



# Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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## Report on Hermeneutics of Transformation and Changes

**Time: January 20, 2023**

**Place: Online Zoom**

### Participants:

**Joseph Agbakoba** (University of Nigeria, Nigeria)

**William Barbieri** (Catholic University of America, Washington DC)

**Craig Calhoun** (Arizona State University, AZ)

**Anthony Carroll** (College of the Resurrection, United Kingdom)

**José Casanova** (Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Washington DC)

**Catherine Cornille** (Boston College)

**Karim Crow** (McLean Center for the Study of Culture and Values, Washington DC)

**Tomas Halik** (Charles University, Czech)

**Huang Yong** (Chinese University of Hong Kong, P.C. China)

**Hans Joas** (Humboldt University, Germany)

**Peter Jonkers** (Tilburg University, Netherland)

**David Kaulem** (Arrupe Jesuit University, Zimbabwe)

**Johanna Liu** (University of Toronto, Canada/Taiwan)

**Robert Neville** (Boston University, MA)

**Gail Presbey** (University of Detroit Mercy, MI)

**William Sweet** (St. Francis Xavier University, Canada)

**Charles Taylor** (McGill University, Canada)

**Joao Vila-Cha** (Gregorian University, Italy)

This was the RVP annual consultation with its advisory members to think about the possibility of future research projects and activities for its global network. Normally it was held in person in conjunction with a public conference. Due to the global pandemic it was cancelled in 2020 but held online in 2021. This January 20, 2023 consultation was held in two parts: the first part was devoted to a thematic discussion on hermeneutics of transformation and change in contemporary times; the second part to a business meeting with a few board members. **William Barbieri** moderated the consultation.

### Introduction

**Agbakoba:** modernity in Africa, contesting equality of all cultures, colonial heritage, pre-colonial world in Africa, progressive elements, cultural world, trans-coloniality, new identity, hybrid identity as based for the new world, new relationship to create, notion of positive justice vs negative justice (retributive justice), able to reconciliation, enrich life, encourage people to develop people's social, forgiving, creative world

**Barbieri:** ethics, moral ecology, ecological thinking, can inform descriptive and normative on ethics

**Calhoun:** cosmopolitanism and belonging, universal order, cos, city, ethics, ideology, human rights, existence of decay belong and solidarity, place based community, regionalization without replacement in many settings, rightism, radical right, hierarchy and transcendence vs individualism, transformation of thinking in human, AI conceptualized and make AI human beings (gene editing), change humans, communitarianism vs liberalism, community-based

**Carroll:** history of philosophy (Cabanston), the role of philosophy in the contemporary world, ethics, religion, place of God

**Casanova:** concern the Ukraine situation, Asian Catholicism, religious pluralism, monotheism in pluralism, religion particular and universal, inter religious encounter, Orthodoxy project, working groups on Catholicism, Judaism, Islam; East Religion freedom and Russian Orthodoxy, peace and reconstruction; Orthodoxy conflicts; universalism and particularism, 3 years phases project of religious pluralism

**Cornille:** rethinking the notion of religious particularity in dialogue with other religions, a theological project, the question of religious empathy, the religious other

**Crow:** Islamic studies, how to understand intelligence in modern world in Muslim society, Muslim response to modernity, a form of modernity based on Muslim traditional principles, ethical issues vs other society in education

**Halik:** the afternoon Christianity, synodality project

**Huang:** ethics in Chinese tradition, Confucianism-virtual ethics, contemporary discussion on virtual ethics, Chinese resources to response difficulties and solution, Confucian tradition to address issues; ethics of difference—Chinese Daoism—Zhuangzi, Gold Rule (positive)—Silver Rule (negative)

**Joas:** sociology of religion, new book not why the Church is good for, but why Christianity develops an institution to remind the church reform, global history of moral universalism

**Jonkers:** universalism and particularism on values, European value project (empirical), liberal values, local values, traditional values, objectivity of values, belief and non-belief

**Kaulem:** training philosophy in social-political in Africa, how ethics/political theory can bring peace to Africa in African contents, social imaginary to explain the challenges in Africa, to find the possibility to develop a better society, Zimbabwe in 40, values underlining the challenges

**Liu:** art and aesthetics, international project on art and aesthetics, materiality and interculturality as elements in aesthetics, rethink what is art in the age of Anthropocene, art and aesthetic experience beyond anthropocentrism; how to find the situation of humans in the nature, self-so, ethics of caring in the age of Anthropocene, strangification, not individuals between each other or institutions, the destiny of humans after the pandemic caused by human behavior, objects are not exist in front of us but mirror things, caring not only for people but all things (animals, plants, etc.), what is the relationship between humans and others; complete work of Vincent Shen

**Neville:** how to negotiate our sense of global identity and each culture needs to go its own way and recover it

**Presbey:** Oruka African justice, new colonialism, environmental issues, regional responses to environmental crisis, grass-root communities, immigration issues

**Sweet:** medical aid and death, decriminalization of medical aid and death, ethics in medical care, intercultural philosophy, what is intercultural philosophy, epistemology presupposition on what allows conversations to occur, migrating texts and traditions, biomedical ethics

**Taylor:** Issue of ethics, need back to Plato, what should we do, 10 commandments, declaration of human rights, fulfilled life or failed to do that, human life form, Plato's life form, constitutions tendency/emphasis in the modern world to shine away from it its legitimacy

**Vila-Cha:** Ukraine situation, existential problems, international law, international justice, technology – bad use of it

### **Hermeneutics of Transformation and Change in Traditions**

Coping with modernization, reform under the condition of modernity, forces against cultural diversity, globalization, marginalization, tradition and contemporary thought, retaining cultural, linguistic diversity, preserving cultural diversity, war and implication of conflict for the work of philosophical and religious, social sciences, friends and enemies

**Agbakoba:** religious cognition, a special way, a fundamental, religious experience, universal or particular, religious cognition, how to elaborate and understand, epistemology dimension, able to understand religious commitment, possible to do trans cultural discourse, cognition and intuition need to be cooperated.

**Calhoun:** close to related to Joas partial acceptance and rejection to Jose, global challenges does not have to organize in global scales, global solidarity is good, intermedia scale, how to make nation state behavior well in global terms, capitalism to govern everything, universal features, market, materials conditions, and claim change, one kind of structure and other structures, universal is common denominator, all humans share, understood unilateral, universal and higher good, not all civil societies are good, many are again, world making project, reorganization of the world, not the world system nation state, transformation of world making, resistance to the world making, challenges (China, Russia), making a world is not a religious/civilizational project, but in relation to other organizations true to axil age and now, cannot ignore traditions, it is not simply global but reorganization of particularity, regional world project, cultural conditions to support their subjectivity, cannot only global civil society, human system very influence, embedded in the system to make the world this or that, they are all projects, all have infrastructure reorganization in culture and solidarity

1. You ask about the “principles and mechanisms employed by ethico-religious traditions as they emend and change their teachings in response to major historical challenges and shifting social imaginaries.” I am greatly interested in this, but also in resistance to and marginalization of these traditions by much contemporary social thought, the consequent failures or limits of imagination, and the impact of this on the different ethico-religious traditions.
2. Relatedly, what should we make of the implications of displacement of ‘conservatism’ by new kinds of ‘rightism’. The latter are often neoliberal but compete with conservatism in public discourse, often lose in public opinion, or at least confuse matters. These are seldom connected to older ‘organicist’ themes (important to conservatism but not limited to it, as in Catholic social thought of various stripes).
3. You have previously addressed ‘being human for global times’. The related questions of being human alongside technological compensation seems important. Think, AI, but also large-scale socio-technical systems that may include AI whether they are defined by it or not.
4. Most of all, I am interested in and therefore want others to be interested in (a) cosmopolitanism as projection of universal order, (b) cosmopolitanism as embrace of heterogeneity, and (c) tensions

between the two. This seems significant for the World Congress theme. There are lots of jumping off points. At the moment I have in mind Sheldon Pollock's reflections on vernacular and cosmopolitan (but also my own struggles as I write a book on 'cosmopolitanism and belonging').

**Carroll:** cognition is important, discernment in religious cognition, an insight, Lonergan, insight and discernment are important for discussion for hermeneutic change, nature of change good and bad, stay where you are can be good and bad, judgement can be good and bad, discerning is important whether to change or stay where we are, change is normally bad (Plato), change is not what we should do, religious tradition in doctrinal perspectives, change is not good, a betrayal, the notion of change is bad by nature, discernment is not religious but human capacity to discern when to change and stay, related to universalism, need category for discernment, a set of rules principles to facilitate change, go beyond western tradition, in political culture, nation-states as agency, lack of vision, moral universalism, expand of nation state, the job for thinkers today

**Casanova:** religion and questions asked in 60s, go beyond these questions, secularism, global age, inability of social justice, secular system, world system cannot respond challenges, how religion to adapt the global capitalist system, religions still have something there, two main systems, how to challenge the capitalist system and nation state; need a global system, global civil society as counterpart to the nation state system, more than religious, something can help address issues, neither system can address the problem, national system does not work, how religions can serve institutionalized systems in global levels

Synodality is Eastern Church, oldest Christian churches, democratic decision making, transnational civil society, synodality crossing boundaries, it is Greek and Orthodox, cannot go beyond capitalism, nation state, global common good to address global solidarity, two systems of global government, global structure to concern the limit, to think in the global level of structure to add the role, not deny the current governing system

**Cornille:** Christian or not, it is associated with Christian church, dialogue, commonality and difference, not sure Synodality to add much in classical dialogue

**Crow:** in terms of change, religion does not good job when so much change around them, religions change because of the circumstances, dominated forces are so powerful religions become flat, difficult to see what role they can play in the world, overwhelming transformation (market, consumption), new form (reborn) of religion

**Joas:** 1. modernity and modernization of religion is obsolete, the concept of modernity is so unclear chronological and normative, talk forever, not make progress, which phase in history which religion which normative about modernity; 2. we cannot go beyond nation state to solve the problems, need to talk state level itself, positive process of European Union which goes back to nation state, EU positive state beyond nation state, not coordinate nations but more, not sure there is connection between the global and the national form of dealing problems; 3. interplay of moral and religious change, sacredness of person, religious tradition changes because of change wide spread moral intuition, certain understanding is no longer possible because of moral change, instead hermeneutic change but interplay of moral and religious change

Crucial component moral universalism, religious traditions axil traditions are the main source for moral universalism, the form not universal enough, in secular movement religious traditions confront with universal movement, Euro-centric, colonies, claimed universalism but challenged with the tradition and outside tradition, existing doctrines from within and outside the tradition and drive the tradition toward more universalism or more particularism, we see our particularity center for us, universalism-particularism

**Jonkers:** Citizenship, care, and self-determination (title of the plenary session on the sphere of Justice). As I see it, this theme expresses two dominant ways to define citizenship, each with its own merits and

drawbacks. CRVP, as a global network of researchers who are interested in – among other things – the value of citizenship is in an excellent position to discuss this theme.

Emptiness and experience (title of the plenary session on the sphere of Infinity). This theme would be an opportunity for CRVP to examine different experiences of transcendence, not only religious ones but also those of non-religious philosophies of life, like Buddhism, Confucianism etc.

“Human Community and Common Values in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”. I think this theme, which is one of the core topics of interest of CRVP, deserves to be explored further in other regions of the world and/or during the WCP.

**Halik:** the project of belief and non-belief, the important thing is doubt toward using classical categories belief and non-belief, religious nonreligious, not relevant, more dialectic feature, mixed in a person, religious-atheist mixed, reflect the phenomenon as believer and nonbeliever at the same time, spiritual non-religious, important phenomenon for today, need new categories, analogy to multiplicity of identity, believer but, nonbeliever but...

Principle and consequence of synodality, religious cooperation, what is common ways for all religions, synodality is not only for Catholics but an invitation to all, ecumenicalism, religions in the contact of common values, all need a common way for synodality for civil society and political democratization of church, influence of democratization of society, inspiration of political cultures, what is political culture, synodality is something deeper, Catholic consultation for deepening human affairs, ecumenical council to put all people together, consultation how to cultivate cultures of humankind as synodality, it is a way of dynamics, a way is interesting for Eastern and Christian religions before Christians called as religion, what to bring as a new religion, as a way I am the way, the dynamisms is important, it is not just religion but a way, this can put together different traditions, Buddhism is a way, common way to go and sharing, respect, go together, to company each other, more than dialogue, accepting and integrating modernity, in the postmodern global pluralist society, it is more than dialogue, but a way, we go together toward something, etc. pilgrimage

**Kaulem:** crossing boundaries is ambiguous, solidarity is heavy, how to create the environment for an international solidarity, African ubuntu for the global world, but also struggle as well, international forces positive but also paradox, particularizing the international solidarity, social imaginary as an attempt to say whether there are ways to utilize something to bring people together, Christianity divided African people in ethnicity, are there values there that can put together and reduce the division, what we are, how we relate others, power of capitalism, political boundaries imposed on African contacts, African nation states are not adequate in their own boundaries, regional bodies emerge, an attempt to have African constituency, start from local situations, to create something which is Zimbabwe, our history is other history, contribute to social imaginary that can work for Africa

**Liu:** how to develop religious community without religion, difference between religious change and religious transformation, new transformation like aesthetics-ethic-religious, divine reality in Shen, metaphysical experience cannot exclude ultimate concern, too much human rational approach to issues, sign of meeting through understanding, where to meet religious encounters among different cultures through text images to find the divine world and ultimate reality, Daoist poetic reading, reading is the process of tracing back to Dao and logos, there is an author who writes the text, when read the text, it is not the text, but the author's intention, or the human understanding of ultimate reality which reveals through texts, culture, text and willing of God, text is the trace of the ultimate reality which is invisible, but through text and culture we may have the chance to share the religious experience

1. Concerning the issue of hermeneutics, I would take Mencius thought of poetic reading as principle of textual interpretation and understanding. Reading is a process of tracing back to the original of *Dao/Logos* embodied in the written text.

2. Beauty as *transcendentalia* of Being and beings is undefinable, untouchable, invisible both in Nature and in Art. In *Laozi* the Sage has pointed out, the beautiful which has been known is ugly. since the end of last century in the West, goodbye to aesthetics (adieu à l'esthétique) turns out an anthropological step towards the intercultural boundaries. Why returns of beauty? What beauty redeems? How the aesthetic experience transforms the knowing and the desiring of human beings in the age of Anthropocene?

3. After the pandemic with all kind of disasters, people starts finding the fact, the planet is more than human beings. If philosophizing is a way to think what has been not yet thought, could we start to think the imaginary society beyond anthropocentrism, in order to find a way staying with the Nature (the Self-so of myriad things), such as, seeing the things through the inside of things, in the Anthropocene.

**Neville:** metaphysical hypothesis: to be a thing is to consist of conditional and essential components for harmony, social structure, conditional components religious condition, religious traditions, social structure, counter condition, counter-counter conditions, psychological conditions (Kierkegaard, Western), essential for religion is pursuit of ultimacy – consist of saying the world we live in (including religion) all created, the creator cannot be substance, but an act, so is luck, this leads to important consequence, social conditions are important, but deep division what is social conditions, home tradition—Catholic including synodality, other traditions self-contradictory, on the contrary, we do comparison we do the subject matter, religions start with ultimacy, what are the conditions, we all have backgrounds which cannot be contradictory, conversation up to now, we deal with social imaginary, one part of conditions, not necessary religious, other nonreligious can make important contributions, change in different places, psychological change, we are in the skeptical age, to trace all directions of changes and where the change should go, text is one of the conditions and play a role to various other conditions, Laozi text for us is a spiritual matter, it was an advice to king how to go correctly, Daodejin teaching is deeply personal but also how to be a king, text can be read in different variety, Freud's texts, draw the consequences others cannot see

1. How do we reconcile global interests (for instance, of RVP) with interests in recovery of local interests (for instance, in local languages, purity of ethnic backgrounds, celebration of holidays, etc.)?

2. Dealing with cross-cultural philosophy, how do we distinguish between cultures that have been taken over culturally by other cultures (for instance, much of Indian philosophy) and cultures that seem to us westerners as non-religious, or even non-philosophical, because of deep differences?

**Vila-Cha:** virtue of small things, facing options not exclusion but inclusion, development of transnational civil society needed but not dismiss something important (current war as consequence of bad nationalism, national spirit), the capacity of Ukraine people with international help, Ukraine is more Ukraine because of the consequence of the war and recognition of national identity, discern more systematic way of limit and possibility and impossibility of what is entailed in human experience, institutionalized religion and nation state in political sense, international formation (consciousness) comes out nation state, rule of law comes out, far away from implication of rule of law, good possibility not yet developed or not sufficiently developed, religious, psychological, national, dialogue more substantiated, religious implication of current war (Russia against Ukraine) in social situations, religious communities do not stand enough for an unjust war, one of roles of religions is to discern in political conditions/situations

**Taylor:** in relation to in documents, moral and ethical change, what to do and what not to do, ethics enables moral changes, background for our thinking to proceed rubric cause, important in 18<sup>th</sup> century, sacralization of human god, sudden turn to abolitionism, the present age working with or against very powerful forces

(world capitalist system), very powerful forces in Christendom, reaction to addressing violent forces, complex picture – religion, the whole community behind to recognize religious denomination, all divided, move toward the international civil society to draw all people together, animated by forces of religious groups, aligned with all religious groups against forces betrayal, all kinds of movements, conservatism in USA or Islamic world, advanced and profound thinkers in the world but also the opposite, the line of abolition of battle, ecumenical aliens to see the possible future human beings can be.

### **RVP pre-World Congress of Philosophy Conference 2024**

**Jonkers:** information on the World Congress of Philosophy in 2024 in Rome, central theme “Philosophy across Boundaries.” Embodiment, transition, vulnerability, justice, citizenship and care, earth and sustainable world, infinity, emptiness and experience. To propose RVP’s significant role in meetings within the World Congress.

**Presbey:** need something broader enough to subsume, overarching, the issue of the war is not the only injustice, should make a room for the general theme, the seminar theme social transformation is more broader, transformation of religion, tradition, larger term, coming together in a global scale to work on environment, nationalism, individual government’s promises to deal with environment, global transnational companies and local government, international organizations are not enough, need civil society to push government

**Sweet:** practicable, pre-congress on culture, one of issues on universalism and go beyond nation-state, more global, global governance concerned by Chinese, vaccine nationalism to deal local issues, global and local, friends and enemy, friends become rivals same as countries, division of humans, a kind of turn, who are friends and enemies, polarization, retrench, (im)possibility of universalism but massive retrenchment, global organizations deal with the global pandemic, possibility of crossing borders/cultures, not respond globally in terms of the pandemic, Pre-congress conference, many RVP meetings are based on the general theme.

One thing I might suggest is a theme for a pre-conference prior to the World Congress. (A practical point. I don't know where we can meet in Italy, perhaps at the Gregorian, although that may be expensive, and Rome itself is expensive. Perhaps a location that is outside the city but easy to travel to Rome?) But if we are going to continue the practice of a pre-conference, I would suggest a theme that takes up both the World Congress theme and the specificity of the CRVP. So I would suggest something like "culture and boundaries" or "cultures overcoming boundaries," that would bring together both the RVP's charism and that of the World Congress.

About other themes for our work overall, I wonder about something like "friends and enemies" or "who are our friends?." What I have in mind here is that it seems that those whom people identify as friendly or enemy states and cultures seem to change rather quickly, as economic and political conditions change. The demonization of some countries/cultures that previously were regarded as 'friendly' (or at least not unfriendly) - think the middle east prior to the Ayatollah Khomeini - concerns me. Conversely there are countries or cultures or orientations that many people once opposed, are now accepted or embraced. I can't narrow this down right now, but for an organization like ours that seeks to enter into dialogue even with countries or regions that for many are or have been pariahs, there may be room for some reflection.

Another possible theme is related to global governance. Again at a time when it seems that countries are focusing more on internal issues, there is a question whether a notion such as global governance -- which I think is something of particular interest to people in China -- makes much sense.