BIOPOLITICS - THE BIO-ENVIRONMENT

BUILDING A BIOCENTRIC MILLENNIUM SOCIETY

Dr. Agni Vlavianos-Arvanitis

President and Founder

Biopolitics International Organisation

Greece

Renaissance of the human spirit

A ticking clock is registering the last remaining minutes of the millennium. Despite positive steps and a conscious effort to curb environmental destruction, the continuation of bios - life - on our planet is still threatened. Environmental protection and respect for the gift of life must, therefore, evolve into a more expansive concept and become part and parcel of the dominant social paradigm.[1] The ethics of this endeavour entails a number of different elements and the solution lies in a deeper understanding of our responsibilities as human beings on this planet.

As humanity enters the next millennium, the issue of bios will grow in complexity. More than just the appreciation and protection of the environment, in all its varied manifestations, humanity will have to confront fundamental moral, legal and political dilemmas resulting from cumulative technological advancements. These advancements could be life-enhancing or life-threatening depending on our ability to understand their various implications, as well as our readiness to preserve the common good. The urgent task ahead is to inform the public regarding these challenges, so as to be morally and mentally prepared to face the uncertainties ahead. A bio-assessment of priorities is of the essence.

In order to avoid a robot-like, mechanistic society, human creativity needs to be channelled towards an inspired and productive "renaissance."[2] Technology and the arts, coupled with a sound system of values, provide ample opportunities for growth and can lead to the blossoming of the human spirit. Spiritual wealth and a reassessment of the concept of profit will help humanity to exit its present crisis of values and can serve as messages of hope and encouragement. Applying human potential towards respecting the environment and all forms of life, will guarantee a society made up of responsible and affected citizens. Humanity can be "reborn" once we acknowledge the value of bios.

Water and bios

Water is synonymous with the evolution of life. Water is essential for bios. It is difficult to overestimate the value of water in the study of history, religion and sociology. Since the beginning of time, water resources have been cherished as a universal good and have been tightly related to the human spirit. The cleansing and purifying properties of water are present in virtually all religions and cultures. Water deities abound in mythology, often portrayed as a sacred symbol or rite with the power to provide absolution.

The Bios Theory3 is based on the appreciation of life on our planet and life would not exist without water, the single most abundant molecule in all living organisms. Therefore, protecting this precious resource, on both a local and a global basis, is not only a fundamental responsibility, but a prerequisite for the survival of humanity.

Water resources – the Danube and the Black Sea

The Black Sea is dying. Rivers emptying in the Black Sea basin are polluting the area, damaging one of the richest and most fragile ecosystems and jeopardising the lives and livelihood of millions of people. To reverse this destructive trend, a number of initiatives have been undertaken with varying degrees of success. However, it is essential to promote preventative rather than reactive measures and, to be effective, such attempts have to focus on countering pollution problems at much earlier stages. Within the framework of such action plans, the improvement of river water quality is a priority.

As the largest river outflowing in the Black Sea, the Danube is responsible for a significant part of the pollution load. The Danube originates in the Black Forest and traverses ten European nations before ending its course on the Black Sea shoreline. The international and multifaceted nature of the development of this waterway should therefore constitute a key concern for policy planners and decision-makers, throughout Europe and world-wide.

Multilateral initiatives for the protection of the Danube, the restitution of lost biodiversity and the prevention of pollution will not only result in the improvement of water and environmental quality at the local level, but will also lead to a more comprehensive protection of water resources. However, such expansive projects cannot be successful unless all the countries involved make a genuine commitment towards their expedient implementation.

By focusing on the Danube as a water management model, the Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.) brings attention to the fact that the long-range management of water resources, especially international ones, poses a major challenge for the world community and can prove decisive for international co-operation. Since most water resources are finite, it is becoming increasingly complex to manage them on a renewable basis. The development of efficient marine and fresh-water management plans is crucial to our survival on this planet and should become a priority on both the national and international level.

Setting global bio-environmental priorities

In the current crucial period of transition, world decision-makers have the responsibility to lead the process of change. To do so effectively, priorities need to be clearly defined and, to avoid mistakes of the past, a new vision and new models are seriously needed. The promotion of international peace and security and the fundamental human right of living in a clean environment have to be actively pursued. It is necessary to tie these issues together, since the environ-ment is the most potent unifying agent in modern society. Concerns for the deterioration of our planet do not recognise national boundaries, ethnicities or religions and, therefore, active global participation in the effort to preserve the environment can lead to the desired goal of international co-operation and understanding.

There is divergence in will expressed by national governments and these governments, have to be guided, through consensus, to the direction of a genuine commitment and not merely an unenthusiastic compromise. Global priorities need to be collectively set and technological drives properly channelled. Balancing the seemingly incompatible aspirations of global environmental harmony and economic growth needs to become the focal point for future development policies. It is essential to realise that not only are these issues not conflicting, but it is impossible for any economy to flourish without just and long-range environmental management.

Fortunately, the world is currently aware of the fact that bios and the environment are in dire need of attention, and global conservation efforts are gradually starting to show results. However, this should not be cause for laxing effective measures, but should be viewed as positive re-enforcement in the struggle to make bio-environmental protection the core component of every action and thought. In order to be effective, global peacekeeping and humanitar-ian efforts should be co-ordinated on the basis of environmental conservation. A millennium vision in decision-making and policy-planning can provide the necessary long-term objectives, in order to address these problems with a view to the future. Immediate action is of the essence. By the time reforms and revisions are approved, they tend to be already outdated. Loss of biodiversity, destruction, war, exploitation of the poor, unequal distribution of resources and trade methods that increase the debt of developing nations require a prompt and radical solution. This solution has to be encouraged by expanding the potential of human resources and channelling them towards a productive and constructive renaissance. Long-term objectives for the implementation of global policies, such as fostering peace, developing human resources, curbing financial inequality and promoting strategies for eliminating world disparities have to become the number one priority in the 21st century.

Since its inception in 1985, the B.I.O. has been raising awareness of the urgent need for a new system of economic norms and principles, compatible with sound environmental management and with the most important task of ensuring unbiased international trade and long-term investment. Poor countries overuse their resource base and, thereby, their natural environ-ment. The sale of raw materials in oversaturated markets leads to falling prices, which in turn reduces net proceeds. Because of such conditions, appeals to protect the environment are ignored or often met with derision. The conflict between the industrial countries' ongoing economic growth and the developing countries' undisputed need for growth, on the one hand and, the negative environmental effects of energy and raw material intensive production on the other, cannot be solved within the present framework. As environmental problems do not discriminate along national boundaries, international co-operation and sanctions based on negative and positive incentives, are the only viable alternatives.

The goal is to eliminate current inadequacies in financial trends and guarantee economic prosperity for every country in the world. Moreover, the goal is to ultimately render the concept of a "Third World" obsolete and, through enhanced communication, trade and co-operation reach a desired state of world equilibrium in both economic and sociological terms. Guaranteeing a better quality of life for every citizen in the world holds the key to a harmonious and peaceful global society in the next millennium.

Bio-culture - moving beyond sustainable development

Present society resembles an inverted pyramid, with human rights representing the tip and technology expanding the unstable base. This imbalance could be changed if we "re-invert" the pyramid and place bios rights as the wide base of our society. Human rights will then occupy the stable tip of the structure.

The relationship between human culture and the bio-environment is becoming increasingly important in our times. The bio-environment is affected by our culture, which is, in turn, shaped by the bio-environment. Bio-culture represents the conscious effort of humanity to reach this interdependence. Aesthetic values, music, science, the arts, diplomacy, politics, business and trade can all come together in the struggle for a better quality of life. In all its facets, bio-culture reflects the spirit of bios as a powerful unifying factor for the future co-evolution of humanity with the bio-environment and the harmonious co-existence of all forms of life. Furthermore, bio-culture can provide the necessary incentives for every endeavour to be governed by biocentric principles and orient toward the better understanding and preservation of bios on our planet.

But more than just a simple orientation toward biocentric principles, bio-culture is a manifestation of life. Bios, with all its intricacies and wonders, can be a source of joy and inspiration. New cultural values, for a global appreciation of bios, can help the world acknowledge the importance of environmental preservation and the urgency of taking action against negative trends. Bio-culture can also provide the ethical guidelines for a reassessment of current assumptions and a critical evaluation of the future. The hope is that present regional conflicts will be alleviated and incompatibilities between environmental harmony and economic growth reconciled. Once the world acknowledges the importance of safeguarding bios, the most precious possession our planet, embracing bio-cultural values will become the only viable alternative.

Working to sustain what already exists is not enough. With new challenges constantly arising and with an increased awareness of the urgent need to take action against destructive trends, the time is ripe to find more comprehensive, long-term solutions to protect our planet and guarantee a balanced society for the future. A new vision, beyond sustainable development, can help place the situation in perspective, and provide the necessary incentives to move ahead and explore possibilities leading to more just and safe global management.2

World Referendum - a new pathway for democracy

In this crucial endeavour, it is essential to have global participation and the time is ripe for humanity to dynamically voice its concern over environmental deterioration. A World Referendum,4 where every citizen on the planet would simultaneously cast a vote for bios, would result in a global mobilisation for the reversal of destructive trends and the guarantee of a brighter future. All the inhabitants of the planet could cast a vote on the same day on issues that affect our very existence and future survival.

The B.I.O. World Referendum can transcend national boundaries and bring the world together, in a common cause. In today's complex society, nations seldom have the same priorities. Developing nations are faced with entirely different challenges from those faced by industrialised countries, and even neighbouring countries can find themselves immersed in conflict over incompatible priorities. Environmental protection is possibly the only issue that is relevant to all the nations of the world. Therefore, a simultaneous ballot on saving bios on our planet, is a brilliant opportunity to demonstrate that as citizens of the world we can all agree on safeguarding the Earth for the generations to come.

Present breakthroughs in the field of communication technology can provide the opportunity for the public to be actively involved in issues concerning our daily lives and be able to cast a vote, anytime, through computer networks and communication link-ups, which can make immediate feedback possible from any corner of the globe. These dimensions can open up new pathways for a participatory democracy, where opinions will be actively expressed and politicians will no longer be able to evade their responsibilities.

We are moving into a truly interdependent world, where communication is vital to development. Information technology can bring the world together. The mass media have the power to influence and the power to educate, and this power should be applied to guarantee peace and international co-operation, eliminating isolation and division. It also has the potential to raise the necessary global awareness of the urgent need to take action against environmental destruction and abuse. The direct and efficient exchange of information, can allow for world-wide simultaneous participation in the attempt to preserve bios on our planet.

Bio-economics - redefining the concept of profit

Humanity is wasting time. In order to exit inflexible thinking processes, which have led to disastrous situations, immediate action is crucial.

Solving environmental problems requires a dynamic approach, combining past experience and present opportunities to establish new, enriched models for the future. The challenge is to calibrate economic growth with reference to biocentric parameters and expand our vision for the coming millennium. We live on a small and fragile planet. The continuation of the chain of life on this planet is the most essential task for all.

Environmental destruction is still cheap, because the environment has not been priced. Threats to the environment can only be relieved through a fundamental change in the economy. Economic science must seriously contemplate the inclusion of concepts that are presently considered abstract and qualitative. The issue of "quality of life" needs to assume top priority, along with culture and education. These elements, which are often excluded from conventional theory of finance, need to become the framework for the new economics of the 21st century. Moreover, the concept of profit has to be rede-fined, in order to include dimensions of internal wealth, preservation of natural resources as a measurable part of a nation's prosperity, better health and the protection of biodiversity, which constitute a "genuine" profit for society.

The prevailing economic structure must be quickly redesigned and re-organised to operate on a long-term basis. Reactive environmental policy is inadequate and there is a pressing need to shift from "react-and-cure" strategies to "anticipate-and-prevent" strategies. Within this framework, environmental standard setting must be conceived as a continuous process. With growing knowledge and awareness on actual and probable environmental damages, the thresholds for action must be successively lowered. This will not only lead to an efficient promotion of cleaner production and environmental management, but will also result in a re-evaluation of current issues and a new economic strategy to meet the demands of an increasingly environmentally-conscious society.

Regulation is a priority if the existing incentive structure in the economy is ever to change towards increasing resource efficiency. Furthermore, a grassroots mobilisation and public participation, on both a local and an international level, are crucial to the establishment of world-wide, bios-supporting strategies and initiatives. Environmentally-sound management guidelines have been discussed and arrogated at the negotiating table, but in real life directives on the national and international level all too often do not reach local decision making. A "top-down" approach, effectively combining the consensus and consent of the people, as well as that of governments and international institutions, is essential for the successful implementation of a global environmental policy.

The periodic table of economic science

Environmental preservation is inextricably linked to economic progress. Preserving the wealth and beauty of the bio-environment, securing the health of the earth's population, providing fair rules of trade, and guaranteeing equal educational opportunities for every country in the world can be a source of genuine profit, both monetary and social.

Economics will need to be upgraded to a comprehensive science and eliminate stereotypes of fragmentation and mutual exclusion. The study of the intricate relationships between all the varied manifestations of our natural and cultural heritage can provide the missing elements for an integrated understand-ing of economic phenomena, thus leading to the formation of the Periodic Table of Economic Science, much like the periodic table of elements in chemistry, that the Russian chemist D.I. Mendeleyev drafted more than a century ago.

In devising the periodic table, Mendeleyev captured the order of the universe. Not only was he able to classify known elements and describe their properties in detail, but managed to accurately predict the existence and properties of elements discovered many years later. Although the periodic table was framed more than a century ago, it still remains the most important single correlation of chemistry, permitting us to deal with the great variety and diversity of nature. The diachronic aspect of Mendeleyev's table is as important today as it ever was. If we view our future as a periodic chart, then we can begin to search for ways to enrich it and fill all the empty spaces with new values and a constructive vision. Modelling the periodicity of chemical properties in vertical and horizontal patterns, led to the discovery of the order and clarity of science. A vertical and horizontal classification of priorities in society reveals their interdependence and can lead to a harmonious future.

Electronic structure, which forms the basis of the periodic table, conveys the concepts of energy and potential. Similarly, priorities in society need to be classified according to their positive contribution towards mobilising human potential. This potential can be applied to enrich our society with a better understanding of biological and cultural diversity. Waves of energy and light, waves of communication, can bring us together as a global community to decide on a joint pathway for the future. New ethics have to govern our action and thought, in order to make full use of the benefits of economic progress and eliminate destructive trends.

In Greek mythology, misguided and destructive progress is portrayed in the story of the sun god, Helius, and his son, Phaethon. Phaethon's precarious driving of the sun chariot brought him to his own demise. Today, we have the wisdom to control economic progress and we should apply it to its full extent. We can use the knowledge gained to improve our quality of life and improve the world for the generations to come. We can fill all the empty spaces of our periodic table with the beauty and wealth of cultural and historical diversity and build a positive framework for the future. Once economic science acknowledges the urgency of reevaluating its role based on a long-term, global financial policy, it will be more efficient in answering to the challenges of the next millennium.

A three dimensional approach to economic theory

Conventional business and national accounting are inadequate for the implementation of long-term economic policies. Economic growth is

largely being measured in terms of goods and income categories only, while the effects of this on the stock and quality of resources - natural capital - are not adequately considered. Traditional economics approaches are generally limited to cartesian representations of inflation and depression tendencies, histograms of monetary units, or regression analyses of stock-market trends. Although these two-dimensional approaches were usually sufficient in the past, they are in dire need of revision and updating. We cannot carry 19th century methods into the third millennium. The current fragmented and limited picture of economic theory needs to be replaced by a three-dimensional approach, where the value of culture, human capital, education, natural resources, and biodiversity will factor in every equation and diagram.[5]

Financially poorer nations may be richer in cultural values, art, tradition or biodiversity. These elements represent an enrichment for the entire planet and cannot keep being ignored by economists. Evaluations of GNP and trade potential should evolve to include all the above mentioned parameters and place special emphasis on the urgent task of safeguarding bios and the bio-environment. Policies for economic growth and employment opportunities, on a global level, have to be structured according to these new principles in order to be more effective in countering poverty, national debts, environmental deterioration and unfair trade developments.

Green salary - new employment opportunities

With current unemployment rates rising and governments forced to allot significant portions of their budgets for covering unemployment benefits, the time has come to seriously consider viable alternatives to counter the situation. The B.I.O. has been promoting the introduction of a Green Salary for the unemployed, with the commitment to work for the protection of the bio-environment. Projects could include tree planting, city cleanup, recycling, resource recovery and many other similar constructive activities.

This Green Salary can help elicit a positive feeling among the unemployed, in addition to providing new opportunities for work and aiding the attempt to lower unemployment levels. Moreover, businesses could be granted special tax deductions when providing opportunities for the unemployed to be involved in environmental projects.

Bank of ideas - mapping the evolution of environmental awareness

The rapid growth of information technology expands the boundaries of knowledge and thought. However, the current environmental crisis is shaking the very foundations of both the private and public sectors. Ethical values, societal structure, and national and international issues have to be re-examined with reference to the new perspectives of modern society.

Up to now, only a privileged few had the opportunity of making their reflections and ideas available on a wider basis, and valuable contributions from less prominent individuals are forever gone. The experiences of historical figures, political and spiritual leaders, scientists and intellectuals has been documented, but the wisdom of the general public is not known. Are we aware of mainstream thinking in antiquity or societal norms in the Middle Ages? Scholars have recorded general trends, in specific geographic regions, but, we do not have concrete or global documentation of what was widely accepted by ordinary citizens, around the world, or what they considered important.

In order to allow for every individual to express and document their thoughts, the B.I.O. has, since 1985, been promoting the establishment of

a computerised Bank of Ideas in which any interested party, may deposit their thoughts on environmental issues and create a rich source of information and reflections on bios and the bio-environment. This depository would be available to future generations, in order to serve as a treasury of material for the development of society in the years to come. Furthermore, this Bank of Ideas would reflect the evolution in thinking and morality, continuously taking place all over the world.

Not too long ago, environmental problems were not even acknowledged, let alone seriously addressed. We have now witnessed a shift in public opinion, as well as an increased awareness of the gravity of the situation and of the urgent need to take action against destructive trends. This turn of events demonstrates an evolution in our ability to perceive and define priorities in society, according to the challenges we face. The trajectory of this evolution, going from ignorance to awareness to sensitisation and, finally, to active participation could serve as a valuable tool for pin-pointing societal progress and could aid our efforts to counter environmental abuse, on a world-wide level. With the establishment of a Bank of Ideas, we would acquire a concrete record of this trajectory and would thus be able to determine all the parameters of change, making the processes of taking action easier and more effective.

The evolution of human thought is a dynamic process and its potential lies in the continuous emergence of new variables. Determining the constant and variable elements can lead to a new appreciation of priorities in society, as well as a critical evaluation of the future. An interactive Bank of Ideas can serve as documentation of the evolution and transition in human thought for present and future generations. Information technology and faster communications will carry us into the third millennium. It is essential to apply this technology to capture the wisdom of humanity and make it available to the entire world.

Bio-diplomacy - investing in "defence for bios"

Present threats to bios are international problems. The required solutions entail the development plans of action for peace and international understanding. International co-operation may lead to a new era for the diplomatic world; the era of bio-diplomacy. Nations will no longer be at war with each other but, with environmental destruction and abuse. Foreign policy may thus shift from a fragmented, competitive framework to a vision of unity and interdependence.

Bio-diplomacy recognises that cultural differentiation constitutes the wealth of the body of humanity. Furthermore, humanity is part of the overall body of bios, where DNA, the genetic code for every living organism, is the link connecting all forms of life. Trees, the source of oxygen on our planet, can be considered the "lungs" of the body of bios. Damage to the lungs is not an isolated event but results in the whole body suffering. These unifying concepts will be promoted as the primary consideration of bio-diplomacy which will be involved in enhancing international co-operation on environmental issues and will actively support all efforts to protect and maintain biological and cultural diversity. At the same time, bio-diplomacy will seek to improve human relations and attain the goal of world peace, by replacing current diplomatic attitudes with a complete international and intercultural perspective.

To encourage international co-operation on the bio-environment, the world needs to stop investing in war and start investing in the preservation of bios and the bio-environment. Competition for ways to destroy, should become co-operation for ways to save. Without interfering with vested interests, the greatest challenge for the 21st century should become the development of new ways of channelling current defence protocols so as to adopt the principle of defence for bios as the primary national and international priority. Existing defence equipment can be amended and used for reforestation, water resource clean-up, soil erosion recovery, protection of the ozone layer and the de-contamination of areas affected by nuclear radiation.

Bio-legislation - defending the rights of future generations

The central concept of bio-legislation, regarded as an integral part of biopolitics, is to link the protection of bios rights to the defence of the rights of future generations. Furthermore, bio-legislation acknowledges that in addition to "human rights" there exists a series of "human obligations" geared toward our common responsibility to preserve the environment and improve quality of life on a global level. It is therefore essential for international legislation to make explicit reference to the protection of bios on our planet and for current environmental acts to be expanded upon and re-evaluated.

The distinction between prudential control and regulatory intervention is vital in this context. Bio-environmental considerations should become one of the determining - if not decisive - factors of decision-making at every possible level. It must also be realised that environmental protection is the only option for securing economic growth in the future.

Bio-ethics

To allow for the blossoming of the human spirit, we need to acknowledge that bios, with all its intricacies and wonders, can be a source of joy and inspiration. New values, for a global appreciation of life, can help us to take action against negative trends and re-examine current assumptions with a view to the future. Our maturity and survival will depend on our ability to assimilate the explosive progress of technology and acknowledge the generous gift of bios. Within this framework, ethics, spirituality and technology can co-develop and enrich each other with positive new dimensions. In celebration of life, waves of light, waves of music and communication can provide hope and encouragement to help us face the challenges of the new millennium.

In view of the urgent need to curb environmental deterioration and to secure the rights of future generations, the promotion of bio-ethics as the foundation for the peaceful and harmonious co-evolution of humanity and the environment is currently a priority for the B.I.O. In this framework, bio-ethics can be considered both a conceptual science with a philosophical dimension and, at the same time, a direction of practical activities. From a philosophical perspective, bio-ethics is closely related to the principle of reverence for life.

Of paramount importance for bio-ethics is the philosophical idea that any individual, any form of bios is of unique, absolute value. The underlying philosophical idea of intrinsic unity of human and non-human life entails increased responsibilities. A human being is closely related to, and dependent on, all the life on Earth. How, then, can we reconcile our existence with the rapid deterioration of bios? In order to achieve the attitudinal changes desired, a number of practical steps including pollution taxes waste reduction policy and using representative polluting substances as indicators of pollution, have been designed. Important initiatives pertaining to environmental ethics have been recently launched.

Bio-education for a global responsibility

To reach a new state of the world, education is key. An integrated biocentric education, that secures lifelong environmental literacy for every citizen in the world, is a necessary vehicle for the successful furtherance of a global appreciation of bios. Bearing in mind that universities should be, by definition, "universal," the International University for the Bio-Environment (I.U.B.E.), launched by the Biopolitics International Organisation in 1990, promotes a model bio-education, by introducing interdisciplinary educational reforms, on a world-wide basis.

The I.U.B.E. is based on a Visiting Scholars Program, whereby leading educators and decision-makers from around the world will inseminate existing educational institutions with new bios promoting values. The aim is for the I.U.B.E. to become a world-calibre initiative for the development of multidisciplinary environmental concepts, beyond the confines of conventional environmental science, leading to a revised educational system for the entire planet.

Major goals of the I.U.B.E. include: (a) international educational reforms and the promotion of an efficient, global bio-education, through the Internet and the use of satellites and other communication links (b) international co-operation for environmental protection, leading to a new era of bio-diplomacy (c) international legislation on bios rights (d) the re-evaluation of business and management concepts and the development of new economic strategies, compatible with environmental preservation (e) an international campaign for Environmental Olympics and the award of Bios Prizes to "individuals or institutions that have contributed to the preservation and appreciation of the bio-environment" (f) raising public awareness of the ramification of the biological sciences (g) a global bio-assessment of technology, to ensure technological and economic progress that support the bio-environment, and to help bridge the gap between technological progress and societal values. In reference to the issue of Bios in the Next Millennium, experts in respective fields will be asked to present a thesis and antithesis, and then create a synthesis of new concepts. Emphasis will be placed on identifying ways of reducing negative environmental impact, so as to truly benefit from the contributions of technological breakthroughs.

Environmental Olympics - bios prizes - athlos as an intellectual achievement

In the quest for new societal values for the next millennium, a revival of the ancient Olympic spirit can contribute unity and harmony to the development of every aspect of human endeavour. The Olympic Games, held in Greece for over ten centuries, constituted important political and cultural events, promoting a unifying vision of peace, kinsmanship and reconciliation. Currently, the Olympics, a beacon of world peace

and hope, award medals only for physical prowess. Moreover, the concept of athletics has become synonymous with sports and feats of the body. Yet we should be reminded that the word athlos, means achievement. Therefore, the term athletics encompasses all possible achievements of humanity, whether physical or intellectual. It is thus important that the concept regain its original significance and become redefined, on the basis of a new system of values.3

In order to promote incentives for environmental protection and a global bio-culture for the new millennium, the B.I.O. has been proposing the development of multidisciplinary international committees, assigned with assessing progress and awarding Bios Prizes to individuals, or institutions, that have significantly contributed to the preservation and appreciation of the bio-environment.

At present, international competitions take place in various fields, but represent a fragmented view of human achievement. In order to re-establish the harmony and unity behind all expressions of creativity, an overall recognition and award of achievement in sports, arts, and science may be carried out simultaneously, every four years, on the occasion of the Olympic Games. For example, legislators could be awarded for developing new legislation regarding bios rights; architects, for having worked in the construction of "biopolis" models; corporate leaders, for including environmental protection in their business activities. Prizes could be awarded in several disciplines, such as ethics, legislation, economics, business, theology, architecture, diplomacy, or philoso-phy, with the hope to eventually include all human accomplishments.

Example: Bio-Legislation

A. Global legislative community to nominate candidates

B. Supreme court justices and university law professors to receive nominations and propose up to 150 candidates for award

C. Elected 30 member International Com-mittee to select 15 nominations

D. 3 member International Committee to award 3 Bios Prizes

Cease fire

The Olympiads should be periods of world peace and occasions for all citizens to celebrate the unifying concepts brought forth by the Olympic spirit. At the same time, the global community can be sensitised to the value of a harmonious co-existence as a vehicle for achieving a better quality of life. Within the spirit of bio-culture, the B.I.O. has been promoting the revival of the ancient ideal of cease-fire during the Olympics,3 a proposal recently adopted as a UN resolution. The hope is that the bio-environment will act as a unifying force for peace, leading to a new social structure, where respect for bios will be at the core of every action and thought.

On the occasion of the 1996 Olympic Games, the First Bios Prize Award was given to Commander Jacques-Yves Cousteau, who was not only be the first, but also, the only Bios Prize recipient for this century, emphasising his invaluable contribution to the comprehension and appreciation of the bio-environment. Commander Cousteau was the first to explore the limitless biodiversity of the planet's oceans and raise awareness of the most important task of preserving this biodiversity. He worked tirelessly to further the idea of protecting life on our planet and, through groundbreaking research, offered unique information on the intricacies and beauty of bios. His achievements represented one of the most positive contributions to humanity and, by awarding him the First Bios Prize, the B.I.O. was aiming to set the pace for a millennium of hope, understanding and international co-operation to guarantee the rights of future generations.

Bio-peace - global harmony in the next millennium

Technology has induced the expansion of every field of human endeavour. Continuous innovation and development, as well as fluidity in the structure of society due to changing social goals, make the identification of priorities and proper educational perspectives difficult. The emerging global economy ascertains the future requirements for society. While we are becoming interested in economic growth, there is also an increased awareness of the need for a better quality of life. On the brink of the 21st century, the timely implementation of biocentric initiatives is of the essence.

Regional conflicts, constantly erupting all over the world, are severely jeopardising global security. Without a new and revised approach to the issue of international co-operation, it is doubtful whether we will ever be successful in attaining harmony, and progress toward a world made up of responsible and affected citizens. Our society is governed by a system of Darwinian ethics, where survival of the fittest is regarded as the optimal strategy. Global peace cannot become a reality if we allow this trend to continue, and it is the responsibility of every citizen in the world to ensure that a new set of values and ethics prevails.

Within the framework of this new set of ethics, the global community has to learn the joy of sharing. It is not to anyone's advantage to separate

the world into developed and under-developed regions. Poverty and the unequal distribution of resources not only affects the countries that suffer most by it, but threatens the stability of the entire planet. It is up to us to render the concept of a "Third World" obsolete and work together to reconcile environmental harmony with the need for economic prosperity and growth. A better harmony between economy and the environment is a tremendous task, conceptionally as well as practically. Its implementation requires a restructuring of the economy and a replenishing of economic policy.

We all share the gift of bios, the most precious possession on our planet. Political systems have come and gone, financial regimes have succeeded and failed, but bios, in unlimited varieties and forms, has existed for millions of years. Bios and the bio-environment are the most powerful agents for the attainment of world peace and stability. The pursuit of bio-peace, through the development of concrete plans for world-wide co-operation on environmental conservation, can alleviate conflict and division and contribute to a new era of international understanding. By enacting these principles and evaluating future policy-planning on the basis of biocentric criteria, we may succeed in the quest for world security and order. The unifying aspects of bios and the bio-environment hold the key to our future. If we all adopt this principle as our guide, then perhaps global peace will become a reality in the next millennium.

What if the earth is turning
what if time has passed
faster than the flash of lightning
the waves of thought
crossed rocks and towering mountains
crystal waters
have run everywhere
in matter, in infinity
yesterday, today, tomorrow

"*Oscillations*," A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis, 1983

References

1. Vlavianos-Arvanitis A. (1985) Biopolitics. Dimensions of biology. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens, 16 pp.
2. Vlavianos-Arvanitis A. (1996) The bio-environment – bio-culture. Bio-peace for the next millennium. In: A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (ed.), Biopolitics – the bio-environment V. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens, pp. 51-66
3. Vlavianos-Arvanitis A. (1989) Biopolitics. The Bios Theory. In: A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (ed.), Biopolitics – the bio-environment II. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens, pp. 17-31
4. Vlavianos-Arvanitis A. (1993) Bios in the next millennium. Reversing the crisis of values. In: A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis and R. Keles (eds.), Biopolitics – the bio-environment IV. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens, pp. 18-28
5. Vlavianos-Arvanitis A. (1996) Biopolitics: a new dimension of the concept of profit. In: A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (ed.), Business strategy for the bio-environment III. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens, pp. 14

Dr. Agni Vlavianos-Arvanitis founded B.I.O. in 1985, after having dedicated over 20 years to teaching and research in biology. In 1990, she launched the International University for the Bio-Environment and, in 1992, a campaign for Bios Prizes and cease-fire during the Olympics. A recipient of many high distinctions, she was elected, along with M. Gorbachev, N. Mandela and M. Strong, Honorary President for Life by the UNA of Sri Lanka, and is also an Abdi Ipekci Peace and Friendship Prize laureate. She is Vice President of the International Bioethics Society, Member of the *Journal of Cleaner Production* Advisory Board, Member of the Board of Trustees of the Uganda National Foundation for Research and Development, Vice President of the UNESCO-MAB Hellenic National Committee, Commissioner on the Global Commission to Fund the UN, Corresponding Member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, Member of the New York Academy of Sciences, the International Academy of Ecology, Human and Nature Safety Sciences, the Hellenic Philosophical Society and the National Society of Greek Writers. Author of poetry books, she is also Honorary Professor of St. Petersburg State University for Plant Polymers and *Doctor Honoris Causa* of Mendeleyev University. In 1995 she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, a nomination renewed in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000.