

Inaugural meeting of the B.I.O. Division in Portugal

The new B.I.O. Division in Portugal was launched by the B.I.O. President in Porto, on October 2, 2004. Created at the initiative of Professors Daniel Serrao and Rui Nunes of the Department of Bioethics, University of Oporto, the B.I.O. Division will promote the goals and projects of B.I.O. in Portugal and world-wide. The Division comprises a General Council, which includes Dr. Maria Barroso as President of the Division, Professor Daniel Serrao, and Professor Rui Nunes, and also an Executive Committee, composed of Professor Cristina Nunes, Dr. Jose Belmiro Costa and Dr. Sandra Aparicio. All members attended the inauguration.

The first official meeting of the Division, which included various planning sessions, was held in June 2004, and the members have already begun to collect materials for a reference library. The B.I.O. Portuguese Division is affiliated with the University of Oporto and will be headquartered at the Department of Bioethics of the University.

The inaugural meeting featured speeches and presentations by the B.I.O. President and by all the distinguished members of the Portuguese Division.

Professor Rui Nunes

It is an honour to have a person like Dr. Arvanitis among us on the occasion of the establishment of the

BIO Division in Portugal. The Medical School of Oporto University is the ideal place for this initiative to be launched. We must make bioethics a part of daily life. Laws need to be re-structured to address bioethics, not only as ethics for human life, but as ethics for life in all of its forms that appear in nature. The implementation of bioethics is the obligation of every citizen. B.I.O. exemplifies this. B.I.O. aims to protect fundamental human rights and to demonstrate that there must be an obligation, and sub-



Dr. Sandra Aparicio and Professor Rui Nunes.

stantial and essential responsibility, to the environment. In Dr. Arvanitis' words, biopolitics is the base for future societies. I hope that bioethics will be our bridge to a better future.

Dr. Maria Barroso

Dr. Arvanitis is well-known internationally and in her country, Greece, among those who take the subject of the transformation of the world seriously.

In an extraordinary book, Dr. Arvanitis calls us all to the task to prepare ourselves practically and mentally for the transformations. A robotised and mechanised society needs to be re-born. There is a need for new concepts to face the current value crisis. Scientists and philosophers are urged to defend nature. The application of these values, compatible with the environment and sustainable development, are already in discussion by the UN and the WHO. Sustainable development should not aim only for the creation of wealth, but specifically the creation of wealth for all individuals. Even though initiatives have been taken, such as in



Dr. Agni Vlavianos-Arvanitis, Dr. Maria Barroso and Professor Daniel Serrao.

Geneva with 30 thousand participants from 178 countries, sustainable development still needs to be addressed.

The contamination of water, acid rain, and desertification are all themes known to all that may be used to create the link from the need for the sustainable development to the concepts to be applied. There must be responsible action by all citizens. We must construct a new consciousness, mainly for the future generations, for an ethical behaviour towards the environment.

Dr. Jose Belmiro

There is a need in modern democracies to use the concepts of B.I.O. A consensus can be obtained in all disciplines, such as those that rely on bioethics. Environmental disasters such as the green house effect, acid rain, desertification, destruction of the ozone layer, species extinction, and decreasing water resources are mentioned daily and remind us of the importance of the environment in our lives. We must also keep in mind the lack of respect for human rights.

The B.I.O. representation in Portugal comes in good time. In the history of humanity, there is a tendency for people to appear at a time when they are most needed. Dr. Arvanitis is one of these personalities. Dr. Arvanitis is an intellectual whose authorships cover not only science but also poetry. The representation of B.I.O. in Portugal will undoubtedly be a tool for the ideal dispersion of the bios way of thinking to Portuguese society.

Professor Daniel Serrao

We have here today a noble Greek woman who shares with Aristotle, Socrates and Plato their universal style of thinking. One day in the future, among discussions of the survival of humankind on Earth, the name of Dr. Arvanitis will certainly be mentioned among the great environmental thinkers and soldiers of this century.

All living beings are dependant on their environment; the non-living matter that provides raw materials needed for growth, nutrition, reproduction, and survival. The relationship between living beings and non-living matter assures the continuity of life. Because of this relationship, living beings need to adapt to changes in their environment. Those that cannot adapt perish.

The capacity of adapting to changes in the environment is limited and time-dependent. Adaptation can be risky in the medium and long term. Not to adapt is to risk mass extinction. This should be taken into account in the long-term sustainable development of modern human society.

Mankind, so proud of its intelligence and power on life, acts childishly towards its surroundings. The incorrect assertion that man is the owner of nature, that he can create and transform, at his will, water, air and other living things, will lead to the supreme form of violence: death of man by man. To prevent this from occurring we must awake the common consciousness of society. The Biopolitics Organisation, which Dr. Arvanitis has brought to Portugal, is the prophetic voice that calls out to us to do so. The representation of B.I.O. in Portugal will be the guarantee for those who believe that this is the only solution. And we believe it. The alternative is the extinction of the human species.



The distinguished members of the board of the B.I.O. Portuguese Division at the inaugural meeting held in Porto, on October 2, 2004.



Professor Cristina Nunes and Dr. Jose Belmiro.

Professor Cristina Nunes

B.I.O. is value system that adds a new dimension of respect for the environment, and an attempt to educate society and inspire respect for biodiversity. B.I.O. is essential. There is a need to intervene with clear and transparent rules, to generate trans-national concepts, multilateral agreements, and to insert deeply in society the concept of biopolitics.

In a world without geographical and biological frontiers there must be an international commitment to quality of life. Biopolitics must be incorporated into education and culture at the global level, aimed at the devel-

opment of mankind and the environment, the agreement to live together harmoniously with all forms of life, and to create a new structure for society, like the bioeconomy.

The B.I.O. Division in Portugal is very important. It represents a transformation of the consciousness of the Portuguese community. This is a time of increased awareness in civil society of the damage to nature and the ways to correct it.

We must aim for better education and bio-education on the internet and through other means of communication. We must increase the awareness of the importance of bios for all society. We must re-orientate

our actions. Examples of environmental damage, such as global warming and acid rain are well known and of interest to all and should be used to draw attention to this cause. Change is possible.

We need a bio-evaluation of technology, aimed at developmental and social advancement. We also need a Declaration of Bios Rights, a declaration about the duties of mankind towards the environment, aimed at protecting and improving quality of life. This will include values that should be accepted by all, and environmental policy to be obeyed. It will include the tools needed to promote and protect those rules, even against personal or group interests. Here the concepts of ethics and rights will coincide.

IXth Youth Bios Olympiad

The IXth Annual Youth Bios Olympiad was held in St. Petersburg, Russia, under the inspired leadership of Professor Alexander Shishkin with the support of B.I.O. The events took place at the Academy of Sciences, on September 23-26, 2004. More than 450 participants travelled from several foreign countries, as well as from 38 cities in Russia to take part.

Diplomas for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place awards were given in three areas: environmental research works, creative environmental works, and nominations of encouragement.

Environmental research works were presented in 8 areas: Assessment of the state of the environment; Problems of flora protection; Problems of fauna protection; Hydrobiological and hydrochemical research; Medical and social aspects of environment; Research on the state of ecosystems; Solid and industrial wastes; International cooperation in bio-environment.

Creative environmental works were evaluated to the best representation according to the following nominations: Awareness and awakening of the value of life; Theme of the Bios Olympiad; Proposal of a solution to an ecological problem; Most original concept; Brightest and most remembered image; Most expressive colour; Most original composition; Maximal use of artistic expression (image, colour,



and composition); Most educational work; Most original use of natural materials; Preservation of traditions in bio-culture; Concern for the future of the Earth; Most sincere interest in the Bios Olympiad; Humour to explain an ecological problem; Most clever interpretation of nature; Best performance skills; Best environmental essays; Best research in the field of bio-culture and bio-environment; Best posters in the field of environmental protection; Most inspiring input from teachers in the field of bio-culture and bio-environment; Most original; pedagogical method of education in bio-culture.

Nominations of encouragement were awarded in six areas: Best performance; Youngest participant; Possibility for practical use of research results; Most current ecological topic; Most original work; Best illustrative design.

Thanks to the extensive efforts of Professor Shishkin, there are currently thirty six bio schools in Russia.

III World Conference on Bioethics

The III World Conference on Bioethics, organised by the International Society of Bioethics (SIBI), was held from September 27th to October 1st, 2004 in **Cuenca, Spain**. The conference focused on issues of water shortage and contamination, as well as on the use of stem cells in research.

The B.I.O. President was a keynote speaker at the event, and addressed the ethics of green diplomacy and water sharing (p. 11). Other speakers included: Dr. Kati Myllymaki, f. President of the World Medical Association; Dr. Volnei Garrafa, President of the Brazilian Society of Bioethics; Dr. Fermin Roland Schramm, Main Researcher, National Institute of Public Health; Dr. Jayapal Azariah, Founder and President, All India Bioethics Association; Dr. Salvador Dario Bergel, Law Professor and UNESCO Chair Director, Buenos Aires; Dr. Georges Kutukdjian, Director of the UNESCO Office in Lebanon; Dr. Jose Cantu Garza, Coordinator of the Genetic Centre in Mexico; Dr. Einar Oddsson, President of the Bioethics Committee and the Iceland Medicine Association; and Professor Hector Gros Espiell.

SIBI was founded in 1996 at the proposal of Dr. Marcelo Palacios, former member of the Spanish Parliament (1982-1996) and member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council

of Europe (1986-1996). The society aims to promote reflection, analysis, and open discussion on bioethical



issues. Dr. Agni Vlavianos-Arvanitis served as SIBI Vice President from 1998 to 2002.

Resolutions

The participants of the III World Conference on Bioethics unanimously resolved to:

- **Reaffirm** the message made public by the Scientific Committee of the International Society for Bioethics (SIBI) and presented at the Palace of the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg, the 28th and 29th of January of 2003, that states: "Human intelligence must use all possible means to prevent war, and must use scientific and technological knowledge in support of peace and freedom."
- **Support and reaffirm** the Declara-

tions of the I and II World Conferences of SIBI proposed in Gijon in 2000 and 2002.

► **Affirm** that access to water of good quality is a basic human right. Therefore, indicate the social and bioethical responsibilities in regards to the promotion of the means to ensure clean water and health as a basic prerequisite to the protection of human dignity, stressing the respect for all forms of life and recognising biological and cultural diversity as the riches that are necessary to continue in the effort to build peace and common understanding.

► **Support** the use of information technology, and the means of communication and education for the divulgation and promulgation of bioethics in the search for a better understanding of the handling of the issue. The media must make use of accurate knowledge in order to publish all information correctly and with neutrality. In this way, scientific information must be current, truthful, and based on the concerns for the possibilities and expectations of the application of the proceedings.

► **Develop** the debate regarding stem cells from different sources, taking into account the indispensability to reach adequate norms and the necessary funds for research and possible therapeutic use.