

Seventh Plenary Assembly: Workshop Discussion Guide

**HUMAN VALUES AND THE PURSUIT OF A FULL HUMANITY
IN ASIA**

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1. PREAMBLE

Listening to the Voice of the FABC 1970-1997

We are invited to discuss the question of human values from an inter-cultural stance. A dialogue with living cultures has been central to FABC thinking from the very beginning. Let us briefly recap a few of the more significant statements over the past 30 years.

1.1 Vision of a Multi-Cultural Church – Manila 1970

The message from the Asian Bishops' Meeting held in Manila in 1970 reads, in part:

We... urge on all a deep respect for the cultures and traditions of our peoples, and express the hope that the catholicity of the Church, the root of our diversity in the oneness of faith, may serve to help Asians remain truly Asian, and yet become fully part of the modern world and the one family of humankind. (Message, par. 24)

It remains for us, with both patience and decision, to help bind together the new world of Asia, as a true family of nations in this part of the earth, linked not only by lines of geography, but by mutual understanding and respect, by the nobler bonds of brotherhood and of love. (Message, par. 27)

We make ours, in the most solemn of ways, the hopes and aspirations for a new Asia which shall be worthy of the future that is

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laid up in the heart of Asian Man. (Message, par. 28)

We also pledge ourselves to develop an indigenous theology and to do what we can so that the life and message of the Gospel may be ever more incarnate in the rich historic cultures of Asia, so that in the necessary process of modernization and development, Asian Christianity may help to promote all that is "authentically human in these cultures."¹ (Resolution No. 13)

Thus, thirty years ago, Catholicity was described as unity in faith among a diversity of cultures (par. 24). While Asia has geographical and political divides, we are united by root values (par. 27) and common aspirations (par. 28). This is a vision of a polycultural Church united in faith with other Christians, while culturally united with fellow Asians through paradigmatic cultural values. This new vision of becoming authentic local Churches needs theological articulation (Res. 13). Twenty-eight years later, the vast majority of interventions during the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia (April-May 1998) spoke from this vision of a multicultural communion of authentic, local Churches.

1.2 Transparently Christian, Authentically Asian – Taipei 1974

The First Plenary Assembly took up the dialogue with living cultures as one of three crucial facets of the dialogue of life with other Asian peoples (the other two facets, as we well know, being the living dialogue with the poor and oppressed, and with other faith traditions).

The local church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions – in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply, and whose history and life it gladly makes its own. It seeks to share in whatever truly belongs to that people: its meanings and its values, its aspirations, its thoughts and its language, its songs and its artistry. Even its frailties and failings it assumes, so that they too may be healed. For so did God's Son assume the totality of our fallen human condition (save only for sin) so that he might make it truly his own, and redeem it in his paschal mystery. (First Plenary Assembly, Taipei, 27 April 1974. Statement, par. 12)

1.3 Asian Cultures — Rapidly Changing, Increasingly Secular — Calcutta, 1978

The "reincarnation" of mission Churches as truly Asian Churches is not one-sided. Inculturation is not simply a question of adaptation to local realities, nor is it nostalgia for a romanticized past. Simplistic models of inculturation are inadequate in a rapidly changing world. This received appropriate emphasis during the FABC Second Plenary.

The modern world, despite its undeniably great achievements, brings about the gradual disintegration of our traditional societies and the effects on peoples's lives which follow on it. The loss of a sense of belonging in community, depersonalized relationships, disorientation and loneliness, — these have become part of the lives of so many of our people. With its accompanying secularization, too, with its worship of technology, narrow materialism and secularism, its fever for consumerism, its ideological pluralism — realized in diverse ways in different societies — our age quite swiftly erodes religious values and often suffocates the aspirations of the human spirit, especially among the young. The generations growing up in our time tend to lose the sense of God, the sense of his presence in the world, of his providence over their lives. (Second Plenary Assembly, Calcutta, 25 November 1978. Statement, par. 8)

This situation brings before all religious traditions, and to the Church in Asia along with them, a true crisis. A crisis: for, as the ideograms which make up the Chinese word for it tells us, crisis means both danger and opportunity. Danger of the dying out of these values, the squandering of the precious heritage we have just spoken of. But opportunity as well: for in striving to keep alive and hand on to the future the riches of contemplation and interiority which have been ours, we will be able to offer them as precious gifts to the Church. In already thoroughly secularized societies and in growing areas of unbelief the Church seeks with all earnestness to regain these same values... (Second Plenary Assembly, Calcutta, 25 November, 1978. Statement, par. 9)

The handing-on of these values to present and future generations calls for creative assimilation and "translation" into contemporary cultural expression... (Second Plenary Assembly, Calcutta, 25 November 1978. Statement, par. 10)

This creative labor is, in a genuine sense, what the task of inculturation calls for in many of our countries. It must assume into the

full Christian life of our peoples what is good, noble and living in our cultures and traditions — and thus in our hearts and minds. Thus, too, it will bring to fulfillment the future harvest of "those seeds which God's own hand has planted in our ancient cultures even before the Gospel was preached to our people. (Second Plenary Assembly, Calcutta, 25 November 1978. Statement, par. 11)

We are daily more convinced that the Spirit is leading us in our time, not to some dubious syncretism (which we all rightly reject), but to an integration — profound and organic in character — of all that is best in our traditional ways of prayer and worship, into the treasury of our Christian heritage. (Second Plenary Assembly, Calcutta, 25 November 1978. Statement, par. 31)

... We believe that with deeper study and understanding, with prudent discernment on our part and proper catechesis of our Christian people, ... many indigenous riches will at last find a natural place in the prayer of our churches in Asia and will greatly enrich the prayer-life of the Church throughout the world. (Second Plenary Assembly, Calcutta, 25 November 1978. Statement, par. 33)

Rapid change is secularizing Asia (par. 8), bringing both the danger of materialism and opportunities to develop cultures of pluralism and participation (par. 9). We shall be able to hand on our own religious values, only if they are lived in Asian ways (par. 10). What we can give depends on how radically we are willing to be "re-born" with Asian hearts and minds (par. 11). This is not syncretism (par. 13) but needs to be accompanied by appropriate catechesis (par. 33).

Interestingly enough, the dialogue with Asian cultures has not been developed as a separate theme since 1978. However, crucial cultural issues have been taken up by various concerns, such as, women, youth, indigenous peoples and urbanization.

1.4 Culture of Life — Manila 1995

Cultural dislocation on a massive scale has occurred, especially during the past 15 years. This has occurred both through physical migration and through invasion by the values of the market places. The more the globalization of the market economy has uprooted peoples from their cultural values, the more the FABC has placed emphasis upon core, life-enhancing cultural values.

From the dynamic forces at work within Asian realities a basic vision of life emerges. In the living heritage of cultures and reli-

gious traditions of Asia we discern values and their expressions in symbols, stories and art forms, that embody a vision of life; while we are critically aware of the distortions that have entered into these traditions. In these cultural and religious traditions we also discover the responses to life given by past generations of Asian peoples, which in turn become resources for our contemporary response.

While Euro-American responses to the clash of values are often painted in apocalyptic terms, FABC speaks quietly and clearly of the mystery of Life at the heart of culture:

We Asians are searching not simply for the meaning of life but for life itself. We are striving and struggling for life, because it is a task and a challenge. But life is a gift too, a mystery, because our efforts to achieve it are far too short off the ultimate values of life. We speak of life as a becoming — a growing into, a journeying to life and the source of life. (Sixth Plenary Assembly, Manila, 10-19 January 1995. Statement, par. 9)

1.5 The Globalization of Culture – Pattaya 1997

The more immediate background to this workshop can be found in the landmark Colloquium on Church in Asia in the 21st Century, held in Pattaya, from 25th - 31st August 1997. Cultural values and cultural change in an age of globalization were central to the entire discussion. The impact of culture on other life dimensions, and the bearing of change on culture were central to the discussion on religious traditions, the mass media, mobility of peoples, questions of religious fundamentalism and identity, discovering an Asian world view to integrate our commitment and lifestyle, changing gender perceptions and roles, tourism and the marginalized.

2. CULTURES – PRE-MODERN, MODERN AND POST-MODERN

We are taking up the issue of human values and the pursuit of a full humanity in Asia as presented at Pattaya 1997, and convincingly re-echoed in the Paul VI Auditorium during the 1998 Assembly for Asia. To do so, I would like to outline one possible frame for analysis, a working hypothesis to give shape to the subsequent discussion. We can detect at least three basic cultural paradigms, each of which is at work in our lives. But first a word on culture itself.

2.1 Culture

To sense the creative and redemptive presence of God in Asia today,

we need to detect the meaning of the culture of our times. For each culture in every age is the vehicle of human encounter with God. Our spirituality, our ecclesial life and prophetic evangelization are acquired and filtered through culture.²

Culture is like a colorfully patterned cloth woven from the strands of our political and economic thinking and practice. Culture is the way we express the meaning of life, and in the way we arrange marriage and family life, and in the way we organize social life. Culture is the way we use technology to weave juridical and aesthetic motifs in art and architecture, in music and literature. We transmit culture through stories, myths and legends, through the way we live, the ideals we etch into wood or express in dance, the hopes we compose into songs and poems, the deepest longings we voice in shadow puppet shows and through the sound of a percussion orchestra.

Cultures are never static but flow with history. Cultures are created and are continually renewed by their members as they solve the problems they face, hand on the knowledge they have garnered, and channel the experience which has shaped and continues to reshape the values and norms of society. They are also, and inevitably, open to control and manipulation by the interests of dominant groups. This is very clear in Asia today, as histories are rewritten by those in power, and "Asian values" are promoted by political, economic and religious interests to enhance and justify sectoral interests and goals.

There are at least three world views each with its set of values. They are often called pre-modern, modern and post-modern. Without needing to question these terms, we can compare and contrast the core values in each world view as we reach out for a new humanism.

2.2 Pre-Modern Culture: An Organic Cosmos

Although cities have long been part of the Asian landscape, pre-modern cultures grew in the forest environment of the hunter — gatherer and the fields of dry and wetland cultivation. Pre-modern culture is described as cosmic, for each part expresses the whole; each level is intertwined with all other levels. Value is discovered in the correct place, function and status of the particular in the whole. "We participate, therefore we are." This cosmic world view was sacred; the earth breathes the life of the Spirit; the Spirit flows through its cosmic body. Commonly, the undergirding "metaphysics" of such pre-modern, cosmic cultures in Asia is "form" (order, boundaries, division) and "flow" (life, generation, unity). Indigenous cultures often symbolize the principle of "form" (or order) by the male, the outside, the earth, the mountain, the sun; while "flow" (or life) is metaphorically femi-

nine, the inside, the sea, the coast, the moon. In such cosmic cultures values often form dyads, such as harmony and conflict, which complement rather than oppose. Clan and marriage alliances usually re-enforce or re-create group identity. Individual value and identity are found in the group (one's place in family, clan and ethnic group). Cultural values are collective rather than singular. Participatory democracy, where it flourished, was practical on a small scale. With the development of the nation stage, accompanied by a population explosion, ever larger societal units harbingered an increasingly authoritarian ethos in political life.

Nowhere in Asia does cosmic culture survive intact, in "splendid isolation," not even among the hunter-gatherer Asmat people of Iran Jaya, who are now very much part of a globalized market! However, its influence still pervades both social and ecclesial life.

Both the great and little cultural traditions of Asia, and the patristic tradition of the West Asian and European Churches, took their distinctive form in their respective cosmic cultures. In Western Europe, the early scientific theological investigations of Dun Scotus, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas came from such an organic culture where each branch of science found its place within a grand theory or overarching philosophical design. In today's Asia, living remnants of local, cosmic cultures are the repositories of what is most deeply characteristic, and possibly of what is most genuinely human, in Asian ways of thinking, feeling and acting. As globalization is uprooting local identities, so people are rediscovering and reasserting their indigenous roots.

- *Social Challenge:* To re-root ourselves in the vibrant yet defenceless and increasingly marginalized cosmic cultures of Asia, while opening ourselves up to the rigors of scientific inquiry and the opportunities of global networking.
- *Ecclesial Challenge:* To own and give equal weight to all Asian cultural narratives, and refrain from cultural hegemony, whether national (national culture over against local indigenous cultures), or international (western tradition over against local traditions).

The answer to shallow cultural chauvinism and insipid romanticism is rigorous analysis embedded in a deep appreciation of both resilient root-values and an understanding of the direction of cultural change (see Section 3 below).

2.3 Modern Culture: Scientific Inquiry Divorced from Morality

The modern age, commencing perhaps with Descartes in philosophy

and Isaac Newton in science, is marked by the hegemony of scientific inquiry. Science views the world as a machine available to be pulled apart and then reconstituted according to human design. The sacred, organic cosmos of the pre-modern world was replaced by a secular, mechanistic one. Everything could be pulled apart, examined, re-constituted. In this modern world the individual claimed autonomy. "I think, therefore I am." Decisions should be rational and in line with the individual's conscience. Individualistic and empirical in nature, the modern age was characterized by competition rather than harmony, and personal advancement rather than the common good. This led to rapid progress of the strong at the expense of the weak.

Modern culture was nurtured by the printing press in central Europe, and expanded to the Americas, Africa and Asia through economic and political colonization. It was an Euro-centric time of cultural elitism. Asian cultures were dismissed as primitive; Asian religions were viewed as pagan. The modern, scientific world separated the part from the whole, the mind from the body, logic from the heart, science from art, research from morality, theology from prayer. In the nuclear bomb the modern age has come to a resounding climax. The bomb is the fruit of the application of extremely advanced scientific inquiry, totally divorced from ethical principles.³

Scientific advance has been rapid. The twentieth century opened with a by-plane making its first humble flight, and ends as the cyber-marker dissolves national boundaries. Meanwhile, the destruction of morality has been just as swift. The twentieth century has seen the most brutal wars and massacres the world has ever known. Just as the modern age saw the invention of the nation state, so the advent of the post-modern age is seeing its slow demise. As five hundred years ago the modern age was made possible by the invention of the printing press, so its passing has been presaged by the advent of the electronic media.

Most Asian nationalists during the past 150 years have dreamt of an Asia free from political bondage and economic colonialism. They struggled for a citizenship educated and open to scientific progress. Many also worked for a nation which nurtured Asian religious and cultural values. Ironically, these days it is the more authoritarian national leaders who speak most of Asian values, and usually as a way of avoiding the question of universal human rights.

- *Social Challenge.* Is it feasible to re-graft scientific inquiry and formal education upon resilient cultural values — that is, upon a humanist morality in a multi-cultural world?

- *Ecclesial Challenge:* Most of our contemporary Churches came with the colonisers during the modern era, and were imbued with and promoted modern values (schooling, social institutions, etc.). The institutional Church is very much part of the modern world. Is it possible to leave aside this "pre-Independence past," and replant our Churches in the main stream of Asian humanism, both secular and religious?

2.4 Post-Modern Culture: Boundaries Fade, Cultures Fragment

Since the Second World War the political map of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, as drawn up by the European colonisers, has been replaced by that of independent states who collaborate through the aegis of the United Nations and a variety of regional bodies. Meanwhile, economic colonialism, managed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, with the help of international conglomerates and local military-backed regimes, has largely destroyed the emergent democratic states. As the modern world was marked by expansion and conquest, so the post-modern world is marked by a growing realization of how fragile and finite our world is, an acknowledgement of the limits to which the earth will tolerate human interference.

2.4.1 Compressing Time and Space

Technology is the great instrument that has made social, political and economic change possible on a global scale. In turn, technological advance has radically altered our way of living, and even more basic, our way of thinking and relating. Traditionally, we have defined ourselves through clear frontiers — principally through boundaries of blood, land and language. Neighbors were those next door. But today, we can choose our neighbors. We can relate more often and more intimately through electronic mail with a soul-friend on the other side of the world, than with a blood-relative living on the other side of the street. Technology allows us to be closer to a colleague living and working in another continent, than with a member of our own, perhaps small, household — if we so choose. The once immutable concepts of time and distance have evaporated like mist at dawn.

However, the paradigmatic leap provided by the technological revolution has not given power back to the people; it has reinforced the power of the few who control us through the global market. "I consume; therefore, I am."

Clarity and certainly have vanished. While Catholic elite schools used to guarantee their alumni good positions in the job market, today these schools often simply supply candidates for unemployment, each with cer-

tificate in hand. Wherever we live, the nature of the family is changing, and the question of gender is becoming ever more crucial. Our understanding and practice of government, both in society and in the Church, has been transformed. The practice and place of religion in life are changing. Cultural and religious traditions are fading everywhere, putting paid to clear confessional boundaries and hegemonic, ecclesial loyalties. Like during an earth tremor when there is naught to hold, nothing is stable any more: not education, not marriage, not government, not economic progress, not religion — not even personal roles and gender relationships. Everything — institutions, concepts, relationships, the world itself — is in motion. And when human DNA has finally been mapped, we shall be reaching the very edge of possibility. Each and every one of us committed to the evangelization of cultures is surely sensitive to this crisis of rapid and radical change. And Asian women have not had much of a say in any of this.⁴

2.4.2 Hope at the Margin

The post-modern world has put an end to monocultures throughout Asia, while reinforcing an irresistible trend to ever greater individualism. Most Asian societies have lost their once clear consensus values. Cultural pluralism does not lead to conflict; cultural repression does. To deny another's culture is to deny their identity, their dignity, deny who they are. Major traditions have always insisted upon interpreting smaller traditions, sidelining them in the process. The post-modern world opens up the possibility where each and every cultural narrative can have its say, and be interpreted on its own terms. Articulation is no longer constricted to the corridors of the academe; the songs of the inarticulate can now be given equal time. This is the post-modern context for heeding the thirty-year encouragement given us by FABC to live close to the culture of the poor, to immerse ourselves into popular culture, into the culture of the marginalized, into the culture of the silenced. Basic ecclesial and inter-faith communities, nurtured in a participatory Church, are an appropriate environment for making space for as many of the marginalized as possible, to articulate their aspirations and concerns, and to make their opinions and feelings heard and understood. Local action groups, networked into wider movements, can struggle for their rights, undertake their duties, exchange strategies and procedures, and choose the more appropriate path for action.

The fragmentation of the modern world has given rise to a different set of values to that of the modern world. Authority is now increasingly accepted because it is appropriate and proves itself so, rather than because it is the authority. Tradition — weakening anyway through modern mass communication — no longer legitimates; competence does. If in the past a catechist was accepted because of her ability, while an incompetent priest was tolerated because of his ordination, in the priest's case this will not obtain

for much longer. Doctrine will be received because it inspires and makes sense, not simply because it is taught by bishops. Authority will be obeyed, not because it is in accordance with Canon Law, but because decisions were arrived at together. Authority, and with it administration and bureaucracy, have been desacralized. Institutional authority has become a social function. Thus, authority is often met with scepticism and criticism. In a post-modern world authority is obtained through the integrity of its holders, the transparency of its dealings, and the competence of its execution. Domination is no longer acceptable, whether political, economic, ideological or ecclesial. Authoritarian regimes justify themselves by ever-decreasing circles of argument. Which is why they need a brutalized army to enforce its will. Without military force, they are doomed to failure.

As the communication and distribution of products, ideas and people have become so rapid and extensive, so attention has been shifting from the accumulation of wealth to an increase in the quality of life. Vast, dispersed networks of decentralized action-groups and NGOs have brought post-modern values to the front of the political agenda: ecological concern through simple lifestyle and a sustainable economy; human dignity and rights as the bedrock of a civil society based on the rule of law; gender sensitivity that reshapes male — female relationships at every level of society; individual autonomy and freedom to make choices on an ever-expanding range of personal and societal matters; an ever-sharper sensitivity to the right to life, to peace and security, to work and privacy. The key values here are freedom and democracy, and the welcoming of pluralism and diversity. Such methods of working, organizing and networking are overtaking more traditional structures.

This giving of space to minorities contrasts with the approach of the past few hundred years. While science reigned supreme during the modern world, the post-modern world is giving equal space to alternatives. Formal education is once again learning from local, cultural wisdom; the results of scientific research are being balanced by the stories of indigenous knowledge and experience; philosophies are being complemented with mythologies; high-tech hospitals give room to native medicine.

2.5 Crude Coercion

In this pluralistic environment, crisscrossed by electronic communication outside government control, it has become increasingly difficult to dominate the other except by means of overt coercion. Coercion can be cultural — the dominant culture claims to be the norm, while smaller traditions are marginalized. Coercion can also be through political force; a creeping militarization of civil society is occurring in a number of Asian countries. Here a tragic combination occurs between the brutality of a militarized society,

with the brutal values of globalized capitalism, re-enforced by the "natural" crassness associated with uprooted peoples. Global greed, military brutality, a lack of cultural roots, all these can be bound together by the vertical relational values of conformity and submission.

2.6 From Ghetto to Diaspora?

The end of mono-culturalism harbingers the end of the colonial Church. Until the mid-1960s, the Church's policy was officially mono-cultural, or at least heno-cultural. Ideologically exclusivist in its Western theology, law, organization and liturgy, local cultural identities were invaded or coopted. The practice was often more gentle. Where Christianity succeeded in planting roots, an organic symbiosis took place between the invading culture of the missionaries and the changing culture of the Asian recipients. While the historical burden of colonial history still marks some of our relationships with majority Asian religious cultures, the "natural syncretism" that occurred during the prolonged encounter between Western Church and Asian Christian Communities defies the label foreign.⁵ What is more worrying is the encapsulation of small minority Churches within certain ethnic or racial groups. Such "ethnic" Churches tend to remain ritual ghettos, rather than reach outward as prophetic diasporas.

- *Social Challenge*: To discover how the break-up of premodern and modern cultural values does not inevitably enrich the few, while marginalizing the majority.
- To discover how the almost limitless possibilities of post-modern technology can be restrained by the marginalized, to re-create a world of freedom and democracy.
- *Ecclesial Challenge*: To discard the authoritarian values of the modern world, and accept in the life of the Church the post-modern challenge of freedom, openness, transparency, participative democracy and de-centralization, while welcoming the host of local narratives and traditions.

Frontier human ingenuity and creativeness at the heart of technological advance deserve our respect and awe. Here is God's image — male and female — filling the earth and subduing it, ruling over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky, and over every living creature that moves on the ground (cf. Gen 1:28). However, we need also to be realistic as we look at a fundamental clash in values that is rapidly fragmenting societies, as the world becomes more globalized.

3. CONTRASTING CULTURAL VALUES

Attitudes to this post-modern world are usually ambivalent. None of us wish to return to pre-modern conformity, or to the predominant utilitarianism of the recent past. We all enjoy some, at least, of the privileges and freedoms of the post-modern, high-tech world. However, we are also aware that 40% of the human race is being pushed aside, unwanted, unneeded, unnecessary. We are also becoming aware of how our ecclesial and apostolic institutions are still woven into the fabric of dominant, hegemonic cultures. Meanwhile, the marginalized, to whom we are sent to accompany with the Gospel, are hanging onto fragments of minority, indigenous cultures. In mission we stand with the marginalized, while our institutions are integrated into the global market. In mission we espouse one set of cultural values, while our institutions depend upon a contrasting set. This is a problematic we need to face.

In this workshop, we might wish to focus upon this pivotal challenge: How openly to welcome the opportunities given by the post-modern world which places dignity, freedom, participation and justice at the center? This welcome is edged by a concern that the technological powers and principalities of the world—and the Churches themselves—are also imbued with these same values.⁶

The challenge, then, is to work with economic, social, cultural and political forces that enhance a humanitarian thrust towards a culture of life. The question remains: Is it feasible to aspire to ecclesial and inter-faith communities that are shaped by, and in turn actively shape, a kaleidoscope of human values, a mix of values taken from the living repository of our hybrid Asian cultures? To see what is feasible, we need to look at the values of Asian society as present in marginalized cosmic (indigenous) cultures, in the secular humanism of the modern world, and in the opportunities and dangers that have emerged with the onslaught of a global market.

3.1 Cosmic Values in a Globalized World

Post-modern culture can be viewed as a shift away from modern cultural values back to pre-modern values—within the frame of high technology, and generated by the fruit of modern scientific research. There is a clear shift back to a cosmic faith, and ecological religiosity, similar in ethos to that of pre-modern times. The very notion of inculturation involves a desire to get back to the soil, to the roots of a culture, a return to a cosmic world view. One of the great achievements of our modern understanding of local culture is a new sense of the importance and uniqueness of these living traditions. They have something important to say which cannot be heard anywhere else. In these defenceless cultures, we encounter human integrity

at its most pristine. While local cultures are respectful of the environments from which they have sprung, Western Christianity has tended to ignore local conditions.

Jyoti Sahi contrasts seven core cosmic values found in indigenous cultures with those values at the heart of capitalism.⁷ If asked, most of us would probably claim that tribal values are closer to the Gospel than those of modern capitalism. And yet, our Churches live from the latter. We are re-awakening to the mystery of the Incarnation, that the Incarnate Word's option for the poor of the earth entails an immersion in creation, and a rootedness in the soil. If, during the modern, colonial period the tribal peoples of Asia were converted to a Western Church, then in this post-modern era the Western Churches in Asia need to be converted to the values of the cosmic cultures at the margin of society. What is needed is an imaginative step forward into an eco-spirituality which affirms our common responsibility for the earth and the rest of creation.

Core Values of Indigenous Peoples

- 1) The value of the land. The community belongs to the land.
- 2) The value of the tribe. The clan is the most important unit of society.
- 3) The value of culture as part of nature. The community participates in nature's life.
- 4) The value of consensus in government. Decisions through discussion.
- 5) The value of co-operation as opposed to competition.
- 6) The value of welcoming. Hospitality acknowledges cosmic interdependence.
- 7) The value of celebration. Life is not just for laboring — it is for enjoyment.

Market-Driven Values

- 1) The value of dominating the land.
- 2) The importance of the nuclear family and the individual.
- 3) The value of culture as opposed to nature.
- 4) The value of hierarchy and patriarchy.
- 5) The value of competition.
- 6) The value of territory and possession.
- 7) The value of hard work.

3.2 The Values of the Global Market Place

Contemporary cultures are fragmenting. This fragmentation is due to the clash between the values of global capitalism with cosmic values and those proclaimed by the Scriptures. For instance: Global capitalism — preach-

ing democracy — thrives on cartels and authoritarian regimes, while the Scriptures picture humans as creative actors, co-creators responsible to God and to one another. While the world market lives from unlimited growth, the Hebrew prophets place justice, peace and solidarity at the heart of the economy. The market seeks to create unbridled competition, while the first-century apostles and contemporary tribals proclaim solidarity and inter-dependence, cooperation and collaboration. While the law of the market is dogma to the global economy, both cosmic cultures and the Hebrew Scriptures have for millennia stated that the economy is for the human community, not the human community for the economy. While the so-called free market is held up as sacred by international treaties, it is taking the entire world on the road to a new imperialism. The global economy feeds from a consumerist mentality — the more we consume, the greater the economic growth. In the Hebrew — Christian tradition, limitless acquisitiveness is a sign of moral immaturity. While pre-modern societies, from which the Scriptures hail, cherish the vast variety of human and biological cultures, the market sees cultures as sellable commodities. While for the people of the book life is sacred, for the market life is profane. While human rights and obligations are basic to the Hebrew — Christian ethic, any and every human right can be — and in fact is — trampled upon for the sake of progress (profit). We are forced to conclude that globalization in its capitalist guise is the final triumph of economics over culture, the victory of the market over humanism.⁸

The list can be extended, the contrast between the values of the market place and human values becoming increasingly stark.⁹ A globalized world is not the enemy, but *this particular model of capitalist globalization* is the world of Baal and Mammon. We are caught in the middle. We make use of the advantages of economic progress — including electronic communication. Meanwhile, the values upon which the world economy has been built are undermining the Gospel to which we have dedicated our lives. Our schools prepare the next generation for the labor market, which is negating the very Gospel we preach. While we seek globalization without marginalization (John Paul II), the model on offer concentrates more and more economic and political power in fewer and fewer hands. The global movement of money, goods, information and people increases at a pace and on a magnitude made possible by rapid advances in communication and travel. Because the economy is driven by the values of the market place, globalization is exacerbating the inequality between and within nations. It is presenting instant prosperity to the few, while reserving marginality to the rest. Consciences are becoming numbed, as the heightened insecurity of hundreds of millions of displaced people is seemingly accepted as a consequence worth paying for the tremendous advances globalization brings to the elite. There are now 15 million overseas migrants from Asia working in various destinations as documented and undocumented workers. The rapid

deployment of workers goes to every part of the globe, and a modern consumerist culture is subsidized by remittances from abroad. It weakens the hold of family life on its members, and liberates the individual from tradition. In truth, this is not entirely negative. It is only fair to add that there are positive consequences too. Uprooting is allowing migrant women to emancipate themselves from their patriarchal cultures back home. Migrant youth discover a freedom in the city inconceivable in a conformist village society. For this, they need to have strong, inner resources.

3.3 Domination of the Local by the Global

These days, virtually everywhere a dominant cultural motif sets the pattern for smaller, minority cultures. Some call this the "McDonaldization" of society. Superficially, consumer societies look very much alike, for taste in clothes and food and entertainment are in the hands of the transnational and their advertisement-driven mass media. Through trade and the media, capitalist values, principles and networks are spreading to the remotest corners of the global. If a country wants to have access to the Internet, global communications, world markets and inward investment, it has to accept the new rules; the "capitalist straitjacket" — low taxes, privatization, deregulation, free capital movements. And the straitjacket is policed by the financial markets, which will invest in your country and support its currency as long as you accept the straitjacket, but flee in panic if you do not. Thus, the 1997 monetary crisis in Southeast Asia. The result — countries today are much more constrained in their foreign policy options. The resultant social and economic frustration finds its outlet in inter-communal strife (linguistic, racial, ethnic and religious).

The destruction of the traditional character of settled populations, and their transmutation into a new type of people, migratory, nomadic, lacking in self-respect and discipline — crude, callous beings, of whom both laborer and capitalist were an example.¹⁰

3.4 Asian Values

Despite much talk on Asian values by politicians, academics, and indeed by FABC over the years, to date very little scientific study has been undertaken. Recently a preliminary study was completed by the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture in Japan.¹¹ This is only a pilot study; therefore we cannot extrapolate from this limited survey to the whole of Japan, let alone to other Confucian or Buddhist cultures in Asia. What we can do is look at its tentative results to encourage similar scientific studies elsewhere.

Family First, Religion Last

In the survey, life was divided into six domains — Work, Family, Friends, Leisure, Politics and Religion. In a scale of importance Family came first (92%), with Religion a clear last (18%). After Family came Friends (87%), and Leisure (79%), and only then Work (76%). Politics came fifth with just 49%. When compared with the regular, comprehensive surveys carried out in Europe, it is interesting to note that Europeans give more value to Religion (48%) than does the pilot survey in Japan (18%). Europeans also give more value to Work (86%) than to Leisure (83%) — the reverse of Japan. Apparently, the steady privatization of life in Japan (and the rest of Asia?) is taking a pattern different than that in Europe.

Twelve Asian Values

The pilot survey also studied twelve general values that are often identified with Asia. Traditional values formed two clusters, an "upper cluster" (highest score), and a "lower cluster" (lowest score). The upper cluster can be described as personal morality, while the lower cluster deals with the preservation of vertical relationships. All are Confucian in origin. Thus, the tentative hypothesis is that, while horizontal relationships continue to enjoy considerable support, values regulating vertical relationships are not highly prized. Given that vertical relationships received a lower estimation the lower the age of the respondents, there might well be a further erosion of "hierarchical" values as time goes on.

<i>Upper</i>	<i>Asian Values</i>	<i>Lower</i>
<i>"Horizontal" Cluster</i>	<i>"Modern" Cluster</i>	<i>"Vertical" Cluster</i>
Honesty (95%)	Diligence (83%)	Groupism (64%)
Cooperation (95%)	Success (66%)	Obedience (60%)
Manners (94)		Patriotism (59%)
Obeying the Law (92)		Authority (24%)
Seriousness (88%)		
Helping Others (86%)		

It seems that, although traditional values are not receding, those concerning vertical relationships attract only a low level of support. Apparently, traditional values that restrict the freedom of the individual are no longer highly respected. Meanwhile, traditional values that are not necessarily authoritarian, especially those oriented towards a sense of duty or charity, continue to be highly evaluated. Relational harmony still scores better than individualism. However, modern values received a certain emphasis. The survey concluded that, although the relational orientation remains strong in Japanese society, modern values emphasizing merit also enjoy a considerable level of penetration. The positive interaction of per-

sonal trust based on the sharing of traditional values, and impersonal trust based on common modern values can contribute much towards the formation of a solid social structure.

There is much else in this pilot survey, including extensive treatment of religious and moral values, Suffice it to say, that only when we have such accurate data, can we hope to "evangelize culture." When we know which values are present, where they are influential, how they work, and to what extent and how they change, we can undertake a living dialogue. What, then, would a cross-cultural evangelization entail?

- *Social Challenges:* To discover how horizontal relational values can unite with the contemporary values of universal dignity, human rights, freedom and democracy, and not with vertical relational values that would reinforce authoritarianism and coercion.
- *Ecclesial Challenge:* To renew the mission of the Church through a commitment to the egalitarian values of collegiality and participation, while discarding authoritarian remnants from a coercive, colonial past.

Until studies are undertaken, we can only speculate on possible differences between a "Confucian" Japan, a "Hindu" Indai, and a "Muslim" Indonesia.

4. TOWARDS A NEW HUMANISM

4.1 The Challenge

In this post-modern world of contradictions, seemingly, the vision, the hope, the breath of life, the fire within — that is, our mission — has little positive influence in a globalized world increasingly driven by rapacious consumption by the few. Chaotic global capitalism is creating a society, where to be is to consume, where the great majority are being disenfranchised politically, and disempowered economically, where everybody and everything, including religion, has been turned into a commodity to be bought and sold, or treated as a private hobby. We speak of empowerment, while all around us people have been reduced to dust blowing in the wind.

The underlying values of the world economic order contradict basic values which imbue cultures open to the divine. In this clash of values, the center does not hold, and local cultures fall apart. This is surely what is happening at varying rates in each of our countries. The small, oral cultures of indigenous peoples in China and India and throughout Southeast Asia, are fragmenting under the impact of globalization. Equally clearly, the domi-

nant culture that has carried Christianity for over a thousand years is also fragmenting—the Christian cultures of Europe. But also, the great cultures of India that have birthed each of the great world religions, and the exceptional cultures of China that have nurtured the way of Tao and Confucius, are coming under the same pressure of consumerist, capitalist values. Without a central, non-dominating ethos, without commonly accepted standards at the center, the very possibility of finding and living out truth in integrity is denied. Dialogue and understanding across cultures is becoming increasingly problematic, while at the same time communication between cultures has become increasingly easy. In this time of exuberant yet frightening cultural change, which are the cultural values that are holding people together, and which are dividing them?

4.2 Problematic Identities

The identity of diverse peoples and races has evolved through millennia through the basic categories of culture, religion and society. We face God, Truth and the Gospel as we are, transparently, with whatever cultural imago we have, bringing with us our own historical identity, as unfolded in culture, religion and society. This is the basic dynamic of the Bible, the way the Incarnate Word reveals Self in history.¹²

In Asia, a double, or even triple, religious identity is not the exception, but is almost the rule—whether Confucian, Buddhist and Shinto in Japan, Kebatinan and Muslim in Indonesia, or primal and Catholic in much of the Philippines. Keeping to the three-fold cultural world view above, we can see the following elements in composite Catholic identities in much of Asia. 1) A locally-embedded, cosmic religiosity in personal and family domains; 2) An acceptance of a universal humanism (human rights and duties, justice, democracy and freedom) in the social and political domain; and 3) A conventional ecclesial frame in the public domain.¹³ The three may well be distinct within the person, yet not unconnected, and definitely not in open conflict.

How then can we understand religious identity? A number of patterns are present. In some areas, there seems to be almost an identification of an ethnic community with a specific religion to the exclusion, or at least the marginalization, of other religious identities in the same ethnic group. Such "ethnic religions," whether Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu or Christian, tend to become culturally encapsulated and religiously fanatical. "Full humanity is only found in my group."

Other patterns are more fluid. While the contextualizing of Christianity in India has sometimes been accompanied by strident historical criticism of a Western, colonial Christian past, a similar movement to localize

Christianity in Indonesia rarely criticizes the past. The colonial past is understood as an indispensable stage in developing a sound and more independent tradition. In India we might have to speak of a "re-grafting" of the Church onto Asian roots; while in Indonesia it is more a question of a gradual symbiosis, as various streams flow into each other over time. In the one, identity is re-invented through a clear and conscious articulation; in the other an absorbent, syncretic culture is at work.

4.3 Mission of Hope

From the dark night of the global market, we need to rekindle fires of life and hope, of warmth and light. The stronger the world economy is holding countries and their institutions in its octopus' grip, the louder we hear the call that personal and communal human rights be placed at the center. The more brutal high-tech wars are being fought, the wider the rejection of war and violence as an instrument of policy. The more catastrophic the effects of global capitalism, the stronger the acceptance that poverty is primarily the result of unjust banking, finance and trading arrangements. The more devastating the destruction of the environment, the greater the growth of ecological consciousness. The more dominating and authoritarian the leadership — of families, societies, countries and international bodies, the more clear the challenge to the patriarchal norms on which most Asian societies are constructed. It is here that we find the cutting edge of cross-cultural mission. It is here that we live out our vocation of prophetic marginality and of creative boundary-living.

Thus, out of cultural fragmentation and human brokenness a flame of hope is glimmering. There is hope for a renewal — indeed, an evangelization — of culture. Hope is being kept alive precisely by those who have become the victims of the global market. From the fragile, oral cultures of village and city, from the values kept alive by the poor and the marginalized, a small yet powerful flame is flickering. In the life-witness of the broken and fragmented poor, we come face to face with the world's fractures and fissures. And there, as nowhere else, we meet Gospel values, the springboard for a renewed evangelization of culture. Among the peoples discarded by the dominant culture we encounter community rather than individualism, altruism instead of egoism, simplicity (*santhosa*) instead of affluence, creativity instead of cultural limitation, openness to transcendence instead of secularism. In living close to the poor and the marginalized, in listening to their values — their cultural heartbeat — we are listening to what has been cut out from the dominant consumerist culture. It is there that we begin again to create a language for the soul; there we reshape caring and compassionate communities.

Thus, amidst our world torn apart there are threads of hope. The evan-

gelization of culture consists in reweaving the widely-scattered threads to design a viable cloth of life amidst the wreckage of the times. Our mission is to connect the silent prayer of the heart with courageous justice and peace apostolates; of making or strengthening connections between the individual strands, the separate strings, the isolated community fibers. By binding together fragile communities of hope at the edge of society, by networking at local, regional and global levels, we join in creating *compassionate communities*.

4.4 Mission as an Art of the Impossible (cf. Eph. 1:10)

The evangelization of culture is not one-way. In accompanying the victims of progress, we discover a renewed sense of self; we ourselves are evangelized. Genocide in East Timor — *Timor Loro Sa'e* — made headlines in September 1999. Many of us are working in the face of stark brutality, amidst the destruction of individuals, communities, oral languages and fragile cultures. We need the prophetic humility to be evangelized by the victims of society, and come to life in the midst of death and destruction. We need the poetic and prophetic ability to create and re-create day-by-day a soul-space, which connects brutal politics with inner growth. With the militarization of politics and the brutalization of cultural values, many of us have yet to discover our inner resources, our ability not to hate the oppressor, our capacity of receiving the other back into a shattered heart. If mission entails becoming the heart of a heartless world and the soul of a soulless existence (as Karl Marx once acknowledged), then we need to anticipate in ourselves some of the great suffering of the vulnerable. We need to allow our bodies to become a haven of comfort in the place of crass violence and hatred. Ours is to embody grace, compassion and forgiveness. We confess the Cross because we know the Resurrection.

The victims of this battered world show us that we should not try to unite the world from the center but from the periphery, not from strength but in alliance with those pushed to the edge. As Diaspora Churches scattered among the Asian peoples, we aim to be prophetically marginal, places of "creative boundary-living."

Our place is on the boundary between the cosmic old and the high-tech new, between cerebral science and intuitive wisdom, between secular logic and religious commitment, between all-powerful global networking and defenceless local values. In cross-cultural missions we weave a colorful pattern from each, and discover the Divine Presence in new cultural forms.

4.5 Dialogue as Conversion

We are social by nature. Therefore, the quest for God is not limited to

the individual conscience but finds outward, social expression.¹⁴ We *dialogue with culture*. At the end of five hundred years of Western colonialism we repent the destruction of indigenous Asian cultures. Indeed, as the global market is eating away at the roots of local communities, we view minority, marginalized cultures as the cutting edge of mission. I am referring to open, fragile "diaspora" cultural communities of faith, not to encapsulated, sectarian "ghettos." Is it feasible for our "composite" Churches—Greek in its theology, Roman in its organization, and Western in its cultural expression—to set down roots in Asia, and fire people with hope? The greater the conformity, the more obvious the shallowness. Some try adapting Western models to those of Asia. I am sure that we should go about inculturation in the opposite direction. We need to take the initiative, and begin where the victims of so-called development are, with their popular culture and religiosity, and allow them the freedom to express and celebrate their own Gospel response, as they struggle for a new humanism, for human dignity, rights and duties.

God's saving plan encompasses the entire universe, leading it towards ultimate unification.¹⁵ In the face of ecological destruction we *dialogue with creation*. We are learning to relate as fellow creatures with the rest of the earth. Here, the primal vision of indigenous cultures is showing us how to relate to creation and one another in the face of environmental rape.

This living dialogue with culture and creation shapes our mission. This is essentially a mission of "cosmic compassion." We join forces as agents of dignity through justice, and peace through reconciliation with all groups and networks with whom we have common ideals and values.

Maumere, Indonesia,
October 1999.

END NOTES

1. Asian Bishops' Meeting, Manila, 29 November 1970. Message, paragraphs.
2. For a continuation and elaboration of the philosophy of culture present in *Gaudium et Spes*, see, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Pontifical Council for Culture, Vatican 1999. 81pp. + index.
3. See Charles C. West, "The Changing Ideological Climate in Church and Society." Paper presented at the Church and Society Conference, organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), Darwin, September 1999.
4. See Joan D. Chittister, osb., *Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men*, 1998.
5. For how long is an incoming cultural element to be considered for-

eign? The Gregorian Requiem Mass, passed on orally for many generations, is as authentically Florenese as any other part of their composite culture. When 12 clan names, which were introduced by the Portuguese, have been totally integrated for centuries into the local linguistic and social landscape, is it still correct to call them foreign? E.g., In Central Flores, Indonesia, the da Cunha Clan is the warrior clan; the da Gama clan contributes religious elders; while the *da Silva* clan gives political leadership.

6. "Christ stripped the rulers and authorities of their power, humbled them before the eyes of the whole world and dragged them as prisoners in the triumphal march of his cross" (Col 2:15; see also 1:15-20). "Even the heavenly forces and powers will now discover through the Church the wisdom of God in its manifold resources, as the plan is being fulfilled which God designed from the beginning in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Eph 3:10).
7. See Jyoti Sahi, "Cultures in Relation to the Mission of the Church," *Mission Today*, Vol. 1, 1999, pp. 314-323. List of values on p. 319-20.
8. See Randolph S David, "Asian Societies in the Age of Globalization," paper read at the CCA Church and Society Conference, Darwin, September 1999.
9. See Nicanor Perlas, *Elite Globalization: The Attack on Christianity*, Quezon City, Philippines, 1998.
10. See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 1944 p. 128. Polanyi was summarizing the views of Robert Owen speaking of mass migration in Britain in the 1800s. Quoted by Randolph S. David, p. 6.
11. See Robert Kisala, "Asian Values Study," *Nanzan Bulletin*, No. 23, 1999, pp. 59-73. This survey is later to be extended to the whole of Japan (in 2001), and hopefully to other Asian nations. It is an adaptation of the ongoing European Values Study, initially conducted in 1981, and later in 1990 and 1999.
12. See Anton Karokarna, "Mission, Monoculturalism and Murder of Cultures," *Ishvani Digest and Mission Documentation*, Vol. XIV, No. 2, 1996, pp. 87-97.
13. For interesting Indonesia examples, see Karel Streenbrink, "Ethnic, National and International Loyalties of Indonesian Christians" paper read at IIAS Seminar, September 1999.
14. See *Dignitatis humanae*, par. 3.
15. See for instance, *Ad gentes*, par. 1.

WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

1. Between Vision and Reality

Rarely have prophetic vision and earthly reality, human hope and the human condition been in such dramatic contrast. We prize faithfulness, trans-

parency and honesty, and yet live in a world where long-term personal and inter-personal commitments are becoming problematic, whether married or celibate. We are rapidly becoming an urban continent, whose cities are landscaped by glass-entombed banks, stainless-steel financial centers and cathedral-like shopping malls, while the streets below are littered with homeless children. Restless, we migrate from mountain and village, from agriculture and the interior, and then get absorbed by urban cultures marked by conflict, violence and fragmentation, devoid of common ethical norms. We speak of peace, and yet our countries are fractured by interethnic and intercommunal strife. We are becoming increasingly ecologically-sensitive, while the last of our tropical forests is being felled, and the remaining seed stock upon which our future depends is being genetically altered. We claim to be gender-sensitive, while a majority of Asian women are forced to the background.

- Q1. In my experience, and where I live and work, what key human value is in dramatic contrast to the values by which society seems to be living?
- Q2. List the key causes of this problem, and state whether they lie in the economic, social, political, cultural, or some other field?

2. Signs of Hope amidst State Terror

The following is a true episode from East Timor. Maria awaits her youngest son, Antonio, to return. She has been waiting for over a year. She leaves the front gate ajar, the door, and the windows open longer than usual in the evening. Sitting by the window she waits for her son, Antonio. Over and over again she dreams of how she would see him coming from afar, then run into the road and smother him with kisses. But Antonio has not come. Her eldest son, Ricardo, disappeared years ago; no news, not a whiff of gossip. Maria's husband, Gregorio, has gone too. It was said that his corpse was found cut into pieces, scattered across a field, food for the vultures. And so, her last hope is the youngest, Antonio, whose hair shines in the evening light, rustling in the gentle ocean breeze. Maria sat waiting in agitated hope. Already a year, yet only a year.

One evening, the door still ajar, the day already dark, Maria hears footsteps on the path. Somebody appears in the doorway. He kneels down and embraces Maria, "Mama, I'm home, Mama." But Maria does not react. She only whispers, "Antonio?" "Yes, I'm your Antonio." Before Maria is a youngster whom Maria does not know. His head has been bashed in, his left eye closed, his right eye only half-open, his face defaced by torture. He has no ears. His nose has sort of moved from its original position. His mouth agape; not a tooth left. Finger and toe nails ripped out. Emasculated, he asks, "Don't you recognize me, Mama? Antonio, your youngest son?" Maria replies, "No, you are not Antonio. You are not my son!" "The Indonesian soldiers

beat me, Mama. They tortured me because I would not confess. I had done nothing; there was nothing to confess." "No, you are not my Antonio." "Mama, they have destroyed my body, but they never reached my soul!" "Go away," said Maria, "Get away from me." In a split second, the 365-day dream of the mother, and the dream that kept the son alive minute by minute for a bitter, body-destroying 12 months, disappears into the evening air. Hesitating a moment, Antonio leaves by the open door, and shuffles out of his mother's home. Unrecognizable, he passes soldiers marching down the street.

- Q1. The upcoming Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops has the theme: "The Bishop: Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World." In simple, practical terms, how could I have been a sign of hope to Maria as she saw her family slowly decimated?
- Q2. What examples from Asia and elsewhere have you heard of, where people of faith have managed with some success to build up contrast communities of quiet courage in the midst of a culture of fear and state terror?

3. My Composite Identity

"I have a scientific head, a Christian heart, and indigenous guts."

- Q1. Let each of us describe from which source(s) we draw: a) a sustaining spirituality; b) a logic for daily living; c) my identity as a compassionate citizen.
- Q2. Do each of the elements in my answer to Q1 survive somewhat independently from each other; or is there a clear unity among them? How so?
- Q3. Give an example of how I relate local cosmic values, universal humanism and the values of the global market.

4. Naming the Principalities and Powers

"Modernization is Westernization is Christianisation."

- Q1. Describe how the rapid and extensive movement of peoples, ideas, finance and goods are:
 - a) weakening traditional values and;
 - b) opening up untold possibilities for a new humanism?
- Q2. Describe how modernization or development supporting and/or undermining Christian mission.

- Q3. Give an example of how universal values, such as human dignity and fundamental rights, have been wedded to core, resilient cosmic values in the struggle for a just, egalitarian and sustainable society?

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