Abstract

The present paper argues that the market system is unable to protect fundamental human rights, to be conceived as those rights which derive from the developmental potentialities of the human species, for it leads to a “dehumanization” process within which human beings are reduced to “atoms” and cease to be “social animals.” Such a “dehumanization” process, through which human beings are reduced to mere means for each other to achieve their ends within the market, also violates individual’s fundamental rights to realize and develop her potentialities. That is to say, the market violates both individuality and sociality of human beings by restricting the “right to nonconformity,” which is believed to be essential for the development of human potentialities and for securing the “authenticity” of individual.
“In an established society, the right to nonconformity must be institutionally protected.” (Polanyi 1944: 255)

Introduction

The present paper argues, on the basis of the conceptual framework provided by Polanyi’s analysis of the market system (Polanyi, 1944), that this system cannot protect human rights because of its institutional structure, for this structure violates the very foundation of the notion of human rights, namely, “humanity” itself. The market system, with the mode of thinking that it dictates, namely, the “market mentality” (Polanyi 1947a) is characterized by a “dehumanization” process, which follows from the creation of “fictitious commodities,” that is, labor, land and money, and deprives human beings of the very qualities that characterize their humanity, by “atomizing” the individual and thus violating her quality of being a “social animal.” The system, by its reducing individuals to mere “rational” economic units, eradicates the differences among human beings that characterize their very individuality, for it forces them to behave under the guidance of the market only. Since the market system makes the society subordinate to itself, the notion of “human rights,” to be conceived as the rights that allow individuals to develop their human potentialities, may become devoid of meaning because the system will only allow human beings to develop and realize a very limited set of potentialities that have an “economic” character. That is to say, individuals are allowed to realize their potentialities only within the boundaries of the market, as conditioned by the “hope of gain and the fear of starvation” (Polanyi 1944: 269).
1. Human Rights and the Market System

In the discussions regarding human rights, two important issues seem to appear: First, whether “fundamental” rights can be distinguished from “non-fundamental” ones, and second, whether human rights are “universal” in the sense that they apply to the whole of humanity, at all times and places, rather than being applicable to specific historical epochs, and/or to specific social and economic forms. While searching answers to these questions, it seems natural also to find an answer to the question of what we mean by “human,” as the very foundation of human rights.

For this reason, the present paper attempts to discuss the relationship between the market system and the notion of human rights, on the basis of the answers given to these two sets of questions by a leading scholar in the area of human rights, Ioanna Kuçuradi (1982, 1988, 1995a, b, 1999), which takes the notion of human rights as those rights which allow individuals to “develop their human potentialities, ... so that they may, if they can and as far as each one can, carry out certain activities proper to human species” (Kuçuradi 1995a: 11). That is to say, human rights refer to those rights which specifically belong to the human species, and the human species is defined in terms of the potentialities it has. On this, mainly Aristotelian, conception, the notion of human rights refers to ideas regarding how human beings should be treated, and such a necessity is derived from the human as a “species-being.” Such a conceptualization implies that “fundamental” human rights, in the sense of those rights belonging to every member of the human species irrespective of her status, wealth, position etc., are universal in the sense that they are possessed by individuals just by virtue of their being human. It also means that fundamental human rights derives from the “value” or the “dignity” of human beings in the sense of the
“special place Man occupies among other living beings,” which refers to “the entirety of his characteristics, his potentialities, which distinguish him from other living beings” (Kuçuradi 1982: 47). Since these potentialities are proper to human beings, human rights should be defined as the “demands to protect in individuals the potentialities proper to Man only” (Kuçuradi 1982: 48). That is to say, the notion of human rights should only be understood on the basis of the knowledge of these properties and potentialities. They demand, therefore, “that individuals be not hindered while exercising activities proper to man only. They demand the protection of rights which cannot be given (by a State), but can only be respected (or violated) in individuals by individuals” (Kuçuradi 1982: 49). Therefore, it must be clear that by fundamental rights we should mean not the collective rights, but the rights of the individual as the member of the human species, irrespective of the specific social, economic, and political organizations of the society.

Therefore, the notion of human rights should be understood with reference to the structural properties and potentialities of human beings as members of the species, and thus to the “value” or “dignity” of human beings, which is quite independent of the specific social forms. A natural question arising in this context, then, is whether the market system can respect and protect fundamental human rights. This question is of utmost importance because the very notion of human rights, historically speaking, can be said to be the product of the Enlightenment, which corresponds more or less to the emergence of the market system. Then, it would be natural to establish a link between the market system and human rights. In fact, the liberal defense of the market system maintains that only under a market system can freedom and human rights be
protected institutionally. The liberal argument, as is well known, mainly considers individual rights and freedoms within the framework of the theory of natural rights, in the tradition of Hobbes and Locke. According to this tradition, human rights are not to be reduced to mere legal rights granted to the citizens of a country, but they are to be derived directly from the inalienable natural rights of individuals. Coupled with the natural rights argument, especially in economic theory, is of course the utilitarian tradition in Benthamite lines in which individuals are considered as the sole judges of their own actions. That is to say, there should be no external authority that evaluates actions of individuals on some ethical standards or norms that are determined independent of the individual, and the standards defining how a “good life” can be lived are entirely determined by the individual herself. Then, it is easy to see the force of the liberal argument that these natural rights can only be used or respected in a market system, for the very foundation of the system requires self-interested individuals, who are guided only by their free will, and who seek any opportunity of gain freely. Since the right of private property is among the most important natural rights, it is obvious that the market system constitutes the most suitable environment for the protection of these rights.

In order for the market system to function in an efficient way, it is necessary to institutionalize private property and the principle of the freedom of contract. In such an institutional setting, individuals try to increase their gain through voluntary exchange, and the exchange process gives rise to the self-regulating market system, in which the resources that can be used to satisfy human wants are allocated efficiently. The exchange and competition processes will also guarantee individuals to affirm their individuality and freedom, because the
individual is supposed to be “rational” in the sense that she has the capacity to know what is
good for herself, and that she is capable of using the means available to themselves in the best
way. Since freedom of contract requires individuals to act freely on the basis of their own
preferences, they must be free in a “negative” sense (Berlin 1969); that is, they accept no force
or constraint that could be exerted upon them by some external authority, be it the state, the
society, or any agency. Therefore, the individual acts solely on the basis of her own conscience,
which is the precondition for the market system. Since the market system presupposes that all
individuals have the same natural rights and freedoms, the resulting social order, as explained by
the “social contract” theory that rests on the “invisible hand,” will be capable of both solving the
resource allocation problem, and, more important, securing individual and social freedom, for it
allows individuals to follow their own values, preferences and objectives (Hayek 1944). The
basic ingredients of the system, therefore, are the principle of individualism, the “invisible hand”
that arises through voluntary exchange, the primacy of law derived from individual natural
rights, and the limited government that respect the freedom of enterprise.

Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that this line of reasoning is flawed in two important
respects. First, human beings are not just individuals, but they are at the same time social beings
who even “define” themselves in a social environment by their very nature; and second, which
actually follows from the first, human beings are also “moral beings” who do not simply act on
the basis of “hope of gain and the fear of hunger” alone; that is to say, the basic motives in the
human conduct are not just “economic” ones, and human beings are capable of evaluating their
behavior on the basis of some ethical standards (standards defining a “good life”), the
determination of which are not necessarily dependent only on the individual alone. In this case however, it becomes impossible to form an economic system according to the prescriptions given by the utilitarian outlook concerning human societies, which is based upon the “invisible hand” paradigm and its basic ingredient, the principle of *laissez-faire*. Such a system will deprive human beings from their very humanity, as Karl Polanyi shows in his *The Great Transformation* (Polanyi 1944). Therefore, in order to show that the market system is not, by its very nature, capable of protecting “human” rights, it is necessary to consider Polanyi’s arguments against the system.

2. The Market System and The Breakdown of “The Unity of Man”

The basic argument of *The Great Transformation* is that the “self-regulating” market system, to be established on the basis on the motives of individual gain and the fear of starvation, is “in the very nature of things impossible” (Polanyi 1944: 269), because it violates individual’s “vital unity” not only with her fellow human beings but also with nature, and therefore destroys both human and natural substance of the society, by making the society subordinate to the market institution. According to Polanyi, the self-regulating market economy is characterized by two related features: the creation of the “fictitious commodities,” labor, land, and money, which gave rise to a separate “economic” sphere for the first time in human history, and the reflection of this institutional separation in people’s minds, “the market mentality,” or more accurately, economic determinism. The market economy is a unique and peculiar economic system in the human history; never before capitalism has the economic sphere been institutionally separated from the
rest of the society, in the specific sense that the economic system functions according to its own “laws.” Before the market system, the “economic” sphere, or the market, is “embedded” into social relations and consequently it is not possible to distinguish between the market as a self-regulating, independent institution and other social relations. In these societies, the elements of the economy are always subject to essentially non-economic considerations such as social status, political or religious motives. In other words, the term “economic life” has no obvious meaning in these societies (Polanyi et al., 1957: 70). On the other hand, the disembedded, “market economy” is characterized by an independent economic sphere, which stands apart from the society, more particularly from the political and governmental system. In this system, no factor such as blood-ties, legal, or religious considerations other than the motive of gain and the fear of hunger plays essential role (Polanyi et al., 1957: 68). Such a self-regulating market system in which each individual market is connected to the other and sets its own price without any outside intervention must be free from all political considerations. In other words, the whole of economic life is to be governed by the market prices in such an economy (Polanyi 1944: 43).

Thus, the institutional separation between the economic and the political spheres is a key to understand this society, for a “self-regulating market demands nothing less than the institutional separation of society into an economic and political sphere. Such a dichotomy is, in effect, merely the restatement, from the point of view of society as a whole, of the existence of a self-regulating market” (Polanyi 1944: 71).

However, creation of markets for labor, land, and money, is of important consequences for the society, because what the term “raw materials,” referring to land as a “factor of
production,” indicates is nothing but nature itself, whereas what we call labor is the whole of the human life activity. But their treatment as commodities means that the entire society has become subordinate to the market. Under such a system human beings for their own survival need to buy commodities on the market with the incomes they earn by selling other commodities they could offer for sale, including their own labor power and natural environment, land. (Polanyi 1947b: 97) In other words, the desire of gain and the fear of starvation are the universal motives driving human beings. That is to say, Polanyi argues, since no human community can exist without a functioning productive apparatus, and in the market economy this productive apparatus is under the sovereignty of the market, the embodiment of the economic sphere in a distinct and separate one has the effect of making the “rest” of society dependent upon that sphere (Polanyi 1947a: 111). This market society, the society which is “embedded” in, or becomes subordinate to, the market economy (Polanyi 1977: 9), was an “economic society” in the full sense of the term: Not only that the social classes are identical with “supply” and “demand” for the markets for labor, land and capital, but also that all institutions existing in the society, including family, organization of science and education, and of religion and arts, in short every aspect of life, must conform to the requirements of the market (Polanyi 1947a: 100).

However, such a process of commodification according to Polanyi would eventually lead to the destruction of the social fabric, for it made the entire human existence subordinate to the demands of the market system, this “gargantuan automaton” (Polanyi 1944: 217). Yet, the real danger that the creation of commodity fictions, especially labor power, poses for the society is far from being economic; its essential danger lies in disrupting individuals’ lives, if not in the
“annihilation” of the society. The most significant aspect of this institutional change, above all creation of the labor market, is the separation of human beings from their own life activity itself, as was mentioned above: what we call “labor” is nothing but a whole human activity which cannot be separated from life. To put this activity under the rule of the market, by making it subject to the fear of hunger, then, will mean nothing less than the breaking down of the “totality” of the life itself. Under such an institutional setting, human life activity is now broken down into specific compartments, such as economic, political, religious, etc., and only the “economic” motives, the fear of hunger and hope of gain, are allowed to govern individuals’ lives. In other words, the whole life activity is now “commodified.” Yet, this means no less than the separation of human beings not only from their own life activity, but also, even more importantly, from their own “agency,” from their own labor power that refers to “the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the living personality, of a human being” (Marx 1976: 270). Such a process, in turn, would immediately lead to a drastic change in the human existence, for “in disposing of a man’s labor power the system would, incidentally, dispose of the physical, psychological, and moral entity ‘man’ attached to that tag” (Polanyi 1944: 73).

The most immediate effect of the commodification of labor is the dissolution of the society into “atoms,” each of which only behaves in accordance with the motive of profit and the fear of starvation without considering other members of the society. This, as a result of the freedom of contract principle, would in practice mean that the noncontractual organization of kinship, neighborhood, profession, and creed, the traits that characterize early, ‘precapitalistic’
forms of society, “were to be liquidated since they claimed the allegiance of the individual and thus restrained his freedom” (Polanyi 1944: 163). That is to say, labor contract is the manifestation of the “freedom” from the social bond, which actually protects human beings from destruction, for it is the presence of this bond which makes the threat of starvation in the “primitive” societies nonexistent because the community will never let one of his members to die from hunger, unless all community is facing with this threat. (Polanyi 1944: 46; 163-64). On the other hand, regarding the other fictitious commodity, land, it should be emphasized that this process of disintegration of the society is also a process of separation of human life activity from the natural setting within which it takes place, for it is reduced to a commodity. For Polanyi, “an individualized treatment of the land” (Polanyi 1944: 179), another requirement in the institutionalization of the market system, basically meant the separation of human life from its natural surrounding, the “habitat” of human beings (Polanyi 1947b: 97).

That is to say, these two steps, commodification of labor and land, together characterizes a “dehumanization” process; under capitalism, human beings are forced to live through a “perverse” life within which they are deprived of the very qualities that make them human beings, or to use Rotstein’s (1990: 100) apt metaphor, market system represents the artificial, externalized embodiment of the individual or the “blind and dark alter ego.” The institutional structure of the market economy forces human beings to live through a separate, fragmented life; under this system, in other words, the “totality” of human existence breaks down, a process which should be conceived within two steps; first, creation of the commodity fictions leads to the breakdown both of the totality of human life activity into “economic” and “non-economic”
spheres, and of the unity between man and his own powers he exerts within this life activity in
the case of commodification of labor power, and breakdown of the unity of man with nature in
the case of the commodification of land. Secondly, the institutional separation of the economic,
this “disembedded economy,” which is the result of these two commodity fictions, leads to the
transformation of the notion of the human condition; that is, human beings in capitalism are now
characterized as guided by two “economic” motives, the hope of profit or the fear of hunger. All
other motives, no matter how essential they are in understanding what a human being is, are
reduced to the level of insignificance in everyday life through being enveloped within the term
“ideal”: “man’s vital unity” has been split into a “‘real’ man, bent on material values, and his
ideal better self” (Polanyi 1944: 116). This is nothing but the manifestation of the separation of
economics from politics, or actually from morality (Lind, 1994; Rotstein, 1990, 1994, Baum,
1996).

Then, it is no wonder that “the delusion of economic determinism” (Polanyi 1947a: 114)
had to dominate our minds within the market society, which is nothing but an “accessory” of the
economic system (Polanyi 1944: 75). The result of this institutional setting is the dichotomy
between the “material” and the “ideal”: from now on, human beings were believed to consist of
two components; a “material” or an “economic” component, which is guided by motives
starvation and gain, and an “ideal” component which is guided by “non-economic” motives,
which are usually considered to be the typical motives affecting everyday lives of human beings,
such as honor, pride, solidarity, moral duties and obligations. These, “non-economic” motives
are regarded as irrelevant to the everyday activities, and forced to gain a rare and esoteric nature,
summed up by the word “ideal,” since they cannot be relied upon to conduct in the production and exchange processes. (Polanyi 1947a: 114; 1947b: 100-101). Yet, it is important to emphasize once again that this “dualistic fallacy” (Polanyi 1947b: 102) is not simply an illusion; it is nothing but the reflection of the existence of a separate and distinct economic system from the rest of the society, itself based upon hunger and profit motives. In short, though it is quite arbitrary, this distinction nevertheless has been institutionalized in the market society (Polanyi 1947a: 115). Since such an institutionalization destroys the old institutions and the bonds of society so as to make the threat of hunger an individual phenomena forcing human beings to sell their labor power in the market, creation of the commodity fictions amounts to atomization of the individual: individual, through her being reduced to the “bearer” of labor power, becomes just a “cog,” whose only function is to reproduce market-type, exchange relations. In other words, human beings are “socialized” within the system by adapting themselves to the requirements of the system (Thomasberger 2001), thereby becoming useful units that function to reproduce the market relations. That is to say, the abstraction of the “rational economic man,” Homo oeconomicus, becomes a reality; individual is transformed into a functioning component of a system, and therefore as such must be equipped with essential features indispensable for running the system (Kosík 1976: 52). The immediate corollary of this atomization is the “market mentality” and the postulate of economic “rationality”: Once a human being is reduced to an “individual in the market” (Polanyi 1977: 29), it was now easy to argue that “economic” action “was ‘natural’ to man and was, therefore, self-explanatory” (Polanyi 1977: 14).

Yet, to put it another way, this is nothing but the violation of the sociality of
human beings. The market mechanism transformed the very substance of human economy, by transforming both “man’s ultimate dependence on nature and his fellows for the means of his survival” for it put this dependence under the rule of the market (Polanyi 1977: 8), which transforms the individual into a mere “atom.” In other words, the disembedded market economy makes the rule of the “changelesness of man as a social being” (Polanyi 1944: 46) obsolete for it inevitably leads to the dissolution of the society itself by forcing the individual to behave like a *homo oeconomicus*, and to be confined within the economic sphere. By reducing the individual to a “one-dimensional man” (Marcuse 1964) metaphor, the extension of the market sphere, i.e., the commodification process, disintegrates the social bond which is based upon the directness of relations between individuals and replaces it with another one, the bond of exchange, or of money. Money, this “alienated *capacity of mankind*,” becomes the “true *agent of separation* and the true *cementing agent*... the *chemical* power of society” (Marx 1975: 377). In this “mystical” world in which the subject is transformed into a *Homo Oeconomicus*, she loses the very control over her own life, for she is reduced to a “functional” unit, or to the “personification” of reified social relations. This occurs because her immediate environment and even herself is reduced to a bearer of commodities.

In such a situation, then, it becomes impossible to argue that “human” rights can only be protected under a market system; on the contrary, the system, in which the human essence is violated, itself represent a threat for human rights. Of course, what is meant here is not that the market economy is wholly incompatible with human rights, but that there is no necessary connection, as most Liberals would like maintain, between the market economy and human
rights. In fact, to assume the existence of such a connection, implies that the concept of human rights is considered as a historically specific, contingent one, which applies only to market society. For such a connection, in its implication that the “human condition” is given by the historically specific economic and social conditions within which human beings live, is in contradiction with the universality of human rights as referring to human developmental potentialities. If this is the case, this means that not only the notion of human rights, but even the very the notion of freedom can be understood only within the boundaries of the market in which human beings are treated as “things.” Therefore, it is necessary to take a closer look at the “human condition” and the shape it assumes under the market system.


It is clear that Polanyi’s argument depends critically upon the distinction between the general and historically specific aspects of human existence. For him, in every form of society except for the market economy, economic transactions in the sense of provisioning material needs, no matter how essential they are for the survival of human beings, are subordinate to the social institutions, that is, “man’s economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships” (Polanyi 1944: 46; Polanyi 1947b: 99). In other words, according to Polanyi, the “human condition” is not primarily given by the “economic” motives. Although the economic factor underlies all social life, it “no more gives rise to definite incentives than the equally universal law of gravitation,” for “the pangs of hunger are not automatically translated into an incentive to produce. Production is not an individual, but a collective affair.... With man, the political animal,
everything is given not by natural, but by social circumstance. What made the 19th century think of hunger and gain as ‘economic’ was simply the organization of production under a market economy” (Polanyi 1947a: 111). In other words, where the liberal thought goes wrong is its failure to distinguish between historically specific and general aspects of the human existence, the consequence of which is ubiquitous economic determinism. This “economistic fallacy,” i.e., identification of “economic phenomena” with “market phenomena” (Polanyi, Arensberg and Pearson: 270; Polanyi 1977: 20), or the extrapolation of the categories that are prevalent in the market system to other societies and/or other times, which has always been the hallmark of the liberal vision, is therefore merely a product of capitalism. For Polanyi, although markets were fairly common in the human history, “previously to our time no economy has ever existed that, even in principle, was controlled by markets.” (Polanyi 1944: 43) Even more important, it is not the existence of economic motives which “defines” human beings; human beings are, above anything else, political, i.e. social animals. Polanyi asserts that “Aristotle had taught that only gods or beasts could live outside society, and man was neither” (Polanyi 1944: 114) and that “Aristotle was right: man is not an economic, but a social being. He does not aim at safeguarding his individual interest in the acquisition of material possessions, but rather at ensuring social good-will, social status, social assets” (Polanyi 1947a: 112). In other words, human beings are not solely concerned with their immediate satisfaction, they, being political animals, are also concerned with the “good life,” the conditions of which are not simply determined by the individual herself, but it can only be reached within the community: “given the right institutions, such as oikos and polis, and the traditional understanding of the good life, Aristotle saw no room
for the scarcity factor in the human economy” (Polanyi 1977: 30-31). That is, the good life, or human flourishing, does not refer only to the provision of material needs, but refers to the process of the realization of human potentialities, which presupposes both satisfaction of various human needs (material and ideal) and development of different capacities (cognitive, emotional, practical, etc.) in a social setting (Buğra and İrzık 1999). The well being, not as a mere potentiality, but as an activity that is in accordance with virtue, is the ultimate aim for a human being in her complete life, which “is chosen always for its own sake, never as a means to anything else” (Ross 1923: 191). Since “Aristotle’s ethics, no doubt, are social and his politics are ethical” (Ross 1923: 187), that is, the individual is essentially a member of a society, a good life, as defined with reference to “self-sufficiency,” can only be achieved within a community.

In other words, human beings are “self interpreting animals” (Taylor 1985c): even the very identity of an individual is a social product in the sense that it is dialogical; it is constituted through an ever-continuing dialogue with other human beings in the society (Taylor 1985a, b, c; 1991: 32-33). Since the constitution of an individual requires language and culture, which can only be created within the community in which she lives, it is clear that the “community is also constitutive of the individual, in the sense that the self-interpretations which define him are drawn from the interchange which the community carries on” (Taylor 1985a: 8).

Such a communitarian outlook,² which presupposes an Aristotelian ethics that takes the “good life” as the ultimate goal for all human beings in the sense of the realization of human potentialities, also implies that human beings are “free” beings, both from the perspective of individuality, and of the human species. Of course, freedom here is not defined simply in its
“negative” sense, as being free from external obstacles or constraints, as the liberal tradition presupposes. Rather, freedom should be understood in a broader perspective including, 1) do/act otherwise; 2) formal legal freedom, or the “social freedom,” 3) “negative” freedom, that is, to be free from constraints, 4) “positive” freedom, that is, to do, or to become something (which requires “negative” freedom as well); 5) emancipation from specific constraints; 6) autonomy qua self-determination; and finally, 7) “wellbeing,” in the sense of human flourishing, or the “good life” (Bhaskar, 1993: 283-83; 1994: 145). In other words, the notion of freedom presupposes that to be free is the absence of both external and internal obstacles to significant action, to what is important to human beings (Taylor 1985d).

This understanding of freedom, to be understood in relation to the definition of “good life,” also suggests that human beings have the power to transform the circumstances in which they act, in order to liberate themselves. Of course, such emphases on emancipation and flourishing implies that no analysis of human conduct can be free from ethics, for human beings are at once “acting creatures and judging speaking beings” (Bhaskar 1993:141), or to put the matter in a slightly different way, they are “strong evaluators” who are endowed with the capacity to evaluate their desires strongly in the sense that they are not only concerned with the outcomes of the motivations, but also with the “quality” of these motivations (Taylor 1985b). In other words, an individual goes “deeper,” i.e, characterizes her motivations at greater depth (Taylor 1985b: 25). However, since an “individual in the market” must behave only on the basis of the hope of gain or fear of hunger (or pain and pleasure for that matter), she is forced to be reduced to an individual who lacks “depth” (Taylor 1985b: 26). Therefore, an “authentic” human
being who tries to realize her potentialities in a social setting cannot simply be understood only in terms of material provisioning of wants, as those “shallow Utilitarians” (Taylor 1985b: 26), whose lives are guided by the two “economic” motives would behave. Here it is essential to emphasize that the notion of authenticity

(A) involves (i) creation and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and frequently (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as morality. But it is also true, ...that it (B) requires (i) openness to horizons of significance (for otherwise the creation loses the background that can save it from insignificance) and (ii) a self-definition in dialogue. That these demands may be in tension has to allowed. But what must be wrong is a simple privileging of one over the other, of (A), say, at the expense of (B), or vice versa. (Taylor 1991: 55).

Thus, an authentic human being is both an individual and a social being at the same time, as the two defining characteristics of human beings. Even if there are some tensions or contradictions between these two aspects, the individual must define herself and must try to realize her potentialities only in the midst of the society. In this regard it should once again be emphasized that freedom is a many-sided notion; not only is freedom a structural property or potentiality of the human species, but also a personal aim of life, which can only be realized under the conditions characterizing social freedom, or various “freedoms” that are counterparts of human rights (Kuçuradi 1982: 50). These rights create necessary conditions for the individual to become an authentic person, to realize her potentialities, even when they can be seen in
contradiction to certain modes of behavior, or moral codes and norms. In this regard, one can argue, with Polanyi, that an institutionally protected right to “nonconform” would be the essential for a “free” society:

In an established society, the right to nonconformity must be institutionally protected. The individual must be free to follow his conscience without fear of the powers that happen to be entrusted with administrative tasks in under the guardianship of the republic of letter. Compulsion should never be absolute; the “objector” should be offered a niche to which he can retire, the choice of a “second-best” that leaves him a life to live. Thus will be secured the right to nonconformity as the hallmark of a free society. (Polanyi 1944: 255)

Of course, this emphasis over the authenticity of the individual does not mean to reject that individuals are also social beings who seek for self-fulfillment that can only take place through a constant interaction with other individuals in the society. What should be emphasized here is that a human being must recognize both that she is an individual trying to realize her potentialities so as to differentiate herself from other human beings, and that she is a member of the human species; in other words, it is essential to recognize these two inseparable characteristics of the human species, the “uniqueness of individual” and the “oneness of mankind” (Polanyi 1944: 258A), which is required in the first place for the protection of the “human” rights.
Conclusion

This paper argues that the market system, contrary to the liberal vision, does not necessarily guarantee the conditions in which human rights are protected; on the contrary, the system represents a threat for the human rights, for it violates essential powers and “humanity” of individuals through the creation of “fictitious commodities,” which actually represent the “human” traits. Establishment of the commodity fictions and its result, atomization of the individual also violate the very sociality of human beings, their connectedness to other human beings in the society. This “dehumanization” within which a human being is reduced to a *homo oeconomicus* is argued to be incompatible with the idea of “human” rights, as understood as those rights that allow individuals to develop their human potentialities in a social environment. Since the market sphere causes the society to become subordinated to itself, all “human” traits, and the “authenticity” of human beings can only be acknowledged within the boundaries of the market. This “dehumanization” process characterizes the violation of the “authenticity” of the individual, because the system allows individuals to affirm their uniqueness only if it has a “market value,” thereby separating her from her fellow human beings. Therefore, even if it creates the necessary conditions for the protection of freedom and human rights, the system also negates the very rights of “human beings” by treating them as mere atoms.
References


Kuçuradi, Ioanna (1982), 'Philosophy and Human Rights', in *The Philosophical Foundation of


110.


NOTES

1 Of course, the natural rights philosophy is not the only foundation for the development of the human rights within the liberal tradition, for it is also possible to found this notion on the conception of rights, rather than on natural rights. On this, mainly Kantian conception, the notion of rights refers to normative formal principles that apply for every individual irrespective of her specific properties, or position in a specific social, economic, and political organization of the society. That is to say, universality of human rights is to be understood with reference to the universality of the moral law (Deveci 1999: 40-41). However, since such a purely formal understanding of rights does not seem useful to explore the relationship between the market society and human rights, I take the natural right philosophy as the representative of the liberal tradition’s understanding of human rights.

2 Such a communitarian outlook may prompt the objection that communitarian thinking is not suitable to establish the argument for the universality of human rights, for the definition of human rights in this tradition is bounded with a specific community itself, which implies relativism about “virtues” and rights. Still, following Deveci (2002) and Nussbaum (1993), it is possible to argue that Aristotle’s conception of human beings with reference to the human potentials renders such an argument possible, without relapsing into relativism. In other words, the potentialities that we talk about are not restricted to the particular communities, but to the human species as a whole. Since the individual is above anything else a member of the human species, these potentialities become also her potentialities.