

BIOPOLITICS: A SHIFT FROM ANTHROPOCENTRIC TO BIOCENTRIC VALUES IN BUSINESS

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As a necessary aspiration for the next millennium, the Biopolitics International Organisation has proposed a shift from anthropocentric to biocentric values, by placing respect and appreciation for the bio-environment at the core of every human endeavor. A large part of the responsibility for the preservation of bios lies with the business community. In modern, meta-industrial society, overpopulation and technological advances have led to a serious depletion of natural resources. Simultaneously, the pursuit of short-term economic prosperity has resulted in environmental destruction, a threat not only to aesthetic values but also to the very essence of bio-diversity on our planet.

The world economy has currently reached the point of fundamentally revising its attitude towards the bio-environment. This crucial stage entails significant changes in the prevalent system of economic values as the key to economic prosperity in the future. In contrast to early environmentalist movements, which avoided dealing with the business world, biopolitics actively seeks cooperation with all economic forces, and stresses the complementarity of financial profitability with bio-environmental protection.

Biopolitics regards promotion of a bios-centered economy as an essential way to create a new deontology, leading to a revised code of ethics. It is crucial to realize that working to achieve sustainable development is not enough. The oncoming value-system shift in economics consists, in essence, of the evolution of previous doctrines into new concepts for the harmonization of economic growth and bio-environmental protection. A radical change in business policy is critical in order to ensure that the economic driving force actively contributes towards the appreciation and protection of bios.

Establishing Worldwide Economic Stability

The current world economy is characterized by an increased disequilibrium in the distribution of income and in the exploitation of natural resources. The widening of the gap between North and South has resulted in the acceleration of this imbalance, and coupled with overpopulation, especially in developing countries, is leading to major problems for global economic stability. According to recent estimates, world population will have exceeded 12 billion by the year 2080. This dramatic increase is contributing to the rapid depletion of natural resources, and is jeopardizing the entire concept of world "food security".

Gandhi said "we have enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed". Countries of the North should adopt a new consumer-attitude so as to ensure a fair distribution of natural resources. Overpopulation in the South can only be controlled by a balanced economic development, which will contribute toward improving living conditions, and holding health and environmental hazards in check.

Well established studies of various physical or social systems demonstrate that the uncontrolled evolution of an isolated system leads to maximization of entropy, the tendency to disorder. Similarly, entropy is generated in society by the unforeseen results of the applications of technological progress, the destruction of the bio-environment, resource depletion, over-consumerism and the explosive economic problems in developing countries.

For this course to be reversed, and for entropy to be decreased, the world community needs to develop regulating mechanisms, based, not only on measures of a purely economic nature, but mainly on new values and norms in business and society. A long-term bios-promoting policy can contribute toward alleviating inequalities and can prove profitable to any endeavor.

In order to progress towards a society that will guarantee a better quality of life, some experts propose that economic activities with deleterious effects on the bio-environment ought to be excluded from the Gross National Product. Furthermore, ecological taxes should be imposed, and environmental liability legislation put into effect. However, we should keep in mind that pollution is not only the result of production processes, but is also due to poor business strategy. Consequently, the Biopolitics International Organisation has been promoting the introduction of bios-oriented values into economic decision-making, and has been encouraging corporate leaders to channel their business activities in a way that respects the bio-environment and benefits the continuity of bios.

Redefining the Concept of Profit

It is becoming increasingly apparent that in order to progress towards a global, biocentric society, economic projects at all levels cannot be carried out for the sole purpose of gaining maximum financial profit. The economic driving force needs to re-evaluate existing norms and policies, and bring significant changes upon the current system of economic values. For society to overcome greed and over-consumerism, it is essential that we move beyond the antagonisms of governments, nations and business, and adopt a common responsibility for the future.

Therefore, Biopolitics stresses the need to implement current business concepts with a new millennium approach, and institute environmental protection as a viable and successful business strategy. Within this framework, the concept of profit, must be re-assessed.

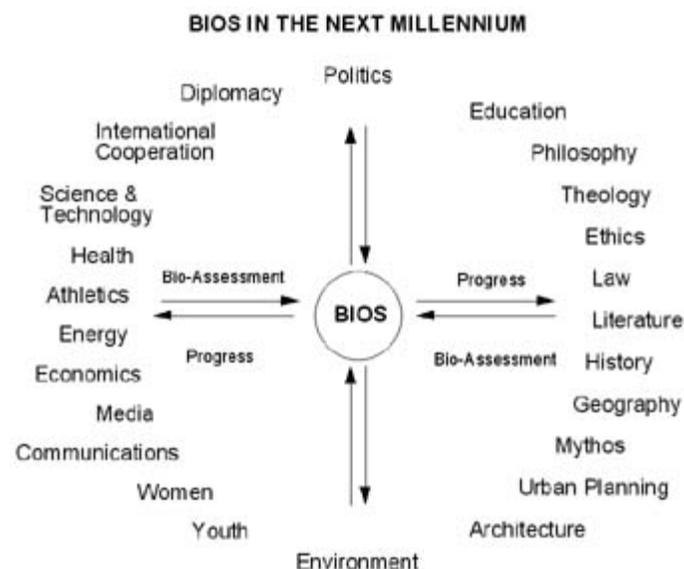
In Western culture, profit is associated with economic activity resulting in increased income and financial well-being. However, the concept of profit needs to be redefined, so as to include the dimensions of inner wealth, preservation of natural resources as a measurable part of a nation's prosperity, better health and the protection of bio-diversity, which constitute a "genuine" profit for society. Only then will changes in business mentality become part of a general tendency towards an environmentally-friendly lifestyle as a prerequisite for a better quality of life.

Bio-Education - International University for the Bio-Environment (I.U.B.E.)

Threats to bios are cumulative and, as a result, it is essential to adopt a global and holistic approach to counter them. The world community needs to develop regulating mechanisms based on a new bio-educational system, and assume a common responsibility for preserving the bio-environment for the future. The bios-theory, first proposed in 1985, promotes a unifying interdisciplinary vision, by investigating and establishing bio-environmental connections between fields, such as ethics, legislation, economics, technology, theology, aesthetics, history and diplomacy.

Communication between academic disciplines is critical. Up to now, universities have been placing barriers between disciplines. In defining new trends for future educational frameworks, it is necessary to provide channels of communication by bearing in mind that universities are, by definition, universal. Universities need to become open institutions, thus avoiding fragmentation and over-specialization, which produces irresponsible citizens.

In the attempt to establish new, bios-supporting economic strategies, an integrated biocentric education, that secures lifelong environmental literacy for every citizen around the world, plays an essential role. The International University for the Bio-Environment (I.U.B.E.), launched by the Biopolitics International Organisation in 1990, promotes a model for global bio-education, by introducing biocentric reforms at every level of education. These reforms cut through all barriers and include all academic fields, thus introducing interdisciplinary dimensions into every educational program. The I.U.B.E. is developing an International Scholars Exchange Program, for educators and decision makers from around the world to inseminate existing educational institutions with biocentric thinking and a new system of bios promoting values. Major goals of the I.U.B.E. include:

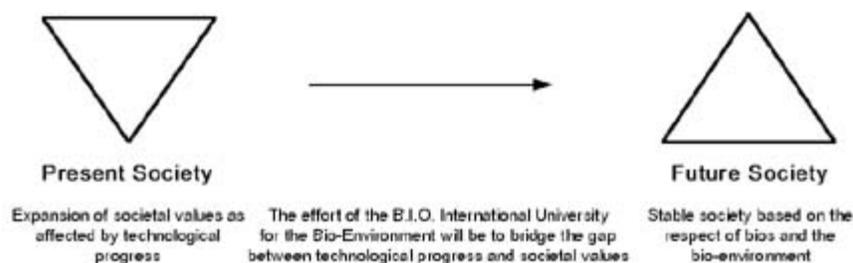


- establishing international educational reforms, in order to facilitate the shift from anthropocentric to biocentric values, and promoting an efficient, global bio-education, through the use of satellites and other communication links;

- redefining the basic core of educational curricula and incorporating inter-disciplinary elements into all educational programs, with the hope of making bio-environmental education the major link among all disciplines in all nations;
- instating international cooperation for the protection of the bio-environment, leading to a new era of bio-diplomacy;
- promoting international legislation on bios rights;
- contributing bios-related dimensions to business and management concepts world-wide;
- providing incentives for business leaders, political decision-makers and the general public to elaborate a new strategy compatible with the interests, needs and values of the bio-environment;
- organizing an international campaign for Environmental Olympics, with the awarding of Bios Prizes to "individuals or institutions that have contributed to the preservation and better understanding of the bio-environment". Furthermore, the B.I.O. proposes the revival of the ancient ideal of cease-fire during the Olympic Games;
- sensitizing public opinion to the ramifications of the biological sciences;
- promoting an international bio-assessment of technology, so as to ensure technological and economic progress that supports the bio-environment.

Bio-Assessment of Technology

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 revert the pyramid and place bios rights as the wide base of our society. Human rights will then occupy the stable tip of the structure.



A worldwide bio-assessment of technology can contribute to bridging the gap between technological progress and societal values. Progress may be viewed under the scope of Bios in the Next Millennium and retain the positive aspects of technology that help in the preservation of the bio-environment. In a dialectic exchange of views, experts in respective fields will be asked to present their thesis and antithesis, and then create a synthesis of new values leading to a harmonious biocentric society for the future. Emphasis will be placed on identifying factors contributing to the present decline of values, as well as on a way of harnessing environmental damage, so as to truly benefit from the contributions of technological advances. Professional and economic activities can thus be guided by new, bios-supporting principles, with the intention of attaining the harmonization of economic growth and bio-environmental protection.

For the successful bio-assessment of technological progress, however, plans of action need to be defined and implemented, in order to complement theoretical approaches. The Biopolitics International Organisation is thus proposing a series of measures, with the aim to incorporate respect and protection of the bio-environment within every aspect of human endeavor:

- promotion of a bios-supporting economic strategy to replace destructive policies, and of a world-wide interdisciplinary exchange of information for the appreciation of the bio-environment;
- introduction of a positive feeling among the unemployed, through payment of a Green Salary instead of benefits, with the commitment to work for the protection of the bio-environment (planting of trees, cleaning of cities etc.);
- generation of environmental action groups, utilizing both the enthusiasm of youth and the experience of senior citizens, to tackle local issues;
- promotion of the establishment of a computerized Bank of Ideas in which scientists, academicians and philosophers, as well as individuals, may deposit their thoughts and create a rich source of information and reflections on bios;
- cooperation with the media, so that a news bulletin on the bio-environment can become a regular item on news programs, in the same way that weather and stock-market reports already are;
- organization of a World Referendum so as to allow people throughout the world to express their willingness to preserve bios on our planet;
- establishment of an International Bio-Environmental Board to address transnational environmental issues, regardless of frontiers and boundaries. This International Bio-Environmental Board would support existing international organizations, such as the UN and the EU, and elicit their cooperation for the implementation of bios-enhancing issues.

Introducing Environmentally-Friendly Industry

Industrial activity and bio-environmental protection have long been considered incompatible projects. Environmentalist movements were reluctant to cooperate with industry, in order to find solutions to waste administration and pollution control, while industry seldom acknowledged that their activities posed serious threats to the bio-environment.

For many years, industry refused to accept environmental pollution as a viable concern. The general public interpreted this attitude as suspect, and this in turn created tension between environmental groups and industry. Moreover, environmental groups and industry competed against each other for the accuracy of information collected on environmental issues. The public, on the other hand, was only interested in action taken to find effective solutions. Dialogue was eventually established, in order to agree upon a solution. This solution would be the result of the cooperation of all groups concerned.

Biopolitics, however, stresses the need for cooperation between the two parties, and encourages corporate leaders to introduce bios-oriented values into their activities. Bio-environmental preservation is essential for economic growth, and efforts should be made to make businesses aware that it is in the interest of their own success and long-term profit to protect the natural environment.

Cleaner Production and Renewable Energy Sources

Environmentally-friendly industrial activity can be promoted by introducing resource and pollution taxes and other incentives for cleaner production. Important steps in this direction were taken in the 1980's when the oil crisis was overcome by introducing methods for limiting industrial oil consumption. However, production cycles need to become increasingly dependent on renewable energy sources, rather than continue to be based on non-renewable sources and raw materials, whose large-scale utilization poses environmental threats. Furthermore, emission-free energy sources such as solar and aeolic energy need to be used more extensively. Cleaner production methods are not only environmentally-friendly, but can substantially contribute to a decrease in the cost of production and waste administration, and are, thus, very profitable financially. At the same time, businesses demonstrating environmentally-friendly attitudes will have an advantage, since environmentally-conscious individuals will be more likely to show interest in their products or services.

Establishing Waste-Free Production Cycles

The re-use and redistribution of raw materials is becoming the primary goal in many countries, in order to minimize over-consumption of natural resources. Recycling constitutes the major method for achieving the desired results. However, in order for a complicated procedure such as recycling to be successful, the following guidelines ought to be followed:

- cleaner production methods, resulting in waste reduction at source, could be implemented. In addition, products should incorporate as many recyclable components as possible;
- new techniques need to be researched. We need to direct our attention toward applying biological principles to existing production methods, thus minimizing the demand for costly chemical procedures;
- public awareness of the importance of recycling programs has to be raised. In order for these programs to be effective, it is important that recycling becomes accepted as a societal value by the community. However, technical information should also be provided, so that over-enthusiastic consumers do not accidentally hinder the process;
- for the cycle to be complete, citizens need to make a conscious effort to purchase products made from recycled materials. Media could also play an important role in achieving this goal.

New Lifestyle and Bio-Business

Changes in business mentality should become part of a general trend towards an environmentally-friendly lifestyle. Preserving the bio-environment requires a general lifestyle change and involving a new business style. It is essential to realize that new alternatives lead to new opportunities in business. Profitable production and respect for the bio-environment are completely compatible goals.

The prevention of environmental deterioration also calls for the creation of ethical, as opposed to merely pragmatism, incentives. Each business company currently in operation should take an interest in bios-related problems. One of the main ways for raising this interest is the creation of an appropriate environmental image for the company and its product. This incentive has both a moral and a pragmatic aspect. It promotes biopolitical values and, at the same time, can contribute to the pursuit of new business opportunities. An environmental image can attract potential customers, as well as employees. Environmental consideration can also stimulate companies to conserve energy, water and raw materials.

In order to cope with the urgency of current environmental problems, industry and government leaders, as well as those involved in business and production, should assume special responsibilities.

Raising public awareness of the importance of incorporating bios values into business activities is crucial. Mass media and commercial advertisers can contribute significantly to reaching this goal. In order to create sufficient support for the cause of bios promotion, it is necessary to address all people genuinely concerned with the bio-environment, and to establish a new deontology, in every endeavor, that will lead to a code of ethics for the protection of bios.

Investing in "Defense for Bios"

Present threats to bios are international problems. The required solutions entail developing plans of action for peace and international understanding. International cooperation may lead to a new era where nations will no longer be at war with each other, but with bio-environmental destruction and abuse. Foreign policy could thus shift from a fragmented, competitive framework to a vision of unity and interdependence.

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 cooperation for ways to save. Presently, enough incendiary weapons exist to destroy the earth several times over. Our planet is the only planet we know of where life exists. What purpose will it serve to wipe it out just to satisfy our consumption? We need to realize that the real enemy is the depletion of the ozone layer, pollution, ignorance, starvation and disease. We cannot escape this planet. Billions of dollars have been invested in trying, while in the meantime life on our planet is jeopardized by our irresponsibility and pursuit of short-term satisfaction.

It is thus imperative to take on a common responsibility to reverse destructive trends, and work towards preserving the bio-environment for the future. Many of these trends are due to short-sighted approaches adopted in decision-making processes. In order to curb environmental destruction and secure the continuity of life on our planet, decision-makers need to realize that respecting bios is crucial to the survival of humanity, and therefore policies ought to be developed and implemented with the intention of promoting harmony and co-existence among all forms of life.

Environmental Olympics - Bios Prizes

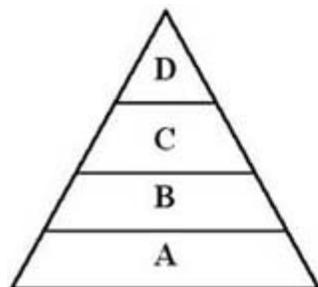
In the quest for new societal values for the next millennium, revival of the ancient Olympic spirit can contribute the necessary dimensions of unity and harmony to the development of every aspect of human endeavor. The Olympic Games, held in Greece for over ten centuries, constituted important political and cultural events, promoting a unifying vision of peace, kinsmanship and hope. During the Olympics, a cease-fire was imposed over all participating parties at war, since the event was considered an opportunity for reconciliation and unity, rather than division. Being an Olympian was considered an athlete's highest honor. A sprig of olive tree was the prize for the winner. No financial awards were given; instead, winners and their families became most respected citizens for the rest of their lives.

Presently, the Olympic Games, a beacon of world peace and hope, award medals only for physical prowess. Moreover, the concept of athletics is synonymous with sports, and feats of the body. Yet we should be reminded that the term athletics comes from the Greek word *athlos*, meaning achievement. Therefore, athletics encompasses all possible achievements of humanity, whether physical or spiritual. It is thus important that the concept of athletics regains its original significance, and becomes redefined on the basis of new bios values.

The bios theory embraces the spirit of harmonious development, both mental and physical. People should not confine themselves to striving for excellence in sporting events only. In order to promote the bio-assessment of technology and a global bio-culture for the new millennium, the Biopolitics International Organisation has been proposing the creation of international committees, in every field of achievement, assigned with the responsibility of 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, such as music, poetry, theater and scientific research. However, these competitions represent a fragmented view of human achievements. In order to re-establish the harmony and unity behind all expressions of human creativity, an overall recognition and award of achievement in sports, arts, and science may be carried out simultaneously, every four years, at the time the Olympic Flame is lit. For example, legislators could be awarded for having developed new legislation regarding bios rights, architects, for having worked in the construction of biopolis models and corporate leaders, for including environmental protection in their business activities. Prizes could be awarded in several disciplines (bio-ethics, bio-legislation, bio-economics, bio-business, bio-theology, bio-architecture, bio-diplomacy, bio-philosophy, etc.), with the hope to eventually include all human accomplishments.

The Olympiads should be a period of world peace and an occasion for all citizens of the world to celebrate the unifying concepts brought forward by the Olympic spirit. As a result, B.I.O. has been proposing the revival of the ancient ideal of cease-fire during the Olympics, in hopes that the global community will be sensitized to the value of a harmonious co-existence as a vehicle for achieving a better quality of life.



- A. Global business community to nominate candidates
- B. Chairpersons from universities and academies, and presidents of corporations to receive nominations and propose up to 150 candidates for award
- C. Elected 30 member International Committee to select 15 nominations
- D. Three member International Committee to award three Bios Prizes

Conclusion

In modern, meta-industrial society, knowledge and technological progress have expanded the horizons of human understanding. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that inadequacies in education, misuse of technology and irresponsible leadership have created a severe environmental crisis, which threatens the very existence of future generations. An international panel of environmental experts presented recently an evaluation of the projected future of humankind. Pessimists asserted that, at the present rate of environmental destruction, life on earth will be seriously compromised before the end of the next twenty years, while optimists arrived at a similar conclusion, merely extended by half a century.

What is more important than numbers however, is the fact that time is running out. A ticking clock is registering what are possibly the last minutes of life on this planet. It is crucial to realize that unless a serious commitment to protect and preserve the bio-environment is made now, the whole future of humanity is at stake.

The anthropocentric attitudes of present day society are threatening the very essence of the continuity of bios. Human arrogance and over-consumerism have resulted in a belief in abusing and destroying at will. But who are we to presume we have the right to cut the chain of life, which has existed for hundreds of millions of years? Who are we to destroy within one or two generations the gift of bios, the most precious possession on our planet. After all, if we consider the evolution of bios as a twenty-four-hour-day, the appearance of human beings occurred only during the last few seconds.

It is essential to understand that we need to shift from an anthropocentric to a biocentric system of values, and reform our thinking and morality to formulate an enlightened vision for the future. A new bios-supporting structure for society, based on a framework of global bio-education, bio-legislation, bio-diplomacy and bio-economics, can help guide humanity towards greater maturity and the commitment to respect bio-diversity and preserve the bio-environment for the future.

Since society is flexible and dynamic, educational systems have to be continuously revised. By the time proposals are implemented, they tend to be already outdated. The more society appreciates the urgency of protecting bios, the more successful it will be in fulfilling the needs of the community, the country or the world. Therefore, the shift in the system of values required for the establishment of new economic and business policies needs to gain world-wide public support. This will enable humanity to embark on a new era, with the advent of the new millennium.

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.