

BIOS AND YOUTH RESPONSIBILITY

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Biopolitics International Organisation, this noble organisation, is contributing to the change in the global situation and I would like to do the same towards this cause.

In the biosphere, where so many intricate relationships between organisms have been developing for nearly three thousand million years, man, who is at a disadvantage with some animals, as far as physical strength is concerned, has managed this handicap very well, due to his intelligence.

To give an example, in connection with studies on eco-systems and their trophic relations -- man, very soon, was using the tools and weapons he had succeeded in making, reached the very top of the nutritional pyramid and acted as a "hyper-predator". Over the last millennia he switched from the state of hyper-predator to the state of hyper-exploiter. As a result, he made his environment all the more artificial, as nature appeared to be inexhaustible. Finding the origin of this notion, "boundless resources" offered to man, is quite easy. In the book of Genesis, God put Adam in the Garden of Eden for him to cultivate it. So Eden had been created for mankind to be its sole owner, in order to be able to exploit it indefinitely. I pass over several millennia of history, to when the reign of overproductivity and short-term profits started. These are firmly fixed in the human mind. When I say "firmly fixed", I should say "firmly rooted". Rene Descartes, a 17th century philosopher, universally recognized to be a man of sense and known as the father of Cartesian logic, following the biblical tradition, wrote "Man must master and possess nature".

As a result of technical progress, the exploitation of all natural things - living or non-living, developed. - mostly without regard or planning and irrespective of the preservation of bios. While machines were improving, analysis techniques were advancing as well. Disasters of all sorts, caused by man's activities gradually appeared. I have no intention of mentioning them all, but it is worth emphasising that the emerged part of the iceberg - such as deforestation or the extinction of animal and plant species - just conceal risks which are all the more insidious as they are diluted in time and space. It would take too long to mention all the polluting agents ranging from pesticides to fuel additives. Faced with such a gloomy situation, which appeared to be as black as smog in so-called civilized capital cities, some people set off the alarm. In fact, these forerunners of environmental protection had rediscovered a few decades ago, that time had come for Homo sapiens to supplant Homo saber. As Henri Bergson, a French philosopher put it, "The geometric intelligence, whose aim is to possess space, is the natural enemy of life."

With the passing of years, a fact has been established. Very often, the groups that fight - always morally and sometimes physically - supporting the associations and institutions for environmental protection, are mostly composed of young people. As a matter of fact, the greatest strength of youth lies, and must lie, in their tendency to tackle the most complex problems in an idealistic way. This often entails a fantastic capacity for promoting and defending ideas. On the other hand, young people, according to the latin word *adolescens*, are between 12 and 30 years of age, and are not usually entrusted with any institutional power. Then, their criticisms can only be expressed through spectacular actions, turning more and more to the media and their recent developments. What about the impact of those years of fighting (more or less planned) on institutions, laws and behaviors. Due to these actions, the greatest victory must be the information revealed to the general public, slowly becoming aware of the dangers of industrialization, as they are becoming aware of their own responsibilities, and finally are beginning to modify their behavior. Personally, I think that even if this result was to be the only one to be achieved, it would be rewarding.

Moreover, it has to be pointed out that when changes occur in the behavior of a country, there are also changes in its laws, e.g., our German neighbors, who, under the pressure of the public, have become leaders in the fight against environmental pollution, resulting from the eco-movements. If we consider that example, we should be entitled to believe that similar changes may follow everywhere in the world.

Unfortunately, the obsolete structures that are not well-suited to new technologies, the financial power of some groups of leading firms, as well as the pugnacity of most governments, have led to the failure of many actions for awareness or protest. In this case, only the power of the opponents can explain the failure. But most often, a few organizations or "trends of ideas" initiated by young people, have sunk into idealism, reminiscent of Jean Jacques Rousseau. This kind of idealism, far from backing the image of bio-environmental protection, has sometimes contributed to making it utopian and consequently, unbelievable. The constructive idealism has too often been carried to extremes by young people, who saw ecology with a capital "e" as one more flag for them to fly, together with communes, self-sufficiency and the denial of technical progress.

Thus, between over-industrialized, biosphere-consuming societies, and the Pygmies' tribal way of life -- which one will be chosen by today's youth? I use as an example the Japanese society in which the choice is unsettled. Japan - a symbol of high technology and intense

industrial rivalry where all the pollutants we know are to be found (remember Minamata?), is the only country in the world stubbornly refusing the quota for whaling. In contrast to this, Japan is also respectful of its ancestral traditions. A country which considers as "national living treasures" its old craftsmen, whose art is unchanging, dating back to a time when the Japanese were still aware of the durability of goods. It is necessary to recall this now, at a time when Hirohito, the "living God", warden of traditions, is in pain, and with him, his whole empire. I think the Japanese youth have apparently not yet chosen. Nevertheless, the choice is obvious: at the beginning of the third millennium, the age group I belong to will be between 30 and 40 years old, and their children's lives, if nothing is done, will be more seriously endangered, either by pollution of industrialized countries, or by disease and malnutrition if their countries do not develop fast enough.

I repeat -- today's young people must become concerned with all these problems. If they become aware, action will finally follow by itself. If what is undertaken is guided only by idealism, then the result will be zero, indeed even minus. I think that finding a balance between idealism and moderation has become indispensable. This present meeting encourages the collaboration between the young and the old, experienced people. From this exchange of ideas a power may emerge.

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