

# THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FOR THE BIO-ENVIRONMENT

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## Introduction

The concept of Biopolitics, as developed by Dr. Vlavianos-Arvanitis, is derived from a knowledge of the natural biological world or bios, and an explicit target of biopolitics is the preservation of the biological environment in such a way as to enhance the chances of survival of the biological species- man-which practices the economic, military and even sporting activities which endanger that species. The fossil record shows that the average life of a mammal is about 3 million years and this is about the age of Man. Is the time near, perhaps, for the extinction of man by his own activities and unwise treatment of the environment?

To mention but a few of the deteriorating effects on nature in our times, I can relate the following: In natural systems, chemical cycling is the main way in which nutrients become available, now to this, then to some other population of organisms. The waste of one population is a resource to another, and very little by way of nitrogen or phosphorous is normally lost or gained by a system such as a forest. But, thanks to human activities, many lakes and forest systems are now being limited by inputs of sulfur which exceed the tolerances of the systems. The activity responsible for this increase in the sulfur is the widespread burning of fossil fuels in industry, transport and home. The acid rain produced in the northern hemisphere is now widely recognised as a significant factor in environmental damage of all kinds.

Acid rain is just one of numerous environmental problems that have come to public attention in the last few years. The slow warming of the earth's atmosphereöthe greenhouse effectömay lead to a 40% increase in hurricane strength within the next 50 years. Continued deforestation in the Himalayas will further increase the vulnerability of Bangladesh to catastrophic flooding. The last large jungle on earth, the Amazon rainforest, may well disappear by the end of the present century, and with it will be destroyed not only the way of life of indigenous people, but also a large proportion of the world's animal species. By the end of this century, the seas will have fewer fish and pollution is likely to have compromised the immune systems of other large marine creatures besides the common seal. By the year 2000, more people will be living in conditions of misery, vulnerable both to disease and to climatological calamities than ever before.

## The role of education

Many other destructive effects on the environment are due to human recklessness in the pursuit of welfare, through the means provided by modern technology in our days. The phenomenon is progressing rapidly, as science and technology develop at a tremendous rate. The adverse results on nature are due partly to ignorance because of the growing deficiency of public education-at-large with relation to technological progress. The public becomes familiar with the use of new technical means very rapidly and this always by far precedes the evolution of social discipline and maturity which is necessary to absorb the progress and avoid the deterioration and degradation of the environment. Development of a new conscience and adoption of principles aiming at the preservation and restoration of the environment can only be met through large-scale education and culture. Respect for nature must be elevated to the level of an ideal that should impregnate all aspects of human activities. A huge effort should start on the international scale to promote the idea of education on environmental issues. And here begins the role of an international university for the bio-environment, which is that of organising and directing the universal effort.

The task is not an easy one. It requires a tremendous amount of courage and inspiration, together with organisational skill and ability. A lot of volunteer work is necessary and due to the idealistic and cultural character of the target, the contribution of large international organisations and institutions should be requested and ensured. So, we have two parallel efforts, first the international recognition and support of the movement and second, the organisation of the institution.

The activities of Biopolitics are already widely known and Dr. Arvanitis has attained worldwide recognition for them. The message has already been diffused transnationally and well-known personalities of administration and science do support the ideas of biopolitics and contribute to the effort. Therefore, consensus on the establishment of such an institution already exists.

## Plans of activities

Education and research are two fields of activity that should be developed. Research should begin with the collection and filing of data concerning the changes and destructions brought by human activities on nature over the last 100 years through industrialisation and exploitation. Pollution of air and water, deforestation, the ozone holes, the greenhouse effect, acid rain-to refer to the most important disasters-

will be measured and recorded. A lot of this kind of work has already been done and data have been published. Consequently many references exist.

The collection of information will be followed by data elaboration and processing which constitutes the second phase of research that will give the initial conditions in order to base the preservation effort and possibly restoration. The above is just an outline and detailed planning should be put in action.

The educational role can be developed in several levels, following a number of multi-dimensional modes of the real world. The educational activities should extend in both breadth and depth, with various degrees of correlation, taking several forms, such as regular courses, seminars, workshops and conferences. There are innumerable ways of promoting education and communicating information to the public or to specialised recipients of various degrees.

Technology, which is partially responsible for the disaster brought to the environment has to be used for the preservation and restoration of nature by making use of its vast possibilities. In the field of education, the multitude of technical means available today can result in efficient methodologies of diffusing education and promoting the ways of learning. The expert systems of artificial intelligence using knowledge bases are rapidly developing towards several directions with the purpose of aiding decision-making for optimising solutions of multi-dimensional, complex problems. And the parallel development of urban and industrial activities all over the earth in harmonic co-existence with nature and the environment beyond the year 2000 is a formidable problem of fine equilibrium. For us, the inhabitants of earth, the environment should become the fifth dimension of our microcosmos, or rather bio-cosmos.

The Bio-University should claim recognition and support on an international scale, in proportion to the noble objective it has the ambition to serve and to the great benefit to humanity that it will eventually offer.

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