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## BIOPOLICY – BUILDING GLOBAL SOCIETAL VALUES THE BIO-ASSESSMENT OF THE HUMANITIES AND TECHNOLOGY

**Abstract:** To overcome today's multiple challenges, we need to rethink the entire structure of society. We are not only suffering from an environmental and economic crisis. A crisis in values, a crisis in ethics and, above all, a crisis in leadership are threatening the continuity of life on our planet. Committed leaders from the humanities and technology need to develop a common vision for a brighter future. The “bio-assessment” of the humanities and technology, structured around the coupling of technology and the arts is key to the effort for global environmental sustainability. A World Referendum and Bank of Ideas can provide the needed momentum to reverse destruction and build a society of hope.

**Key words:** *bio-assessment, ethics, Bank of Ideas, World Referendum, Environmental Olympics*

### INTRODUCTION

The world has been struck by multiple emergencies of unprecedented proportions. The escalating crises on the economic, political, and environmental fronts reflect a deep crisis in values, and, above all, a crisis in leadership. Immediate and realistic steps to achieve meaningful reform are of the essence and time is running out. We have not a minute to lose.

International decision-makers are attempting to face the enormous problems of our times by implementing inadequate solutions of the past. But what humanity needs today is for leaders to invest their political capital and public image to push for improved environmental governance and performance and also to demonstrate the political will to raise the profile of environmental ethics and values.

By setting the right priorities on the international leadership scene, the global agenda can focus on the needed transition to a green economy, new energy mod-

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els, health, environmental security and peace. In this context, policy instruments, mechanisms, and procedures that regulate the processes of environmental protection must be based on ethics and guidelines for global leadership with a vision.

Governments cannot achieve sustainability alone and need to work with citizens, international agencies, and all stakeholders. Since 1985, the Biopolitics International Organisation (B. I. O. – [www.biopolitics.gr](http://www.biopolitics.gr)) acts as a driving force to inspire new educational and economic paradigms, new legislation for environmental protection, and new defense strategies to mitigate climate change and preserve life and prosperity. By stressing the close relationship between culture and the environment, B. I. O. promotes an interdisciplinary approach to policymaking encouraging enlightened leadership. We strive to “plant” new ideas and infuse new thinking, by mobilizing the collective talent of our network in more than 150 countries through innovative projects and programs that help to implement worldwide policy – biopolicy – for sustainable development and global societal values.

### **BIO-ASSESSMENT OF TECHNOLOGY – ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND VALUES IN EVERY PROFESSION**

The destabilizing effects of climate change, poverty, war, and the growing gap between North and South, point to the urgency of dealing with the root of the crisis. Society resembles an inverted pyramid that can collapse at any moment because the right priorities have not been set. Concerned educators, leaders and decision-makers in the humanities and technology can search for new development mechanisms to defend the environment and re-invert our unstable society by displacing arrogance and greed. To be successful, however, these development mechanisms need to be based on a philosophical framework that can define the right course of action and policy.

In this effort, good communication, transparency and open dialogue on values and policies is essential. A “bio-assessment of technology,” ensuring innovation and economic progress that support the environment, would bridge the gap between technology and societal values. In a dialectic exchange of views, presenting a thesis and antithesis and then creating a synthesis of new concepts, ways of reducing negative environmental impact could be identified so as to truly benefit from the contributions of technological breakthroughs. Emphasis could be placed on the eradication of factors causing the decline of values in society, so as to harness natural resource deterioration and develop technologies that respect and protect all life on our planet.

Biopolicy in action calls for the formulation and implementation of policies capable of bringing results. Ethical recommendations in every field of human endeavour be it science, business, health, agriculture, public administration or education, can inspire new dimensions in thinking and development. The Hippocratic Oath in medicine sets guidelines for the medical practice and has been serving as a code of conduct for physicians since the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Universal codes of ethics, such as the Hippocratic Oath, defining our obligations towards the environ-

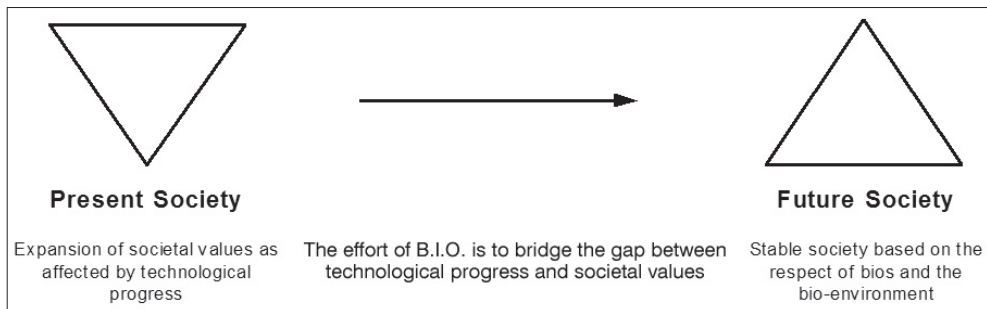


Figure 1: The bio-assessment of the humanities and technology can build global societal values to re-invert the unstable pyramid of our society

ment and all forms of life, need to be developed in every profession in order to set the pillars of a new society of hope. In an era of vast financial empires that often exceed those of states, it is becoming more crucial than ever to advocate environmental standards for financiers and ethical investment for sustainability. The task is both enormous and urgent.

### REDEFINING PROFIT – A THREE-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH

Uncontrolled financial markets have had dire effects on our natural capital and on the services upon which our economies, livelihoods and lives depend. The time is ripe for governments around the world to implement an economy which is resilient, sustainable, operates within the limits of our planet's resources and creates a fairer society. Such an economy will help us to curb unemployment with the implementation of "green salaries," eradicate poverty, protect biodiversity, and promote clean energy, education, international cooperation and intercultural dialogue, resulting in global prosperity for decades to come.

The interdependence of interests is obvious. We need to forget the paradigms of the past where the neighbour was considered a dangerous "other" and where differences in culture or religion were a source of alienation and power games. We need to give priority to a new dimension of profit; not profit in terms of money only, but also in terms of values and of ways of rebuilding society.

Small additions to past patterns are no longer sufficient. Economic growth with concern for goods and income only is not viable. By encouraging over-consumerism, we are running towards a cliff. It is time for health, education, natural capital, water, food, biodiversity, culture, intellectual sharing, productivity, peace and security to be quantified and to assume their rightful place in a *three-dimensional* approach to economic growth. We cannot discard the old system within a day, but we can make big steps by introducing a new scale for evaluating "quality of life" and for encouraging an economy where the harmony and beauty of life are truly respected and appreciated.

<b>Bio-Environment</b>	
<b>Quality of Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health - Safety - Justice - Happiness - Co-existence with all forms of life. External and Internal Wealth - Micro-Environment - Macro-Environment</li> </ul>
<b>Ethical Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diachronic Values for Society - New Criteria for Business Compatible with Quality of Life</li> </ul>
<b>Legislation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National - Global - Bios Rights - Bio-Diversity- Global Warming - Ozone Depletion - Overpopulation - Poverty - Deprivation</li> </ul>
<b>Macro and Micro-Economics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time and Space Scale - Historical Perspective - Millennium Approach -Cleaner Production</li> </ul>
<b>Bio-Diplomacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdependence - International Cooperation - Third World Viewed as Partner</li> </ul>
<b>International Commerce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Durable Development - Internalizing External Costs - Consumer Protection</li> </ul>
<b>Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Models of Participatory Democracy - World Referendum - Defense for Bios</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biocentric Curriculum in Economics - Satellites in Education</li> </ul>
<b>Media and Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet Communication Feedback - Satellite Diffusion of Information - Marketing</li> </ul>
<b>Energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of Resources - Study of Bios Models</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Opportunities for Employment in Bio-Environmental Protection - Green Salary for Unemployed</li> </ul>
<b>Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts, Cultural Values, Traditions</li> </ul>

Figure 2: In three-dimensional economics, quality of life assumes top priority in GDP, along with culture and education. The concept of profit is redefined and encompasses elements which constitute a long-term profit for society: culture, internal wealth, the preservation of natural resources, better health and the protection of biodiversity, as a measurable part of a nation's prosperity.

For decades B. I. O. has been bringing attention to the fact that gross domestic product is being used to measure economic success, but this does not account for environmental status, health, education or other forms of well-being. The preservation of the wealth and beauty of the natural world, the health of the Earth's population, fair rules of trade, and equal educational opportunities for every country in the world can be a source of genuine profit, both monetary and social.

To give world markets incentives to move toward sustainability, it is essential to provide encouragement and know-how. Opportunities range from developing and maintaining zero-emission infrastructure to improving and managing ecosystems, lifestyles and livelihoods. Technological developments provide numerous opportunities for the control of emissions from a wide range of sources, and for the remediation of waste sites and polluted waters. Nanotechnology revolutionizes the development of green products and processes that minimize the production

of undesirable by-products. Hydrogen energy production from algae adds new dimensions to the renewable energy sector. Cleaner production and low carbon technologies contribute to climate change mitigation and offer a win-win scenario for businesses everywhere. The concept of low-carbon cities brings new hope in urban management, while “green jobs” in areas as diverse as tourism, agriculture and transport improve quality of life, curb unemployment and boost the development of strategies for sustainable livelihoods.

### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND THE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FOR THE BIO-ENVIRONMENT

Education is the primary instrument for the implementation of biopolicy. Educational models with the environment at the heart of every academic discipline can inspire policy-makers to create institutions fostering innovative environmental thinking and action. A truly integrated environmental education can help us to reach a developmental framework that places people and the planet before profits. By allowing for cultural differences to emerge as the beauty and wealth of our planet, we can inspire society with new values for responsible and committed leadership.

International environmental education through e-learning, as practiced for years by B. I. O., can reach every citizen, and provide knowledge, infuse new thinking and encourage action and change. The goal is to promote environmental values and ethics in every academic discipline and professional initiative, and a truly civil society where people and organizations everywhere are motivated to respond to the urgency of combating global warming, protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development.

Launched by B. I. O. in 1990, the International University for the Bio-Environment (I. U. B. E.) inspires students and teachers in all academic areas to become environmentally conscious and responsible world citizens. It is a truly “universal” initiative, encompassing all educational levels, set up with an ambitious but happening agenda to act as a catalyst, seeking to infuse educational institutions and their graduates with new values and to encourage a deeper, internalized environmental awareness.

The I. U. B. E. focuses on the dissemination of environmental education to universities and training centers internationally, and to all the disciplines taught within them, rather than offering traditional diplomas or awards. It is designed as an open and distance learning initiative, whereby leading experts, scholars and educators actively engage in the promotion of environmental thinking. Fighting the trend towards over-specialization, the I. U. B. E. seeks to open up all areas of study and training to an appreciation of the environment and all life on our planet. It serves as a think-tank for the development of multidisciplinary environmental concepts, beyond the confines of conventional environmental science, with the aim of promoting a revised educational system that can offer new paradigms for sustainable development.

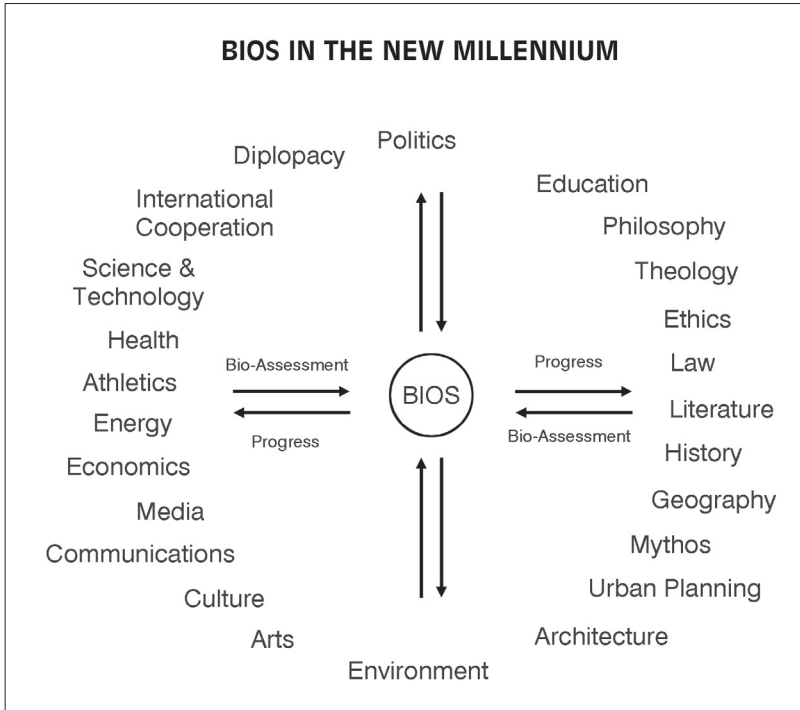


Figure 3: The I. U. B. E. promotes higher order thinking and aims to make environmental knowledge accessible to virtually every citizen on the planet.

### WORLD REFERENDUM AND BANK OF IDEAS

Inspired leadership is essential in building a society that can resist destructive tendencies and offer opportunities for meaningful participation and citizen empowerment. Today, breakthroughs in the field of information and communication technology provide the opportunity for the public to be actively involved in issues concerning our daily lives and to be able to cast a vote through the internet which can make immediate feedback possible from any corner of the globe. This will allow opinions to be actively expressed, so that politicians will no longer be able to delay or renege their responsibilities.

It is the purpose of the B. I. O. World Referendum, first proposed in 1991, to transcend national boundaries and bring the world together in a common cause. In today's complex society, nations seldom share priorities and humanity has never voted together, at the same time. Climate change and other environmental concerns are possibly the only issues that are relevant to all the nations of the world. A simultaneous electronic ballot on saving the environment 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.

To be effective in responding to environmental and ethical challenges of our times, it is essential to stop reinventing the wheel. Owing to poorly coordinated efforts, valuable time and resources are wasted while damage persists. The knowledge and technology to prevent further destruction are available, but they have to be disseminated more efficiently. An electronic “Bank of Ideas,” where any interested party may contribute information, thoughts or know-how can promote an expedient transfer of knowledge that will help to harness pollution and environmental deterioration and put an end to wasteful and unethical practices. The Bank of Ideas will function as a public resource to facilitate greater effectiveness, communication and understanding on issues and challenges that can no longer be confined within a single departmental boundary or clearly understood by a single discipline. The Bank of Ideas will also help to initiate and enhance action programs to clean the oceans, reduce emissions, save water and natural resources, reverse climate change, produce renewable energy from algae, promote effective legislation, support the wider application of clean technology and make the transition to a “green” economy.

Decisions on our common future should no longer rest solely on world leaders, who can evade or even obstruct meaningful change. Every individual can and should be involved. An important challenge for society is to engage people everywhere much more directly and deeply in the process and move them to take action in their own communities and lives. By giving priority to individual voices to be heard through a World Referendum and a Bank of Ideas, we can encourage the participation of every individual and every profession in the race to save the environment. The long-term goal should be to create an environmentally responsible citizenry that can take up the challenge of stemming the tide of climate change and adapting to its far-reaching consequences.

## ENVIRONMENTAL OLYMPICS

Opportunities for humanity to move forward and build global societal values have largely remained untapped. Lack of vision has led even the Olympic Games to become mere competitions of the body and shift into business endeavors reflecting the current crisis. There is a dire need for positive models that can serve as beacons of values to help achieve a society of hope. We need time-spanning ideals that can inspire leadership, hope and a new vision. New directions for professionals, volunteerism, the participation of youth, international education and global action.

The Olympic Games is a perfect opportunity to turn the world’s positively focused attention to the environment and to defend all life on our planet. Teams from all nations assemble to compete in an atmosphere of peace and harmony. Disputes are set aside and everyone savors the ambience of international peace and brotherhood. In ancient Greece, a truce was declared during the games and all hostilities were temporarily suspended.

Yet we should be reminded that the word athletics derives from the Greek term *athlos* meaning achievement, both physical and mental. This Olympic ideal should

be expanded in the form of Environmental Olympics to recognize anyone who excels in protecting the environment, be they scholars, laborers, legislators, writers, or farmers. Representatives of any given field could recommend their best candidates, who would receive awards for supporting the environment, constructing new ethics, or creating new values within their professions. Environmental Olympics, with the participation of every individual and every profession can help humanity re-evaluate priorities and contribute to a global appreciation of the environment. At the same time, the world community can be sensitized to the value of a harmonious co-existence as a vehicle for achieving freedom, opportunity, and a better quality of life.

## CONCLUSION

Life on our planet has existed for almost four billion years and yet, in only a few generations, we have managed to place it in jeopardy. The pursuit of narrow self-interest has resulted in a global crisis which threatens the natural environment, world peace and human prosperity. Technology expands our potential, but can also have disastrous consequences if it proceeds without concern for its social and environmental impacts. Time and again, we have witnessed the emergence of new technologies which promised positive change, but which ultimately created greater problems than they solved. We urgently need to change these trends by building a responsible and sound society that can lead humanity to a brighter future. A society based on ethical and philosophical guidelines that promote the protection of the environment and can lead to global change.

Can we hear the ticking clock of destruction? The need for action is now. Environmental threats are accelerating desertification, plant and animal species are disappearing from the earth at unprecedented rates, human populations are being displaced and driven to poverty and disease, the credit crunch is affecting consumers' environmental efforts across the globe. Humanity can no longer afford to disregard the close relationship between its actions and the environment. Meeting today's 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.

The widespread adoption of environmental thinking and ethics is the only way to alleviate economic instability, support a system of financial investment that values the environment and respects ecological constraints, curb global warming and create a resource efficient economy. There is not a moment to waste. Our true profit is a clean environment, better health, culture, education, international cooperation. Let us mobilize our thoughts and creativity to build a new society, where the joy of possessing the gift of *bios* – all life – infuses our every action and thought. This is the goal and vision for a future of hope and harmony.



## HARMONY

*With wings of the soul  
I touch the golden waves of infinity  
around, heavenly beauty like light  
sparkles rays with colours of flowers  
whispers the soil, awakens the earth  
not like a mother, just like a daughter  
of the cycle of wear  
and the infinite of the eternal  
the melody of the universe  
is surrounded by the rhythm of harmony*

A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis  
*Oscillations, A Collection of Poems, 1983*

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