

BIOPOLICY – OLYMPIC VALUES FOR A SOCIETY OF HOPE AND VISION

Prof. Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis

President and Founder of the Biopolitics International Organisation

and of the Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome

10 Tim. Vassou St., Athens 11521, Greece Tel: (+30) 2106432419, Fax: (+30) 2106426221

e-mail: ava@biopolitics.gr www.biopolitics.gr www.clubofrome.gr

Olympic values – a lighthouse for our future

In these **crucial times of transition**, humanity is searching for **new values and a new vision**. To build a **hopeful future**, it is essential to **draw stability from a deeply rooted past**. **Ancient Olympia**, in the beautiful valley of the **Alpheius river**, bestowed with the **most celebrated sanctuary of ancient Greece** and a mythical status that has been passed down through the centuries across human civilization, **radiates inspiration and beauty**, and can provide the drive and motivation for a new society of hope.

The **legend of Ancient Olympia** has inspired human creativity in the Greek realm for many millennia. The Olympic Games, a global institution and ideal, have their roots in the beginning of time. Some mythological accounts **credit Zeus with the first Olympic Games** to celebrate his victory over his father, Kronos. Other accounts state that **Heracles went to the banks of the Alpheius and established the Olympic Games** in memory of his victory over the city of Elis. This diachronic spirit reaches every individual, helping to elicit a global understanding of our responsibilities as human beings on this planet.

Can a new development paradigm now begin at Ancient Olympia? Since 1985, the Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.) mobilizes every human endeavor to take part in the **race to save the environment**. Combining **techne and technology**, science and the arts, we can deploy the tools of progress to decipher the **book of bios, life, the most precious possession on our planet**. Appreciating and protecting this precious gift can act as a **lever to lift the spirit of the world**.

To promote these dimensions, B.I.O. held a **major international conference in Ancient Olympia in 1999** (<http://biopolitics.gr/publications/proceedings/bio-environment-bio-culture-olympic-values-for-the-new-millennium>). The conference was attended by leaders from science, policy and academia, who searched for **dynamic vectors that transcend time**, opening a pathway to the future. Furthermore, in order to **support the next generations of world-changing leaders**, B.I.O. has been organizing a series of **Youth Bios Olympiads, held annually in St. Petersburg, Russia, since 1995**, so as to sensitize youth to some of the world's most pressing social and environmental problems and serve as an inspiration for new ethics and values for the future.

We are faced with an environmental crisis, an economic crisis, and, **above all, a crisis in leadership.** How can we exit this crisis and regain momentum and hope? *Athlos*, means **achievement**, and the greatest achievement is **to stop climate change** which is placing our planet and the future of bios in jeopardy. Today, **1% of the world's population controls 50% of the world's wealth.** These people need to **be inspired to voluntarily donate part of their wealth to projects for global growth** and climate change mitigation. But also, every citizen on the planet should be encouraged to make a conscious effort to limit environmental destruction at all scales of society.

The **Olympic Spirit can play a leading role in uniting the forces of culture and technology** to instill an appreciation of the value of life on our planet. An **Olympiad of values** and not merely of physical prowess must evolve. **Environmental Olympics, with the participation of every individual and every profession,** can help to contribute to the spiritual renaissance of humanity.

Environmental Olympics – Olympic Spirit – *athlos* means achievement

In the quest for new societal values, a **revival of the ancient Olympic spirit** can contribute 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 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.

In order to promote incentives for environmental protection, B.I.O. has been proposing the **enrichment of the Olympic Games with environmental values.** Capitalizing on the world's positively focused attention at the time of the Olympic Games, new momentum can be given to efforts for the preservation and appreciation of the environment in every sector of society. This initiative, which was **launched in 1992, is supported with great enthusiasm** by leading politicians, diplomats, scholars, representatives of UN Associations, UNESCO officials, Olympic Committee associates, and members of the Club of Rome and other prestigious international organizations (see http://biopolitics.gr/biowp/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/env_Olympics_supporters.pdf).

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 biopoleis 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 philosophy, **with the hope to eventually include all human accomplishments.**

The current crisis in values is a great threat, not only to the environment but also to peace. This is why there is a pressing need to use the diachronic ideals of the past to motivate every member of society towards the conservation of the environment. **The ideals promoted by the Olympic Spirit can lead the world to a brighter future.** The Olympic Games are a unique opportunity to move towards uniting humanity. This Olympic goal, if fully realized, would provide hope to **mobilize the positive energy of anyone who wishes to contribute towards saving bios.**

Sowing seeds of innovation

To ensure a **climate-resilient and positive future**, the most crucial task is to save time. If we do not hear the ticking clock, then we are morally accountable for the damages and problems we delegate to future generations. Restoring damages requires decision-makers to conceive a wider policy framework, fostering shared values and the political will to implement change. The time is ripe to **break away from systems** and policies of the past, where **divide-and-rule** was considered a smart approach, and to get world leaders to unite and benefit from a **common vision**. Awareness of our **interdependence and appreciation of diversity through “biodiplomacy”** can lead to a healthy and happy existence, inspiring every member of society to get involved and take action. The **body of humanity, part of the wondrous body of bios**, if guided by enlightened leaders, can develop and prosper through a **conscious commitment and pledge** to secure the survival of our planet.

Society needs to mobilize every one of its elements and strive for a better future. We are now consumed in an inverted pyramid structure, where nothing is in balance because the right priorities have not been set. The **pyramid may once again become re-inverted** once we acknowledge the value of building the **entire structure of society on environmental principles**.

Changes and reforms ought to be based on **immediate action, having as a target the transformation of our global society**. Enough with misery and hunger, lack of water and food, toxic pollution and wasting of valuable resources. We need to proceed with **expedient plans for zero emission cities, clean energy, green employment**. The ethical evaluation of technological progress through the **“bio-assessment of technology,” with a thesis, antithesis and synthesis of new values**, can open up the pathway to amazing possibilities for the mobilization of every individual on our planet, thus **creating millions of new jobs and moving forward with increased momentum and hope**.

Despite the progress of so many millennia, ethics traces its roots to several early codes such as the Hippocratic Oath for physicians, whereas ethical commitments need to be included in every human endeavor. **Why should we have a Hippocratic Oath in medicine and not in banking, energy, transport, communications?** How can we turn this pressing responsibility into a priority? In a diverse and interdependent world, considerations for environmentally ethical conduct must be clear to all. Individuals, states, corporations and voluntary organizations involved in building an equitable world need guidance as to what constitutes ethical behavior. **Biopolicy – policy with the environment at the heart of decision-making** – in every sector can provide this guidance.

The **International University for the Bio-Environment (I.U.B.E.)** – an initiative which actions the B.I.O. aspiration for global environmental literacy – is a catalyst that can infuse society with these necessary models. It provides a new educational challenge, fighting the trend towards over-specialization and seeking to open up all areas of study and training to an appreciation of life on our planet. Through an extensive **e-learning program, offered completely free of charge** with participation from 139 countries, the I.U.B.E. places environmental education at the fingertips of every concerned citizen.

Responding to the climate change challenge will also force us to consider **escaping from current patterns of consumption** and production that are exhausting natural resources and causing global warming, and transforming the social conditions of human life. Profit remains the motivating factor for businesses and powers the economic driving force. It is therefore essential to **“redefine” the concept of profit** so that it includes elements constituting **a true gain for humanity: health, quality of life, culture, biodiversity, clean energy, secure and safe natural resources.** Employment in new fields that do not create waste and do not pollute is a crucial strategy in this endeavor. From Prime Minister to street-cleaner, **all jobs need to place climate change mitigation as a priority.** The energy of the young, combined with the experience of senior citizens, can help to promote progressive initiatives in international cooperation for the protection of the environment and the fulfillment of a better life for all.

Mythos, culture and the Olympic Ideals as a vehicle for peace

Peace cannot be achieved in a world ravaged by pollution, starvation and disease. We need to be sensitized to the value of a harmonious co-existence as a vehicle for achieving freedom, opportunity, and a better quality of life. A bios-promoting vision, one that places the ethics of bios at the heart of societal structure, can provide the necessary framework to end wars and civil strife and to achieve a world in which the gift of bios is truly appreciated. We cannot envisage a future of hope without access to **culture, active and full participation, meaningful citizenship.** Meeting these challenges requires new ways of stimulating creativity in politics and policy-making, in technology, industry and commerce, in education and the arts, and in social and community development. Culture, tradition, and mythos can inspire this creativity and help us to optimize the cultural wealth of humanity.

The Olympic Games that reach back to mythos continue being the strongest opportunity for humanity to come together and to unite its efforts to save bios. Yet this opportunity is wasted. Why restrict ourselves to running faster or jumping higher? Let’s involve every individual in the positive momentum of the **Olympic Games to compete against real threats,** such as global warming and the loss of biodiversity. **Let’s be inspired by the unlimited range and beauty of life to reach peace.**

Mythos is a multidimensional tool of diachronic value. Its connection with the dimension of time and with the operation of the natural mechanisms of life can help us to appreciate bios and rejoice in its beauty and in all its varied manifestations. **The unraveling of the microcosmos can lead us to realize that life in all its forms is**

precious and irreplaceable. Life at the cell level is the most vivid expression of the perfection of the universe. The microcosmos is the world of symmetry, simplicity, interdependence and high speed. **From the smallest butterfly to the tallest tree, bios is an ongoing process reflected in the miracle of life.**

According to legend, once every nine years King Minos, the wise ruler of Crete, would ascend Mount Ide and visit the cave where Zeus was raised. The king spent many days in the cave and when he returned to his people he would bring back a set of revised laws. It was actually believed that the laws were given to him by none other than Zeus himself, who also taught Minos how to be a prudent and just sovereign. The significance of this myth today is more timely than ever, as we urgently have to build a new system of values based on environmental ethics, education, economy, legislation, and life-supporting technology. **To succeed we need the involvement of enlightened and committed leaders.**

Fortunately, more and more leaders of the world are becoming increasingly involved. The most crucial option for our planet to survive is for us to be constantly reminded that time is running out. Every swing of the pendulum brings loss of biodiversity, pollution, climate change. **We need to engage in a dynamic approach that will lead to a new oscillation, one that will reverse negative and destructive trends and replace them with a vision of hope.**

We are not the rulers of the universe. Blind arrogance has led us to the edge of the cliff. We have to ask ourselves where is our joy? Where is our intelligence? Where is our inspiration? Where is our freedom? If we **draw inspiration from the time-spanning wisdom of the Olympic Ideals**, we might be able to answer these critical questions and learn how to build a more **balanced and equitable society**. A tree with **deep roots yields better fruit**. In the same way, human progress can benefit from the deeply rooted past and expand its frontiers so that **technology, culture and society are united forces in guaranteeing the continuity of bios** on our planet and securing a brighter future.

Millennium of Peace

*Can you hear the gong
resonate the dawning of the new era*

*Can you see the bright stars
send messages of light and hope*

*Can you feel the breathing
of every creature on our planet*

*the waves of love
the whispers of life*

*Can you listen to the beat of your heart
embrace us all with warmth*

*Share the new vision
of joy, peace and harmony*

A. Vlavianos Arvanitis, 1999