

3rd Lošinj Days of Bioethics
14-16 June 2004
Mali Lošinj, Croatia

THE LOŠINJ DECLARATION OF BIOTICAL SOVEREIGNTY

1. Globalisation

Although the idea of cosmopolitanism was developed in ancient Greece and although throughout the spiritual history of the West the human spirit has unceasingly been attempting to realise and confirm its universal essence in the idea of togetherness of the humankind – globalisation as a real historical process has emerged only in our time as an indispensable consequence of scientific-technological progress.

The processes of globalisation irreversibly affect all spheres of life, have diverse dimensions and aspects, and generate diverse effects. Globalisation neither unfolds on the other side of the existential, social and moral contradictions of the thus-far history, such as meaning and meaninglessness, justice and injustice, freedom and slavery, truth and manipulation, good and evil, etc., nor does it unfold along one side of these contradictions; on the contrary, they have become the indicative and even piercing features of the processes of globalisation. Consequently, any orientation in favour of or against globalisation is pointless.

2. The effects of globalisation in the sphere of the living and the sphere of culture

The sphere of the living (bios) and the sphere of culture are heterogeneous substrata, upon which human individual and social existence is founded. These two spheres are present in the very constitution of human beings as the duality of human nature, and they act as antagonising moments which give rise to a productive tension within human existence. The principal currents of globalisation – which are not carried by either the vision of world ethos or the idea of world society, but by the interests of world trade and the ambitions of world domination – have endangered these heterogeneous spheres in an identical fashion, annihilating diversity as their fundamental structure and consequential feature.

3. Biocultural sovereignty and biocultural rights

Thus, it is essential to establish the sphere of the living and the sphere of culture as sovereign spheres and make them resistant to globalisation's levelling of the differences from the heteronymous perspective of trade interests and political domination. Biotical and cultural rights as sovereign rights – which do not succumb to either trade or political relations and influences – can follow from biotical and cultural sovereignty alone. Biocultural rights refer to the conservation of the biotical and cultural heritage, as well as to the preservation of the current constitution and existence of the biotical and cultural community.

4. The extension of the authority of political sovereignty to nature

Originally, sovereignty refers to state government and indicates its highest rank. The father of the concept sovereignty (namely Jean Bodin) established not only its significant features but also the limits of sovereign government, in which “divine and natural laws” are set as its principal limits. Four centuries later, it became possible for political sovereigns to overstep these limits and usurp their decision-making authority regarding certain changes in the natural order of life and the introduction of genetically modified organisms to nature. In turn, the fundamental biotical structures and powers have been converted into goods (patents), while nature has become an element in the trade system and trade agreements. At the same time, this is the lowest point that humans have declined to in their relationship towards nature, having thus become “merchants in nature”.

5. Biotical sovereignty

The concept of biotical sovereignty expresses autochthony as the supreme and inviolable principle of the self-preservation of a life community. Since man as a member of the political community is, at the same time, the sole responsible member of the biotical community, the responsibility of preserving biotical sovereignty is transferred to the political government. However, the political government cannot secure the authority to either change or disturb the autochthonous constitution of a life community. The autochthony of a life community can be changed or disturbed by an ill-considered introduction of allochthonous organisms, by a conscious introduction of exochthonous organisms (GMO), or by the destruction of the natural environment. The introduction of exochthonous organisms directly and consciously negates biotical sovereignty. Bioethical reasons likewise oppose the above for the following:

- a) incalculable consequences,
- b) irreversible effects,
- c) possible catastrophic consequences.

6. The violation of biotical sovereignty – case Croatia

The provisions of the Environment Protection Law, enacted by the Croatian Parliament on 25 September 2003, which refer to the limited use of GMOs and the introduction of GMOs to the environment represent an impingement upon the sovereign rights of the biotical community and a violation of biotical sovereignty by the political government. Moreover, it seems that these provisions also violate political sovereignty, since they were enacted under pressure by international political and trade power centres. The very fact that these provisions are part of the Environment Protection Law, which “regulates the system of the protection and full preservation of nature and its values” (Article 1), is an expression of political manipulation and represents a peculiar paradox.

The above provisions bear witness to the dramatic change in the attitude of the political government on nature and the issues of life in general, which is primarily evinced through the following two elements:

- the penetration of the mental barrier which has emerged in social consciousness against the introduction of GMOs to nature and nutrition,
- the abandonment of the bioethical approach which was instituted on the state level by a decree of the Croatian Parliament on 27 November 1998, and by the decision of the Croatian Government to found the Bioethical Commission for the Tracking of GMOs.

Based on the above we ask that:

- all the provisions in the Environment Protection Law which refer to the limited use of GMOs and the introduction of GMOs to the environment be annulled,
- a bioethical approach be applied in the treatment of nature and the issues of life, and that in this field the bioethical commissions be reinstated in accord with the fundamental bioethical principles,
- Croatia withstand the international pressures in protecting its biotical sovereignty, that in doing so Croatia seek allies in the international community and the circles of civil society, and that Croatia initiate the introduction of the principles and the institute of biotical sovereignty to the international legal system.

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“GMO and Biotical Sovereignty”
Round Table Participants

16 June 2004, Mali Lošinj