Foresight strategies and practices based on regional religious values and global virtue ethics

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Futures research often aims at being value-free in order to be an objective and credible source of information in the eyes of political and business decision-makers. Presenting value-laden alternatives could label futures research as pseudoscience. Naturally futures researchers have values of their own, but they present research findings that do not take any ethical stand on the issue in question. However, their clients do not suppress their values – on the contrary, political and business leaders use these research results to advocate such visions, strategies and practices that are based on their own values.

Human beings are intrinsically value-ridden creatures. Furthermore, we are brought up according to the values of our parents, families and societies, which vary in different cultures. Religion is one central component of any culture. For example, the presidents of the USA utilize religion for good and evil. Even individuals, groups and nations that claim to be atheist, are subconsciously, if not consciously, influenced by the religious past and present of their living environment: e.g., secularized Finnish decision-makers make Lutheran decisions.

Wouldn't it be sensible to intentionally incorporate regional religious values into organizational foresight management? For instance, Chinese authorities are turning to Confucian values to combat corruption. Grameen Bank eradicating poverty with micro credits in Bangladesh is based on Hindu values. International organizations can manage and enjoy the flavours of regional religions because all religions have the same value basis, the natural law (*lex naturae*), according to which all people in the world share the same sense of morality, irrespective of their religion and other background. Virtues exemplify these shared values. Maybe even futures researchers could promote virtue ethics?

The purpose of this paper is to present the idea that virtue ethics comprises the shared values for all people, and to argue how this principle could be introduced in organizational values. It is not argued that religions per se would contribute to better society but that since humans seem to have an innate need for religions, we are stuck with them and should make the best of them.

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Introduction: the dilemma of futures research

Futures researchers often provide scenarios (sets of possible futures) for politicians and businesses on which these build their visions, strategies and practices. Futures research aims at being value-free in order to be an objective and credible source of information in the eyes of political and business decision-makers. Presenting value-laden alternatives could label futures research as pseudoscience.

Twenty years ago futures research was still considered a normative activity in which the role of values was more emphasized than in social sciences in general (Mannermaa 1986). A decade ago futures research covered everything from descriptive extrapolation to prescriptive utopia (Masini 1994), and visions were seen to integrate ex-

trapolation and utopia by taking account of the emerging trends from the past and present in their attempt to realize the utopia. Thus during the last twenty years the futures research's normative approach was first diluted into a visionary approach and then starved into an extrapolative approach.

Futures researchers seem to have reached the dilemma of all endeavours that start from the inspirational ideas of creative individuals and gradually grow into organized institutions: if these endeavours want to survive, prosper and grow, they need more and more funding and cosy relations to political and economic leaders who can provide the money. For that reason, futures researchers must please their powerful partners by producing research results that these defenders of their own position can live with.

Yet the foundations of futures studies lie in Thomas More's *Utopia* from 1516; hence: if you seek to create a new world you must destroy the old. In their own circles, futures researchers can let their hair down and allow utopias thrive, but in the public eye they must tie their hair up and stick to the rhetoric accepted by the rulers. Since most futures researchers see future quite different from the present hegemony, they rather adopt the role of an objective expert than that of an ardent supporter of the status quo. They concentrate on the potential futures, possible futures and probable futures – but ignore the preferable futures. *Eutopia* (where *eu* is Greek for good) is a preferred future: "the best possible real world you can imagine and strive for, always re-evaluating your preferences as you struggle towards it" (Jim Dator in Stevenson 2006: 668).

Religious value-riddenness vs. the use value of religions

Present-day futures researchers naturally have values of their own, but they present their clients research findings that do not take any ethical stand on the issue in question. However, their clients do not suppress their values – on the contrary, political and business leaders use these research results to advocate such visions, strategies and practices that are based on their own ambitions and values.

Human beings are intrinsically value-ridden creatures. Furthermore, we are brought up according to the values of our parents, families and societies, which vary in different cultures. Religion is one central component of any culture. Religions have existed as long as conscious human beings. Humans seem to have an innate need for a religion of some kind or the other. Maybe it is biological: our selfish gene (cp. Dawkins 1976) cannot accept that we are here on earth just for reproduction purposes, and therefore recruits our well-developed brain to search for individual reasons to exist. Or are religions memes (cp. Blackmore 1999), self-copying machines since the meaning systems of religions are passed on temporally from generation to generation and many religions wish to spread spatially through mission work (Kamppinen 2002)? Or maybe the need for religion is psychological: we are so stuck in our childhood need to be protected and cared for by our parents, that even as adults we imagine parent-like gods so that we can fool ourselves to believe that someone is taking care of us, and hence feel more secure. Perhaps our fear of death creates these delusions of gods: life must go on after death, and preferably a better life.

The religious studies experts, Veikko Anttonen and Teemu Taira (2004), say that the *locus* of religion is the whole formed by human mind and body. Another expert of religious studies, Ilkka Pyysiäinen (2004), thinks that religion is a map of utopia – hence accidentally making it a method for futures research. Sociologist Émile Durkheim (1912) maintained that religion is a social system of sacred issues in the collective conscious of humans. The father of analytical psychology, Carl Gustav Jung (1963) saw religion as an unconscious archetype (see Ketola 1997, 1999). For him 'religioning' is a universal human capacity to find meaning in one's life (Mathers 2000). Atheists believe that religions are superstitions – and think that acceptance of this fact increases satisfaction, as this life is the only chance to get it. In the same way Karl Marx thought that religion was the opium of the people. We are still addicted to religion irrespective of whichever part of the world we live in.

The gradual secularization of Western countries after World War II left a value void in the lives of individuals and organizations, which market economy values have not been able to fill. After experimenting with hippy thoughts, Eastern religions and New Age movements, Western people have started to rediscover their traditional Christian religions as a value basis for life. This trend shows also in business life. The increased spiritualization of corporate and managerial values has been spotted by

management research (see e.g., McCormick 1994; Nash 1994; Cavanagh 1999; Nikula 2006). Voluntary corporate responsibility policies and practices adopted by an increasing number of companies illustrate both the duty ethical (after Kant 1785) and utilitarian (as described in Bentham 1789) sides of the coin (see more in Ketola 2005, 2006).

Religion cannot be separated from historical, social and cultural contexts (Taira 2004). That is why, even individuals, groups and nations that claim to be atheist or secular, are subconsciously, if not consciously, influenced by the religious past and present of their living environment. Religion is not only a private matter but has re-entered politics and business (Taira 2006). The 2006 Nobel Prize winner Bangladeshi Muhammad Yunus and his Grameen Bank represents its positive side: his idea, based on the Hindu values of moderation, generosity, trust and reliability, has since 1974 been to give micro credits to poor women so that they can employ themselves. Grameen Bank has now nearly seven million customers. This kind of business spread in the 1990s; e.g., an international Microcredit Summit Campaign has currently over 100 million customers – showing how such values are universal.

An Indian scholar, C.K. Prahalad (2005) has been promoting this idea of eradicating poverty by creating opportunities for the poor in his book and gives many examples of these kinds of successful endeavours. Tecnosol provides financing arrangements for Indian entrepreneurs offering solar, wind and hydro energy solutions to poor rural areas that do not have access to grid. Cemex, a Mexican cement business multinational, offers a savings and credit scheme for the poor so that they can buy enough building material to complete their building project at once. ITC, an Indian conglomerate, has connected Indian villages with PCs so that farmers can check the best market prices for their products daily. Telefonica has enabled proliferation of wireless devices among the poor in Brazil. Nokia has introduced three new cheap and easy-to-use mobile phones for the Chinese, Indian, South American and African markets.

On the other side of the coin, for instance, secularized Finnish decision-makers make Lutheran decisions – and even appeal to Lutheran teachings to explain, justify and excuse their actions. Nokia, the most powerful Finnish company is a good example of this. Mr. Pekka Ala-Pietilä (2004), Chief Executive Officer of Nokia, wrote about the need for humility at the time of both success and failure in a book published in honour of Bishop Eero Huovinen. In Ala-Pietilä's view, it is important not to deny the reality or devalue what has happened. Humility means an ability to be self-critical and a desire to learn. Ala-Pietilä emphasized the difference between self-esteem and self-satisfaction: a company needs healthy self-esteem in order to be able to meet the future challenges but it must constantly fight against unhealthy self-satisfaction that creates a dangerous feeling of security.

Nokia' huge economic power and the accompanying major influence on Finnish society predisposes the company to self-satisfaction and hubris. For example, during Nokia's financial information public announcement on 25 January 2005, Mr. Jorma Ollila, Nokia's Chairman, concentrated on boasting about the large amounts of taxes and bonuses Nokia had paid in Finland in order to devalue the accusations against Nokia of poor treatment of employees presented in a programme MOT on the Finnish TV-1 on 17 January 2005.

Another example of Nokia's hubris was shown by Mr. Ollila, Nokia's Chairman, when the forthcoming CEO, Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo was given a 31,000 euro fine for tax fraud for trying to import his 11,000 euros purchases from Switzerland to Finland without declaring them at the customs. Mr. Ollila brought the subject up during Nokia's financial information public announcement and told the media that Kallasvuo should be forgiven because the Citizen Responsibility Catechism Ollila had received from Archbishop Jukka Paarma taught forgiveness (Anttila 2006). With those words Nokia's Chairman adopted the role of a spiritual leader or even that of Jesus who could forgive sinners.

Both corporate leaders and politicians often think highly of themselves. They are more likely to be narcissistic than other people. Business and political life attract narcissistic, even psychopathic personalities (Ollila 2005). Charismatic leaders are often narcissists. The charismatic grandiose narcissistic leaders demand idealisation from their subordinates (Kets de Vries 2001) and may gradually start believing that they are omnipotent and even god-like. Some of the grossest cases would be laughable – at least to the outsiders – if their consequences weren't so tragic: the promotion of the superhuman, god-like, heroic deeds of the great leaders of Russia (Stalin), China (Mao Zedong) and North Korea (Kim Il Sung). These leaders forbade all known religions in their countries in order to replace the traditional gods with their own

personality cult. Such exaltation is possible only in totalitarian countries, closed dictatorial societies with no opportunities for making comparisons.

Most world leaders are necessarily a grade or two less narcissistic than Stalin, Mao Zedong or Kim Il Sung, as they live in more or less democratic countries. For that reason they have to accept religions. In fact this "necessary evil" may become a "blessing in disguise" for the leaders: they can use religions for their own benefit.

Through the ages American presidents have utilized religion for good and for evil. On the American dollar bill we can read the ecumenical words: "In God we trust." Yet George Bush has labelled certain countries (e.g. former Iraq and Afghanistan and present Iran and North Korea) as the axis of evil, as if his country, the USA, belonged to the axis of good, and he personally had the god-given right to split the world into good and evil countries. In this "divine power" of his Bush resembles the leaders of Iran and former Afghanistan. In atheist North Korea, the son of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, has not succeeded in attaining a god-like status, which may be a signal of change. In the Islamic countries of Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran people trust in God like in the USA. The God of Muslims is in many ways rather similar to the God of Christians and the God of Jews. President Bush wishes to kill these monotheist "cousins in faith" but has not labelled either polytheist India with its spectrum of Hindu gods or atheist China with its totalitarian system as a part of the axis of evil. India and China are rapidly developing economies offering great business opportunities for American companies while Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran have major oil wells for the Americans to conquer. The rapidly developed American ally, South Korea, wants to absorb its Northern brother. In other words, Bush uses religion to further his political and economic ambitions, just like Lincoln, Wilson, Roosevelt and Truman – or the Roman emperors, Viking kings, Ottoman sultans and Imperialists, for that matter. Hence widely different religious beliefs themselves would not be an obstacle for peaceful cooperation either.

Old European kingdoms exemplify the former god-like status of rulers. Before euro currency their notes and coins were stamped with the heads of their kings and queens. The only European Union countries refusing to adopt the joint currency were three kingdoms: Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, all of which kept their royal money. While nowadays the royals are just figureheads, the royal heads on the currency used to show who

had the highest political and economic power in the country. Despite their narcissistic ambitions and wishes, neither the European royals nor the earlier Roman emperors were really regarded as gods. Jesus asked: "Whose head is this [on the coin]?" "Caesar's", the Pharisees replied. "Then pay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." Matthew 22: 19–21). In Asia things have been different: e.g., the Emperor of Japan has been worshipped as God until very recently despite the very Western division of power between the parliament with its government and the royal family.

The leaders of atheist China have also started to realize the potential use value of religions in reaching their political and economic goals. Currently, while putting the members of Falun Gong in prison, the Chinese authorities are turning to Confucian values to combat corruption and strengthen their grip on power. During the last few years the Communist Party of China has gradually been giving in to the attractions of the market economy. The triumph of capitalist principles over Marxist principles in China's everyday life has left its political leaders with little power to decide on the present circumstances and future directions of this huge country. Because of its emphases on stability, hierarchy and authority Confucianism used to be favoured by the Chinese rulers for centuries, before Mao Zedong banned it after his rise to power in 1949. With Confucianism the Chinese leaders could re-legitimize their right to rule but also promote virtuous, non-corrupt organizational behaviour at all levels of society.

Many learned Chinese would welcome Confucian philosophy to avoid the imminent moral and ethical decay of the country. Professor Kang Xiaoguan points out that with the abolishment of the traditional religions – Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism – half a century ago, China gave up much of its cultural heritage (Ådahl 2005). This means that most Chinese citizens have lived in a religious and spiritual void for all their lives and do not know how to treat each other. That is why corruption is rife at all levels of society from local and regional decision-makers to governmental officers. Confucian ethics are clear to understand and simple to follow for both the leaders and their subordinates. These principles require the rulers to be just and morally impeccable and the subjects to be obedient and respectful at all levels of society from families to the nation. Confucianism would allow the Chinese citizens to re-discover their cultural

roots and the leaders of China to regain power. The Communist Party has now allowed Confucian philosophy to be taught at schools so that these ethical principles would become rooted in the minds of the future generation of rulers and subordinates who can put pressure on the older generations.

Many oppressed minority ethnic groups in China would welcome the introduction of a set of ethical values into local, regional and national decision-making, although for example Tibetans would prefer the decentralized Buddhist value basis over the centralized Confucian one. Most minority groups all over the world, including aboriginals in Western Siberia, Central Asia and Southern Africa would have a chance to survive and prosper even without independence if their political and corporate masters adopted ethical standards that respected their ethnic values.

The above examples illustrate the hugely varied and important role of religions in political and organizational life. With all this in mind wouldn't it be sensible to intentionally incorporate regional religious values into organizational foresight management? That might be the case in small and medium-sized companies operating locally under one set of religious values as they could strengthen their stakeholder cooperation by adopting trust-inducing values. This would enable the companies to root themselves firmly in society so that their continuity would be more secure and future success more probable. But what about large multinational companies which operate in many countries with varied religious beliefs? Should they adopt different ethical standards in different areas? While Buddhism and Islam or Hinduism and Christianity are very far from each other in dogmas, they do have some underlining ethics in common: they all preach for instance on moderation, generosity, justness, kindness and loyalty – on virtue ethical values.

Virtue ethics as a value basis shared by all religions

People in politics, business and civil life seem to need absolute values as guidelines for their endeavours although vast cultural differences could make one conclude that values are relative. Relativism is one philosophical approach to ethics (Wittgenstein 1953; see also Johnson 1993). In relativism, ethical values are not regarded as abso-

lute but as changing. On the other hand, already Benedictus de Spinoza (1677/1959) in his *Ethics* and Immanuel Kant (1785) in his duty ethics as well as their deontological successors, such as John Rawls (1971) in his *Theory of Justice* and Alan Gewirth (1978) in his theory of rights in *Reason and Morality* all emphasize that ethics are absolute, thus denying the validity of relativism. They argue that ethics are rational principles shared by everyone (see also Ollila 1997). Donaldson (1996) divides morality into (a) ethical relativism, which believes that ethical values vary from culture to culture, and (b) ethical universalism, which believes in global ethical values.

In fact religions share the same value basis, the natural law (*lex naturae*), according to which all people in the world have the same sense of morality, irrespective of their religion or other background (Ketola 2005). Religions are separated by different dogmas but united by the same ethics. Philosopher Maija-Riitta Ollila (2006) argues that the essential divisions are within religions rather than between them. All religions have many schools of thought and all religions have their moderate wings as well as fundamentalist extremes. The similarities between the values of the fundamentalists of different religions are just as evident as the similarities between the values of the moderates of different religions. Fig. 1 illustrates this reality and the core shared by all religions. The core is virtues.
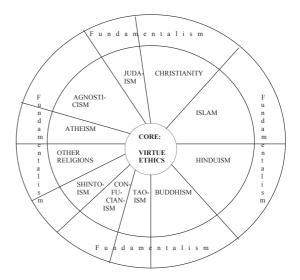

Fig. 1. Virtue ethical values that all humans share irrespective of their religious beliefs.

Virtues exemplify the values shared by all people. Virtue ethics are based on the thoughts of Socrates, Plato and particularly Aristotle (384–322 B.C.). Virtue ethics take account of both the motives and the nature of the actors. When evaluating an action and an actor, (a) the intention of doing good should be taken into consideration even when the action has led to evil; and (b) the past immaculate behaviour of the slipped actor should mitigate the punishment. It is easier to forgive a single deed that was done by accident or while of unsound mind than continual, intentional evil deeds.

In his classic work *Ethics* from 348 B.C., Aristotle (see e.g., Barnes 1988) describes a virtue as an attitude that makes a person good and helps them do their work well. According to Aristotle, a virtue is a middle road between two evils. One extreme of evil comprises of the seven deadly sins, the other extreme of evil would include the opposites. In-between the two evil extremes lay the virtues. Table 1 illustrates the position of the virtues between the two evils.

Each of the two excessive evils can often be found in the same person or company, e.g. arrogance and cringing or envy and extolling. They are the extreme, desperate coping mechanisms of situations a person (or organization) cannot control. Aristotle said that, in addition to (1) temperance, a virtue requires both (2) consideration and (3) training. In order to (1) find the middle course between too much and too little, the virtue practitioners must (2) find their solutions rationally and not arbitrarily, and they must (3) learn self-discipline to keep their emotions in check. For Aristotle the purpose of human life was happiness. In happiness he saw three complementary forms: life of pleasure and enjoyment, life as a free and responsible citizen, and life as a thinker and philosopher. If we find the middle road in life, we can fulfil all three forms of happiness at the same time.

Aristotelian virtue ethics have been strongly advocated by the famous philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright (1997) who died in 2003 as well as by theologian and Islam expert Reino E. Heinonen (2006). Even the sceptical futures research guru, Wendell Bell (1997), accepts virtues as a prime candidate for universal values. Virtue ethics have been adopted e.g. by philosophers Amartya Sen (1995), who has developed John Rawls' (1971) theory of justice further, and Martha Nussbaum (1993). Eastern philosophies Buddhism and Taoism, which are also religions, promote these middle way virtues as the basis of good life.

Carter Crockett (2005) has made a very strong business case in favour of the cultural paradigm of virtue: he explains how virtue ethics can make a company a champion for its practical unification of strategic and normative excellence. The empirical research results by Robertson and Crittenden (2003) show that virtue ethics are the only form of moral philosophy that is suitable for both western and eastern culture and for both capitalist and socialist ideology. Hence virtue ethics have the best potential to serve as a value basis in international endeavours.

In conclusion, multinational companies and international organizations can manage and enjoy the flavours of regional religions because the virtue ethical values can be found at the core of all religions.

Foresight strategies based on virtues

Religions are interconnected with power relationships and can be used as instruments of power. If we focus on the humankind's inhuman past and

Table 1. The position of virtues in-between two extremes of evil (developed from Ketola 2005: 92, 2006: 58).

The seven sins	=>	Virtues: the middle road	<=	The other evil extreme
– arrogance	=>	humble pride	<=	cringing
– envy	=>	justness	<=	extolling
– greed	=>	generosity	<=	exuberance
– hostility	=>	kindness	<=	fawning
– gorging	=>	moderation	<=	anorexia
– indulging	=>	loyalty	<=	puritanism
– slackness and falsity	=>	flexibility and reliability	<=	rigidity and home truth telling

present of continuous wars, genocide and oppression justified by various religious beliefs, we might wish to abolish all religions from this planet. But then we would be looking only at the heads of the coin, where narcissistic ambitions of leaders direct their subjects to destroy each other for temporary egoistic political and economic goals. We would forget the tails of the coin where spectrums of human cultures flourish like ecosystems safeguarding their biodiversity. Regional religions belong to this precious cultural diversity as long as they are not exploited to justify opposite goals of uniformity. Religions may empower people. It is also worth remembering that even the so-called world religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism have many faces. Their contents vary spatially and temporally.

Bell (1997) discards religions as the value basis for futures strategies on their own but finds them two useful roles in the strategy process: (1) religions are storehouses of value assertions to be tested by other means; and (2) religions are persuasive motivators for people to work for particular futures. In this paper, it is argued that religions can be tested by virtue ethical means – and a common value basis for the futures strategy for all humankind can be found. People with different religious beliefs will be motivated to work together to make this future happen because this strategy meets their own value needs just as well as those of the others.

Foresight strategy implementation in geographical scales

A global futures strategy based on global virtue ethics can be endorsed through worldwide organizations, such as the United Nations. In addition, each region and nation can build and implement its own futures strategy in line with the global strategy, in which regional religions can give flavour to the virtue ethical values.

We need action now. Time is running out. Professor Markku Wilenius (2005: 148), director of Finland's Futures Research Centre, underlines the need for a radical change of direction: "most studies assessing the carrying capacity of the planet indicate that we no longer have even one generation left". Humankind "must adapt its activities to such dimensions as are called for by sustainable development and this must take place in the next 15 years." Wilenius speaks for the Age of Responsibility. All actors, whether global, regional or lo-

cal, corporate, institutional or private, should take part in saving the world from destruction.

Stevenson (2006) advocates a foresight process called Anticipatory Action Learning (AAL), which turns visions into actions in a participatory process. AAL is a democratic process offering a non-violent and non-confrontational way to change a preferred future. The stages of AAL could be applied to building global, regional and local futures strategies. AAL is goal-creating and participatory in contrast to strategic planning which is goal-seeking and managerial.

Brown (2005) sees companies as citizen society members whose task is to carry out the values of society. Following his idea, this paper suggests that companies should model their strategies and practices on global, regional and local strategies of our society. Small and medium sized companies can build their foresight strategies on the basis of the regional and local strategies. Multinational companies can take the global strategy as the basis for their strategies and spice it with regional and local strategies. Companies will form networks with intergovernmental organizations, global, regional and local non-governmental organizations, governments and other stakeholders. The views of each actor, whether institutional, corporate or individual will be respected and common ground will be expanded with open and honest ongoing dialogue.

There are many ways to approach the foresight corporate strategy issue in practice. Collier and Wanderley (2005) emphasize that businesses, whether local or global, are global change agents who should commit to the primacy of human rights to secure their future because shareholder value and human rights are the interactive elements of good business. Doane (2005: 215) reminds us that instead of simply minimizing the unsustainable impacts of the 'mammoths', i.e., big business, we should be supporting the ethical 'minnows': "businesses that operate on a sustainable platform and provide a social return on investment, beyond mere financial profit". Stahl (2005) suggests that we should replace our traditional responsibility with reflective responsibility by applying openness, affinity to action and consequentialism. The teleological nature of responsibility and its intrinsic drive for good life leads to modesty: perfection is unattainable – which means that all parties involved must rely on ethical virtues. Fuller and Tilley (2005) solve the temporal and spatial problems of current business, i.e., the

short-term nature of corporate perspectives and their limited view of responsibilities, by integrating the futures orientation and the ethical orientation in order to build ethical futures strategies.

Religions have been used also in business to justify the exploitation of humans and nature for centuries. With holistic global, regional and local co-operation the destructive powers of religions can be turned into creative powers. The danger of religions being used for egoistic economic or political purposes by business leaders or world leaders, like presidents George Bush, Vladimir Putin and Hu Jintao can be avoided if these leaders together combat all fundamentalist religious views, which threaten to tear the consensus of the world apart. In this important role they will be forced to reconsider their own values. For example, President Bush with his staff might decide to stop using dichotomies like good and evil when talking about different countries in order not to sound like Mahmud Ahmadinejad, the fundamentalist president of Iran. Most Muslims are not a threat; they have the same dreams and fears as Christians or any other people. Many of them dream of transcultural future, which could be achieved through a virtuous spiral vision, which includes: "an alternative economics to world capitalism, cooperation between genders based on dignity and fairness, self-reliant ecological communities, use of advanced technologies to link these communities and a world governance system that is fair, just, representational and guided by wise leadership" (Inayatullah 2005: 1198).

Conclusions

There has been friction between science and religion during the history of humankind and the sparks have sometimes kindled great fires. Virtue ethics can put out the fires and build solid brick bridges between science and religions without offending the principles of either. Religions are based on belief, science on empirical findings. Virtue ethics find the recipe for good life both in the core beliefs of religions and in the empirical findings of natural and social science research concerning humans living in their ecosystems. Table 2 gives some examples of foresight strategies based on virtues for anyone to follow.

Table 2. Some examples of foresight strategies based on virtues.

Virtues	Economic foresight strategies	Social foresight strategies	Environmental foresight strategies
Justness:	Divide your welfare between all your partners, human or natural, in proportion to their contributions.	Treat all human beings all over the world according to the same fair play rules.	Treat nature and its creatures all over the world according to the same fair play rules as the humans.
Generosity:	Support disadvantaged and crisis-stricken humans and other creatures.	Help all human beings to have a healthy, safe and happy life. Promote local culture.	In all activities give priority to biodiversity and invest much time, money and expertise to promote it.
Kindness:	Help your fellow human beings and local communities to keep their economy in order.	Promote an open, friendly and happy atmosphere. Treat all people and communities like friends, looking after their wellbeing.	Treat nature and its creatures like friends, looking after their wellbeing locally, regionally and globally.
Moderation:	See to it that the rich are no more than four times as rich as the poor.	Find human wellbeing more important than efficiency and adapt working hours and paces accordingly	Find the wellbeing of nature more important than efficiency, and take this into account in all activities.
Loyalty:	Hold on to your employees, partners and locality for better and for worse.	Defend all people against the abuse and exploitation of others.	Defend nature and its creatures locally, regionally and globally against the abuse and exploitation of others.
Flexibility:	Give people, who have run into financial difficulties, more time to meet their obligations, and help them to conquer their troubles.	Take account of the individual circumstances of people.	Take account of the individual circumstances of nature and its creatures.
Reliability:	Fulfil your contracts and hold onto your promises.	Be trustworthy so that all people can believe that you act in their best interests under any circumstances.	Act in the best interests of nature and its creatures under any circumstances.

Futures researchers have a great deal of power in the scenarios and other consultation they provide for political and business leaders. They can influence the views of global, regional and local decision-makers. The question is: could futures researchers promote global virtue ethics to make these foresight strategies for a good life for everyone happen?

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