

BIOPOLITICS AND CREATIVE THINKING THE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES

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The dire need to safeguard life on our planet has led to the establishment of the International University for the Bio-Environment (I.U.B.E.), and to many proposals for a shift in education. Governments, as well as the media and many individuals, have taken part in a global effort to bridge the gap between technology and societal needs. However, in spite of the enormous efforts made, many populations have remained untouched by, and uninvolved in, this global "war."

In the future, rapid changes and technological advancement will probably produce a new array of problems and threats to bios. What we need, therefore, in addition to institutes of learning and tools and networks for communication, is a vehicle that will enable us to look afresh at issues and problems, and will give us the means to always find innovative ideas for applicable solutions.

The need to use creative thinking as a means of coping with a rapidly changing reality, and as a vehicle leading to flexibility of mind and in-depth thinking, has been pointed out by educationalists, pragmatists and industrialists. When I first sent the abstract for this conference, I was thinking along more or less familiar lines; establishing an institution within an institution, i.e. a B.I.O. Interdisciplinary Centre, (B.I.C.), in which illustrious people from various disciplines, using the tools of creative thinking and the unique E-Alternative method could meet and raise alternative, innovative, practical solutions for various problems, as well as suggestions for their implementation.

Since then, applying the techniques of the E-Alternative, I have come to the conclusion that what is needed is not another institution, but rather a grassroots operation and a mechanism which will take the idea of biopolitics across the threshold of many homes, to reach out to new populations, especially to those who are less aware of bios. The process of my associative thinking, using the E-Alternative approach is to try to break away from recurring thought patterns. The E-Alternative method is an approach for training people in open-complementary thinking. This method integrates Less Commonly used thinking Abilities (L.C.A.) with Commonly Used thinking Abilities (C.U.A.). For example, complementing analysis with synthesis; coherent, logical thinking, with associative, leap thinking and the verbal with the visual.

By integrating the L.C.A. with the C.U.A., this unique method enables its users to be more flexible in their thinking and more receptive to innovative, different ideas and ways of thinking, which can then be used to discover new dimensions in what is believed to be the familiar, by breaking away from recurrent thought patterns. The E-Alternative gives its users different strategies for rating innovative ideas, screening ideas and transforming an idea into a concrete solution. The E-Alternative method is an integrative, interdisciplinary method which draws from creative and inventive thinking as well as from the disciplines of linguistics, philosophy and the fine arts.

Returning to the previously postulated goals - a grassroots operation and an ongoing experience - could we use people who have free time on their hands as agents for the Bios idea? Research and experience teach us that school children, who do not respond well to formal frameworks, can and do, flourish in an informal, small-group atmosphere. My personal experience shows that whereas children who perform poorly in school do little work, and often fall behind in the regular school approach, they often come up with fresh, innovative, applicable ideas for dead-end problems, when they work through creative thinking.

Therefore, school children, especially those who experience difficulties in the classroom, can be familiarised with the Bios ideas and work towards their propagation. Let me add here that research also shows that youngsters who are turned-off by science, react very differently to the ideas of ecology, which they find less abstract and more relevant. Science, when approached through this method, often becomes more attractive.

It will be interesting to note the natural interdependence between creativity and nature, and look at another possible explanation as to why using school children might be a good choice. Land's theory is that whether creativity happens over millions of years, in plants and animals, or whether it happens in a few minutes when a human being solves a problem, it follows the same master pattern. The parallelism of nature and culture is found in three distinct phases of organisation, through which all living systems pass. In the first phase, after exploring all sorts of options, the system essentially invents itself. In the second, the system establishes a formal pattern based on what now works best. In the third phase, the living system has to break the boundaries of this established pattern in order to incorporate what is new and thus continue to grow. When children go to school, society very carefully programmes them to move into the second phase. At this stage they are less concerned about being inventive; rather, the effort goes into building a stable pattern, one in accordance to the norms and folkways of society. If successful, the pattern established in the second phase can last until late adulthood, but by then we have exhausted the pattern. We reach a point when nothing feels right. Perhaps we call it a "mid-life crisis." Regardless of what we label it, we know in the deepest part of our being that to survive we need to experiment, to strike out in a new direction. Land observes: "The invitation then is for us to get out of that basic pattern and to reach down inside and rediscover that five year-old child. We have the opportunity to consciously sculpt our lives in ways that

will allow us to open up to the full range of creativity that is available to all of us."

Another group with lots of free time and, usually, very little to do are the elderly. Many senior citizens live in old peoples homes, surrounded by a garden, or some open space. Why not create, in these spaces, small sample Bio Parks? This would give the elderly something to do and to be responsible for, and would serve the neighbourhood at the same time. Furthermore, school children and the elderly could work together in these Bio Parks. In combining the very young with the older population, we are adhering to the biopolitics principle of interlacing the old and the new, by means of a mutual effort; that of saving the present for the sake of the future.

However, the purpose of this presentation is not to prescribe solutions, but rather to suggest training Bio Teams from different countries in creative thinking. Training would take place at the I.U.B.E. These teams would later establish Bio Groups in their own countries, mainly in urban areas. According to Simonis and Hahn (1991), "Cities are notorious for their careless treatment of scarce and vulnerable environmental goods. The process of transforming raw materials into waste and pollutants has become autonomous, while urban planning ignores significant elements of human behaviour, giving rise to grave socio-psychological problems. Cities have thus become a symbol for the neglect of organic and cultural traditions, and the destruction of the identity of places."

The prevalent type of industrial urban development is a dead-end street, as is demonstrated by the highly urbanised industrial countries. Containing less than a quarter of the world's population, they consume more than 70% of the world's primary energy and almost 80% of the raw materials. This is the result above all of the development of urban technology, infrastructures, and forms of consumption characterised by a linear optimisation of individual systems, with the separation of correlated urban functions. Working, living, and leisure are increasingly separated, as are the patterns of production and consumption.

Grave ecological consequences result from an irresponsible approach to land-use in modern city planning. For instance, in the large cities of Europe the settlement surface per inhabitant has increased 10 fold in the last 100 years. This staggering surface corrosion is, above all, the result of the car-oriented city, the development of surface-extensive facilities and the separation of urban functions. Deterioration in urban quality of life involves not only bad quality of air and drinking water, and the increase in noxious emissions, but also the impoverishment of sensual perceptions and the loss of orientation and identity by the inhabitants. Doctors and psychologists speak of our cities as the expression of a sick landscape of the soul, in which the atrophy of the inner world takes place parallel to the destruction of the outer environment.

Therefore, the suggested Bio Groups, dealing with biopolitics issues and problems could raise new ideas, suggest innovative solutions and draw up plans for their implementation. Creative thinking means not only having innovative ideas but also, evaluating and executing them. Once possible difficulties have been foreseen and ways of overcoming them have been checked, members of the Bio Groups would be responsible for carrying out the plan. Their work would be documented and their ideas would become part of the B.I.O. Bank of Ideas. All the groups would be connected, via a special network. Once a year, group representatives from different countries could convene in Greece, at the I.U.B.E. for an intensive refresher course. When these representatives go back to their respective countries, they will start new groups which, in turn, will actively become involved in the field of biopolitics.

In this way, the seeds of Bios, nourished by creative thinking, could spread into communities and neighbourhoods and become a grassroots operation. Furthermore, an additional by-product, by no means less important, would be the strengthening of ties between various countries and peoples, working together in the common interest of humanity.

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