is no systematic analysis of Salomé's texts beyond selected quotations, no data on actual patterns of dissatisfaction, and no evidence linking economic structures to subjective experiences beyond theoretical assertions.

5. The CEPAL structuralism section provides extensive historical and theoretical background but never explicitly connects this material to the central question of dissatisfaction. Meanwhile, the Salomé section (3.2) is much shorter and consists primarily of lengthy quotations without a systematic analysis.

6. The manuscript relies heavily on historical sources (Furtado 1976, 2000; Myrdal 1957; Salomé 1973, 2024 reprint) but neglects contemporary scholarship in behavioral economics, happiness economics, inequality studies, and psychological well-being research that directly addresses the relationship between economic conditions and subjective satisfaction.

7. The discussion section is brief (approximately 1.5 pages) and primarily restates the main arguments without critically analyzing the findings, acknowledging limitations, or providing specific implications. It does not address alternative explanations or the contradictory evidence.

8. The manuscript presents claims about human dissatisfaction and structural influences in ways that are not verifiable. What evidence contradicts the thesis that humans are inherently dissatisfied or that structural inequality contributes to subjective incompleteness?

9. The CEPAL analysis focuses primarily on Latin American development patterns; however, the manuscript makes sweeping claims about “human beings” and universal patterns of dissatisfaction without acknowledging cultural, historical, or geographical specificity.

10. The manuscript places two theoretical frameworks side by side but does not articulate what new theoretical insights, predictive power, or explanatory mechanisms emerge from this integration that neither framework provides independently.

11. While this manuscript criticizes the homo economicus model, it does not engage with the extensive existing literature critiquing rational choice theory, behavioral economics alternatives, or bounded rationality frameworks that already address many of the concerns raised.

12. The manuscript asserts connections between structural inequality and subjective dissatisfaction but does not specify the causal mechanisms. How do land distribution patterns or terms of trade translate into individual experiences of incompleteness?

13. The manuscript applies Salomé’s early 20th-century existential psychology and mid-20th-century economic structuralism to contemporary questions without addressing how socioeconomic contexts, cultural norms, and psychological understanding have evolved.

14. While the manuscript discusses structural constraints and inherent incompleteness, it insufficiently addresses human agency, resistance movements, and examples of structural transformation. The CEPAL

section mentions resistance but does not integrate it with the existential analysis.

Minor Comments

1. The manuscript overuses brackets for translations and clarifications within quotations, making the text difficult to read and understand. For example: “breaking traditional political power (democratization), redistributing wealth and income (social justice)”.
2. CEPAL is used throughout without an initial definition for readers unfamiliar with Latin American development institutions. Although the context suggests that it refers to an economic commission, the full name should be provided.
3. Several quotations from Salomé exceed 150 words, particularly Rainer’s letter about his mother. These extended quotations disrupt the narrative flow and should be paraphrased with key phrases quoted selectively.
4. The manuscript alternates between “underdeveloped,” “backward,” “developing,” and “peripheral” countries without clearly defining these terms or explaining when each term is appropriate. Additionally, “structuralism” sometimes refers to CEPAL economic theory and other times seems to reference Salomé’s ideas about psychological structures.
5. The manuscript abruptly shifts from the CEPAL economic analysis to Salomé’s existential philosophy without transitional text explaining the connection. Similarly, the transition to the Discussion section is abrupt.
6. The awkward use of reflexive constructions such as “the human being objectifies itself” appears repeatedly. Although grammatically correct, this creates stilted prose in English.
7. The manuscript switches between the present (“Furtado argues”) and past tense (“Furtado argued”) when discussing historical sources without a clear logic for the distinction.
8. The manuscript makes empirical claims (e.g., “In daily reality, [people] often cannot even rationalize the true source of their constant dissatisfaction”) without citing supporting evidence.
9. The manuscript is labeled as “Commentary” but presents itself as a research study with methodology, results, and discussion. This genre mismatch creates confusion regarding expectations and evaluation criteria.
10. The manuscript ends abruptly after the Discussion section without a formal conclusion that synthesizes the key findings, restates the contributions, and provides closure.

11. The manuscript uses philosophical terminology (“dialectical,” “objectification,” “existential incompleteness”) and economic jargon (“terms of trade,” “propulsive effects,” “patrimonialist power”) without defining terms for interdisciplinary readers.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.