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## The Market Economy System and the Biological Crisis

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The object of my paper is to discuss the link between the system of the market economy and an important dimension of the present crisis which so far has generally attracted little attention: the biological crisis.

It is a well known fact that we face today a multidimensional crisis: political, economic, social and ecological. It is also a recognised fact that the ultimate cause of all these crises is the system of the market economy(1). There is however another dimension of this crisis which has not been considered enough, or worse, has been entirely ignored, by most writers and political thinkers of today: the so-called biological crisis. Still, ignoring this crisis does not make it non-existent, as several studies carried but in the last few decades have shown. Particularly so when the biological crisis is getting worse with the passage of time.

This crisis is mainly due to accustomed habits (many of which are not irrelevant to the 'needs' created by the market economy and the consequent growth economy) and the commercialisation of the medical system which, today, is largely controlled by those controlling the market economy system, and particularly the multinational companies.

The biological crisis has a symptomatology seen all around us, without any difficulty: physical and mental weakness, impairment and decline, early deaths due to a multitude of chronic diseases, tooth decay, diseases of the eyes, baldness, malformations of the spine, sexual decline, decline of the human sperm, numerous chronic degenerating diseases, psychiatric and neurological diseases etc. All these problems strike more and more people, increasingly at an early stage of their lives. It may be shown for instance that there is a definite increase, in the last decades, of child chronic diseases, such as cancer, juvenile diabetes, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, allergies, epilepsy, obesity, ulcers, colitis, mental retardation etc. In Greece, which is considered a poor developing country, there is today a striking increase in death rates from chronic degenerative disease, cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes etc. which kill the Greek population prematurely. A similar situation is taking place in all the advanced Western countries whose budgets are heavily burdened by the rising expenditures for the medical and pharmaceutical care of the population, without worthwhile results(2).

There are several ways to show the direct relationship of the biological crisis to the system of market economy. This system is blamed for the pollution of the air, the water, the seas and the land from the excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides-herbicides, the greenhouse effect, the gradual depletion of the ozone layer, the promotion of foods full of chemicals, even dioxins, harmful additives, hormones and drugs of all kinds, as well as for the use of improper foods for raising animals and the expansion of the consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, refined and processed foods, harmful soft drinks etc. The same system destroys the forests of the planet in order to expand the land area for cattle raising and the subsequent production of harmful to health hamburgers etc. Also, most of the grains and soybeans produced all over the world are used for feeding the animals required for the needs of the meat industry. Furthermore, vast fertile lands are used all over the world for the cultivation of tobacco and coffee, grains and grapes for the production of alcoholic drinks (beer, wine etc.) instead of being used for the production of wholesome foods. At the same time, ample natural resources are generally wasted in the production of a multitude of products, processed foods, cosmetics, drinks, electronic machines and drugs, which undermine human health and well-being and promote physical and mental decline. Finally, the system of market economy, by controlling the medical system, is promoting the over-prescribing of many unnecessary drugs.

## REVISTA THEOMAI / THEOMAI JOURNAL

Never before, in the history of humanity was there a greater production of products, which are more or less unnecessary and harmful to human health. And all this for a simple reason: to make profit. Never before were used by people more addictive substances, like alcohol, cigarettes, psychiatric drugs and narcotics, sugar, coffee, excess of meat, which contribute to human degeneration and decadence(3). Everything today is commercialised in order to fit and serve the basic goals of the market economy system. Big multinational corporations, in order to increase their profits, poison the products of the earth and the earth itself on which they themselves also feed. They poison the seas, which surround them and poison the atmosphere in which they also live and breathe. The system of market economy places definitely profits before people, before society and the environment, before people's health, well-being and their physical and biological future. In Marx's words, "the capitalists are willing to sell for profit the rope with which they will be hanged up". There is an ancient myth about King Midas: everything he was touching was made gold and finally he died from famine. Something similar tends to take place in our civilised societies. Almost everything is polluted, poisoned, chemicalised or distorted for the sake of profit. The system of the market economy forces contemporary man to destroy himself by cutting up little by little the branch of the tree on which he is sitting. Contemporary man, because of an inhuman economic system, which creates poverty, unemployment, misery and social chaos, is destroying himself/herself gradually-- through ignorance, severe stress and anxiety, pollution and lack of a healthy life.

People, generally, do not know the means, the products, and the agents which promote health, vitality, well-being and they ignore the causes of the human disease and suffering. The over-consumption of meat, dairy products, refined foods, smoking, alcohol etc., according to many scientific studies and findings of the last decades, contribute greatly to the development of many degenerative chronic diseases. But only a small minority, for obvious reasons, know these facts and takes the proper precautions. The media, all over the world, along with the advertising companies, promote and spread products and services that bring a lot of profits to the companies and multinational enterprises, ignoring and disregarding the fact that most of these products and services promote disease, suffering and premature death in the majority — not to mention that all these products and services pollute the environment, waste the resources, devastate the flora and fauna and gradually destroy the ecosystem. A further important source of human pathology and degeneration is the multitude of machines and apparatuses which emit ionising and electromagnetic radiation, the nuclear accidents and nuclear tests etc. Again, there is a great ignorance concerning the safety and proper measures that need to be taken in this field(4).

The system of market economy conceals or impedes the truth concerning the basic facts of life and systematically impairs the promotion of truth about the vital problems of living. At the same time it promotes only those products and services that bring big profits and power to a small minority of privileged people. The system disregards every system of ideas, every product, every effort and every personality which could jeopardise it and undermine the organised commercial interests(5).

One of the basic characteristics of the present western society — an inevitable by product of the competitive environment within which the system of the market economy thrives — are the feelings of uncertainty and insecurity that it creates to the individual. There are numerous studies carried out in many western countries which show, beyond any doubt, that poverty, part-time work and unemployment inevitably lead — through their direct and indirect effects on physical and mental health — to disease, misery, malnutrition and human degeneration. Furthermore, quite apart from their effects on health, such feelings contribute to the decline of the quality of life(6).

Based on these studies and numerous data and findings in our possession, we have arrived to the conclusion that the multidimensional crisis of today culminates in a biological crisis. This crisis, if it is not arrested on time, will progressively lead to a complete biological decadence of the humankind.

## REVISTA THEOMAI / THEOMAI JOURNAL

Accordingly, the consequences of the system of the market economy and the consequent growth economy are not only the present huge concentration of power and wealth and the corresponding symptoms of political social, economical and ecological pathology in terms of unemployment, poverty, injustice, great inequalities, crime, pollution and other social evils(7). These symptoms inevitably exacerbate the biological crisis paving the way for a full degeneration of the genetic material and creating the strong possibility that the fate of the human race may be similar to that of the dinosaurs. In other words, the system of the market economy has created a social, economic and ecological environment and a way of life and nutrition entirely adverse to human health, unnatural and hazardous, which, if not changed on time, will inevitably turn the present biological crisis into a destructive one. Humanity has entered the procrustean bed of the system of market economy in order to fit to the demands and serve the goals of the system. It is the duty of all the well meaning people to fight hard and spend all their powers and energies in order to overthrow this inhuman system of market economy and development.

To my mind, the project of inclusive democracy (which is analysed and documented thoroughly in the book *Towards an Inclusive Democracy* and which I consider a monumental work) offers a realistic way out of the present multidimensional crisis, including the biological crisis. I think that the view of some intellectuals and writers according to which the inclusive democracy project is a utopia and is practically not attainable in our days betrays a significant degree of naïveté and ignorance of the facts. Their realism is in fact myopic and does not conform to reality, as revealed by the numerous data and findings, which show that the system of market economy leads to all kinds of crises, risks and destruction and that no reforms within this system can really solve these problems. This does not, of course, mean that any improvements in the present social, economic, ecological and health state of affairs are not desirable. But, the struggle for such improvements should always be part of a comprehensive political program leading to the replacement of the system of the market economy with an inclusive democracy. In the context of such a transitional program we must start producing as soon as possible things and products not for profit but for the good of human health, well-being, prosperity and happiness. Inevitably, once the fight for an inclusive democracy intensifies, there will be a growing tension between the present institutions and the institutions being established for the creation of such a society. However, it is the outcome of the struggle to replace the present institutions by the institutions of a genuine and inclusive democracy which will determine the very survival of the human race (8).

### Notes

1. Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy: The Crisis of the Growth Economy and the need for a new Liberatory Project* (London: Cassell, 1997), ch. 4 on the Generalised Crisis of the Capitalist Growth Economy, p.p. 140-170.
2. See, for instance, the UN Reports and particularly the *Human Development Report 1998*, the *World Health Organization (WHO) Reports* (various years), the reports of UNICEF (various years) and numerous articles published in medical journals like: *Lancet*, *JAMA*, *BMJ*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Journal of Clinical Nutrition* and *Journal of Public Health*.
3. See various Reports of the Club of Rome and articles in *Health Science* the official journal of the American Natural Hygiene Society (Tampa, Florida, USA)
4. See "Health and Disease", Life Science Library and the reports of the World Watch Institute *The State of World*, particularly for the years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998.
5. See the articles on the role of mass media in today's society, *Democracy & Nature*, vol 5 no 1.
6. See numerous reports published in medical journals (fn 4) and scientific journals like *Science* and *Scientific American*.
7. See the main works by the following distinguished authors: Rene Dubos, Alexis Carrel, Erich Fromm, Ivan Illich, C. Castoriadis, M. Bookchin, Noam Chomsky, Takis Fotopoulos et al.
8. See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy* and articles in *Democracy and Nature* (various issues)