

RVP Activities

January-December 2023

Annual Seminar

Aug. 21-Sept. 22, 2023: Social Imaginaries and Social Transformation: Discerning the Dynamics of Reality
(CUA McLean Center for the Study of Culture and Values, Washington DC)

International Conferences

January 20: Hermeneutics of Transformation and Changes in Cultural Traditions
(RVP Consultation, Washington DC)

April 14-15: Healing a Wounded Society: Challenges, Reconciliation, and Hope in Rwanda
(in collaboration with Hekima University College, Nairobi, Kenya)

June 1-3: Religion and Peace in Global Times
(in collaboration with University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania)

June 5-6: Technology and Social Responsibility: The Challenges of New/Old Reality
(in collaboration with University of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia)

June 9-11: Intercultural Dialogue and the Transformation of Borders
(in collaboration with University of Prešov, Prešov, Slovakia)

July 5-6: Human Community and Common Values in the 21st Century
(in collaboration with Fu Jen Catholic University, Taipei, Taiwan)

July 9-10: National Values in the New Context
(in collaboration with the Institute of Philosophy, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Hanoi, Vietnam)

December 11-12: The Hermeneutics of Change in the Abrahamic Traditions
(in collaboration with the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy)

Special Research Projects

March 27: Understanding the Signs of Our Times: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives: Power and Responsibility and the Challenges of Technology
(in collaboration with University of Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany and Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy)

March-April: Moving the Needle: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Motivating Ecological Change
(CUA McLean Center for the Study of Culture and Values, Washington DC)

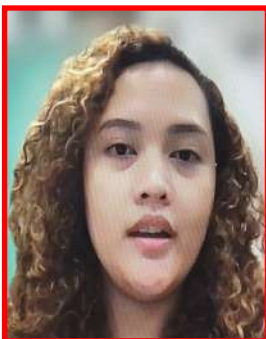
INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR (2023)

Washington, DC

August 21-September 22, 2023: "Social Imaginaries and Social Transformation: Discerning the Dynamics of Reality." As the seminar description stated, human history unfolds itself in time and space marked by unique characteristics. For instance, in the West, the modern age is characterized by industrialization, political revolution, religions reformations, etc., while other parts of the world encountered their own socio-political and cultural experiences which were circumscribed by their own social conditions. However, in these contemporary times, the entire humankind is nevertheless navigating the technological waves, of which the digital and Artificial Intelligence in particular are becoming a major source of concern and reflection. The unfolding of social and historical reality bespeaks of something fundamental for our self-understanding as human beings. As an unfolding of specific circumstances and situations in specific time and space, history does repeat itself but not just what went before, rather continues its movement through various events, big and small, as emerging manifestations of the dynamic character of the vision articulated in stories, images, songs, epics, etc., as well as in laws, political movements, social innovations and transformations. Events and changes in the real world are always dramatic, unimaginable, and unprecedented, while phi-



João J. Vila-Chã



Deborah S. Anastacio



Orisua Bila



Adrienna Black



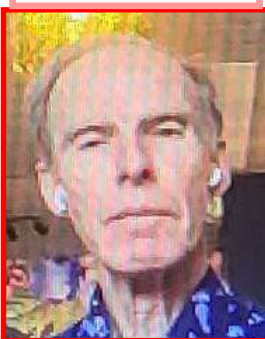
Marcus Paulo R. Boeira



Olga V. Chistyakova



Liudmila Kryshchok



John Farina



Li Jiahong



Leslie Anne Liwanag



Zairu Nisha



Natalia Otreshko



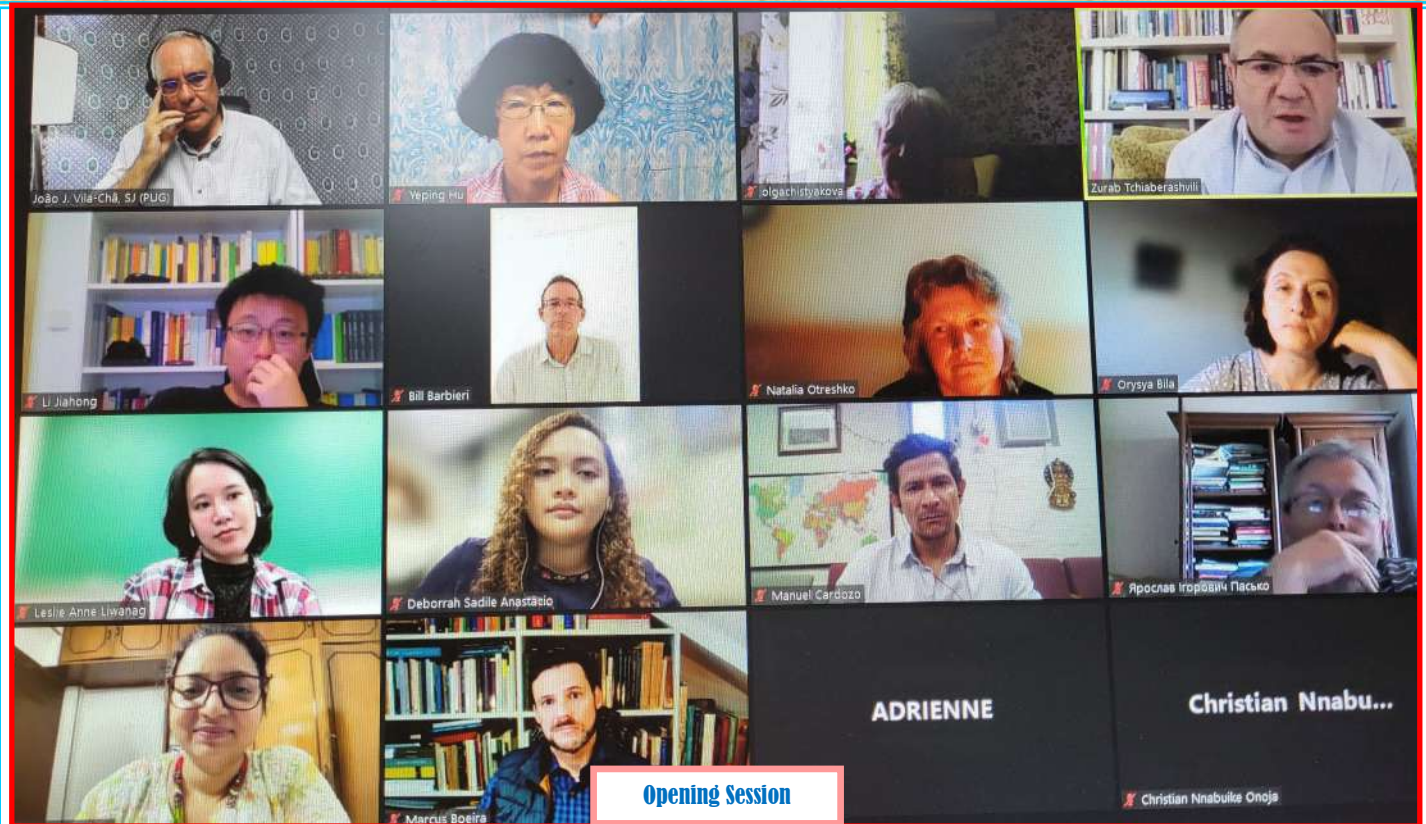
Yaroslav I. Pasko



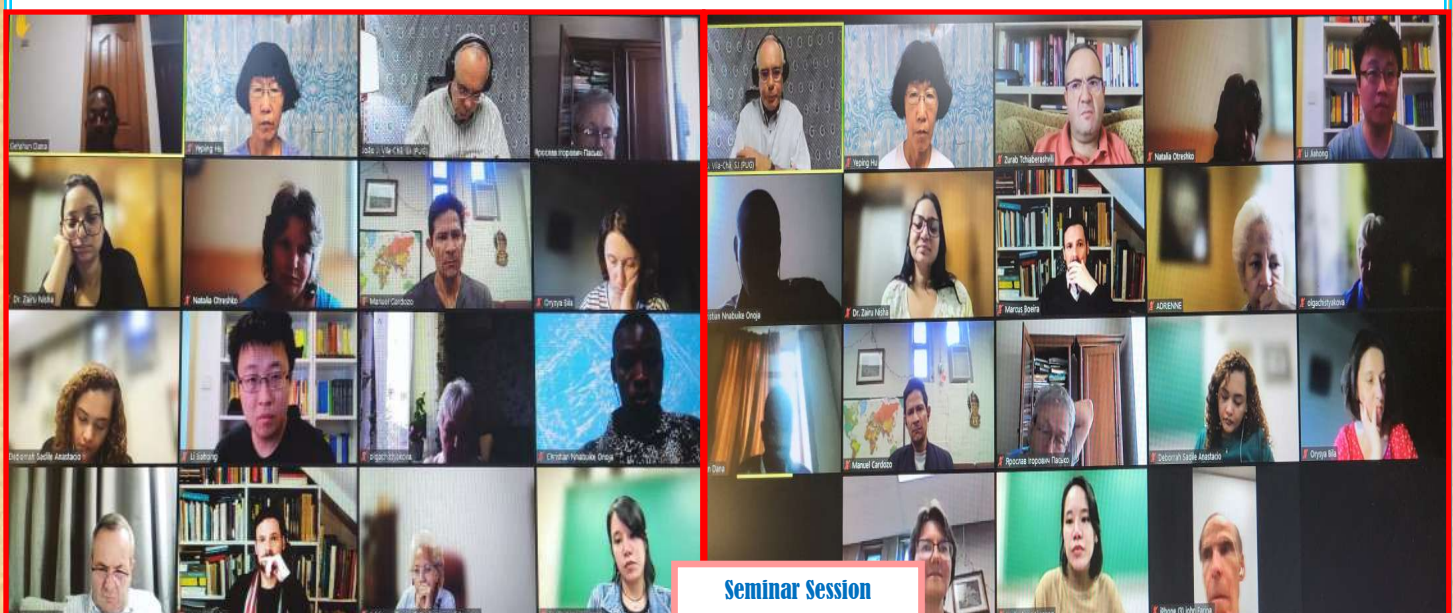
Manuel Cardozo Ruidiaz



Zurab Tchiaberashvili



losophers, scholars, and thinkers of the time always try to catch up with belated theoretical reflections, analyses, and investigations. Yet deeper philosophical inquiry and attention to the broader horizons of understanding the process of social and historical reality are urgently needed at all times. Usually, we take for granted the ability of the human mind to not only become aware of one's own horizon of understanding, but also of systematically transcending it to integrate the horizons of other people and cultures and, thus, to develop a reflexive awareness or historical consciousness. The dynamics of social and historical reality indicates that the human being is never bound by just one specific horizon of understanding but rather constantly moves in and out in order to achieve deeper and broader horizons. In this process, new dimensions and potentialities open to new existential experiences and the corresponding search for meaning. The fusion of horizons through dialogues and shared thinking processes enables us to better understand circumstances that are new and challenging, but also filled with opportunities for renewed acts of imagination and a pragmatic re-orientation at both the personal and the societal level.



The seminar focused on the uncovering of the depth of the problem associated with the development of an understanding of how social imaginaries are significant in constructing powerful social forces for either transformation or paralysis in the formation of historical consciousness for new paradigms in reality. It intended to search for the symbolic dimension of our social being and the concomitant hermeneutical interpretation of narratives and findings necessary for the emerging of a new culture. Indeed social and historical events have profound effects in the inter-



play of cultures and civilizations in the global world. A good and workable social order can ensure authentic freedom and envisage a better, more sustainable future for the entire human family. The seminar dealt with a set of questions, such as how social imaginaries are players in the process of social transformation and why they are particularly significant in developing cultural horizons and how to understand the interaction between social imaginaries and human actions, the relationship between social imaginaries and human consciousness, etc.



The 2023 annual seminar was held both in person and online. It was divided into two parts: the five weeks from August to September as the first part focused on related materials by various authors; the second was devoted to the draft paper presentations of seminar participants. It began in October and will end in April, 2024. Seminar participants meet once a month to discuss and critique each other on his or her draft paper.



Workshop



Organ Concern

During the first five week seminar, **Deborrah Sadile Anastacio** and **Leslie Anne L. Liwanag** (De La Salle University, Philippines) and **Zurab Tchiaberashvili** (Ilia State University, Georgia) presented Charles Taylor's *Modern Social Imaginaries*; **Nataliia Otreshko** (The Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine) discussed Jurgen Habermas's *Between Facts and Norms Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*; **Liwanag** offered her reading on Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*; **Liudmila Kryshtop** (Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Russia) shared her understanding on Marshall McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*; **Manuel Faustino Cardozo Ruidiaz** (Katholische Universität, Germany) discussed Jean Baudrillard's *The Consumer Society Myths and Structures*; **Marcus Paulo Rycembel Boeira** (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil) and **Zairu Nisha** (Ramanujan College, University of Delhi, India) examined David J. Chalmers's *Reality Virtual Worlds and the Problems of Philosophy*; **Li Jiahong** talked about Gerard Bouchard's *Social Myths and Collective Imaginaries*; **Orisua Bila** (Ukrainian Catholic University, Ukraine) explored Paul Fairfield's *Historical Imagination Hermeneutics and Cultural Narrative*; David J. Chalmers: *Reality Virtual Worlds and the Problems of Philosophy*; **Tchiaberashvili** reviewed Cornelius Castoriadis's *Crosswords*



Celebration Mass

spoke on *Ricoeur and Castoriadis in Discussion*; **Otreshko** and **Pasko** analyzed Richard Kearney's *Imagination Now A Richard Kearney Reader*.

Nataliia Otreshko "The Influence of the Social Imagination on the Basic Metaphors of the Social Sciences" and **Orisua Bila** "Humanities at War: The Shaping of Societies, Policies, and Ideals" presented their draft papers respectively on October 28. **Leslie Anne L. Liwanag** shared her draft paper entitled "Stereotypes in the City:" A Comparative Analysis of Ethno-Religious Stereotypes Of Muslims and Christians In Manila, Philippines" on

December 17. **Zurab Tchiaberashvili** and **Marcus Paulo Rycembel Boeira** will discuss their draft papers on January 27, 2024; **Liudmila Kryshchuk** and **Deborah Sadile Anastacio** on February 24,



In Front of the Oblates



University of Virginia



Gettysburg

2024; **Manuel Faustino Cardozo Ruidiaz** and **Yaroslav Pasko** on March 24, 2024; **Olga V. Chistyakova** and **Zairu Nisha** April 27, 2024. After these draft papers are reworked by authors, they will be published in the Council's publication series "Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change."

Anastacio, Liwanag, Cardozo Ruidiaz, and Kryshchuk came to Washington to attend the seminar for the first five weeks. During their stay, they explored the Washington area and took part in different cultural activities. They visited Thomas Jefferson's hometown Monticello, the historical city of Philadelphia, the battle ground in Gettysburg, etc. On September 6, seminar participants had a mass at the Oblate chapel for the 7th anniversary of **George F. McLean**'s passing, a presentation on **McLean** by Emanuel Salagean (University of Bucharest, Romania) at the seminar room and an organ concert by Geanina Salagean at CUA St. Vincent Chapel.



Monticello

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES (2023)

Washington, DC

January 20, 2023: "Hermeneutics of Transformation and Changes in Cultural Traditions." This online workshop was one of RVP annual consultations. The goal of the consultation was to think about the possible themes and projects for future research and activities for the RVP global network of scholars. For the past years, the RVP consultation was held in person in conjunction with a public event either before or after. However, due to the global pandemic, it was cancelled in 2020 but held online in 2021. The January 20, 2023 online consultation was divided into two parts: the morning session was devoted to thematic discussions on hermeneutical interpretation and understanding of transformation and changes in our contemporary times and some related issues according to each participant's own research focus and interest; and the afternoon session was a business meeting with a few RVP board members. **William Barbieri** (CUA McLean Center for the Study of Culture) moderated the consultation.

Participants included **Joseph Agbakoba** (University of Nigeria, Nigeria), **Craig Calhoun** (Arizona State University, AZ), **Anthony Carroll** (College of the Resurrection, United Kingdom), **José Casanova** (Georgetown University, Washington DC), **Catherine Cornille** (Boston College, MA), **Karim Crow** (CUA McLean Center for the Study of Culture and Values, Washington DC), **Tomas Halik** (Charles University, Czech), **Huang Yong** (Chinese University of Hong Kong, China), **Hans Joas** (Humboldt University, Germany), **Peter Jonkers** (Tilburg University, Netherlands), **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), and **João Vila-Chã** (Gregorian University, Italy).

According to **Taylor**, in relation to moral and ethical changes, what to do and what not to do, ethics enables moral changes. As the background for our thinking to proceed, it is important to look



Workshop Session

at the 18th century: sacralization of human god, the sudden turn to abolitionism, etc. The present age works either with or against very powerful forces (such as the world capitalist system, Christendom, reaction to addressing violent forces, etc.). It is a complex picture in terms of religion, because the whole community behind recognizes the religious denomination. Since all are divided and hence move toward the international civil society to draw all people together. This is animated by forces of religious groups, aligned with all religious groups against betrayal, and by all kinds of movements (such as conservatism in the US or the Islamic world). Advanced and profound thinkers



Joseph Agbakoba



William Barbieri



Craig Calhoun



Anthony Carroll



José Casanova



Catherine Cornille



Karim Crow



Tomas Halik



Huang Yong



Hans Joas



Peter Jonkers



David Kaulem



Johanna Liu



Robert Neville



Gail Presbey



William Sweet



Charles Taylor



João Vila-Chã

in the world, but also the opposite in the line of abolition of battles, with ecumenical aliens see the possible future human beings can be. Coping with modernization, reform is under the condition of modernity. There are forces against cultural diversity, globalization, marginalization, tradition, and contemporary thought retaining

cultural and linguistic diversity, preserving cultural diversity. There are friends and enemies, wars and implications of conflict for the work of the philosophical and the religious, social sciences, etc.



For **Agbakoba**, issues importantly concerned include modernity in Africa, the pre-colonial world in Africa, colonial heritages, trans-coloniality; progressive elements to develop the cultural world with new identity or hybrid identity as based for the new world, new relationship to create; how to understand the notion of positive justice vs negative justice (retributive justice), and equality for all; how to develop capabilities to reconcile and encourage people to develop a social, forgiving, creative world. Religious cognition, a special way, is fundamental to understand religious experience, both universal and particular; how to elaborate and understand epistemology dimension in order to be able to understand religious commitment and to be possible to do trans-cultural discourse; cognition and intuition need to be cooperated.

Calhoun noted that global challenges do not have to organize in global scales but in intermedia scale. Global solidarity is good, but how to make the nation state behavior well in global terms. Capitalism governs everything, like universal features, market, materials conditions, and climate change. In one kind or other kinds of structures, the universal is the common denominator, all humans share and understand the unilateral, universal, and higher good. Not all civil societies are good. Many are world making projects, reorganization of the world, not the world system as nation-states, but transformation of world making. There are resistance and challenges to the world making. Making a world is not a religious/civilizational project, but in relation to other organizations. It is true to the Axil Age and cannot ignore traditions. It is not simply global but reorganization of particularity, the regional world project, cultural conditions to support their subjectivity. It cannot be only global civil society. Human systems are embedded in the system to make the world this or that, but they are all projects, all have infrastructure of reorganization in culture and solidarity. It should be in resistance to marginalization of traditions by much contemporary social thought, the consequent failures or limits of imagination, and the impact on the different ethico-religious traditions. Technological compensation seems important in large-scale socio-technical systems that may include AI, or may be defined by it or not. The important issues relate to (a) cosmopolitanism as projection of universal order, (b) cosmopolitanism as embrace of heterogeneity, (c) tensions between the two, and (d) cosmopolitanism and belonging.

Carroll stressed the importance of cognition. Discernment in religious cognition needs an insight. For Lonergan, insight and discernment are important for discussion for hermeneutic change; the nature of change can be 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. For a 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 and related to universalism. It needs category for discernment, a set of rules and principles to facilitate change. We should go beyond Western tradition. In political culture, nation-states as agency lack of vision, moral universalism.

For **Casanova**, questions regarding hermeneutic changes were raised in 1960s. We should go beyond these questions. Secularism, the global age, the secular system, and the world system cannot respond challenges, and are not able to do social justice. How can religion adapt itself to the global capitalist system? Religions still have something there. They still have main systems. To challenge the capitalist system and the nation-state, it needs a global system, a global civil society as counterpart to the nation-state system. It is more than religious, something can help address issues. Currently neither system can address the problem, the national system does not work, how religions can serve institutionalized systems in global levels? Synodality is from the Eastern Church, oldest Christian churches; it is Greek and Orthodox; it has democratic decision making, transnational civil society. It crosses boundaries. We cannot go beyond capitalism, the nation-state, the global common good can address global solidarity. Beside the two systems of global government, global structures to concern the limit, to think in the global level of structure, global civil society can play its role. This is not to deny the current governing system.

Cornille stated that synodality may not be able to add much in classical dialogue. Christian or not, it is associated with the Christian church through dialogue to understand commonality and difference. **Crow** pointed out that in terms of change, religions do not do a 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, in the overwhelming transformation (market, consumption). It is necessary to think of new form (reborn) of religion.

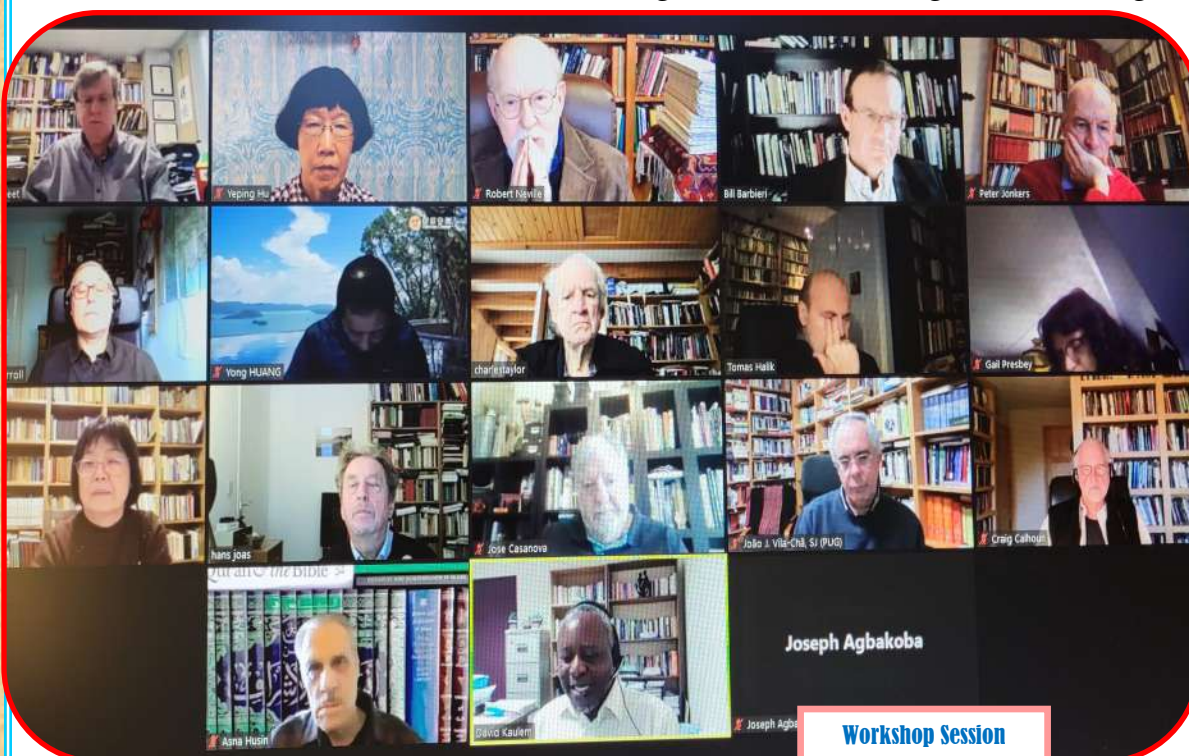
According to **Joas**, (1) modernity and modernization of religion is obsolete, the concept of moder-



nity is so unclearly chronological and normative. We talk forever but never make progress about which phase in history, which religion, which normative about modernity. (2) We cannot go beyond the nation-state to solve the problems, we need to talk the state level itself. The positive process of European Union goes back to the nation-state; EU positive states go beyond the nation-state, not merely coordinate nations but more. It is not sure whether there is a connection between the global and the national form of dealing problems. (3) The interplay of moral and religious change, sacredness of person, is important. The religious tradition changes because of changes that wide spread in moral intuitions. Certain understanding is no longer possible because of moral changes. Instead of hermeneutic changes, it should be the interplay of moral and religious changes. The crucial component of moral universalism is the religious traditions of the Axil Age as the main source. The form is not universal enough. In the secular movement, religious traditions confront with the universal movement, like Euro-centric colonies, which claims universalism but is challenged by the tradition and outside of tradition. Existing doctrines from within and without the tradition drive the tradition toward more universalism or more particularism. We see our particularity center for us, universalism-particularism.

Halik elaborated that for the project of belief and non-belief, the important thing is whether to continue using classical categories of belief and non-belief, religious and nonreligious. They are not relevant for our contemporary situation. There are more dialectic, complex features mixed in a person, religious-atheist mixed. We should reflect upon the phenomenon as both believer and nonbeliever, spiritual and non-religious. This is an important phenomenon for today, we need new categories, new analogies to multiplicity of identity, believer and nonbeliever. Regarding the principle and consequence of synodality, religious cooperation, synodality is not only for Catholics but an invitation to all. It is ecumenicalism. What are common ways for all religions and what are common values in the contact of all religions? We need a common way for synodality, for civil society, and for political democratization of church. In terms of political culture, the influence of democratization of society, and the inspiration of political cultures, synodality is something deeper. It is a Catholic consultation for deepening human affairs. The Ecumenical Council puts all people together, and consults how to cultivate cultures of humankind as synodality. It is a way of dynamics, a way of interest for both Eastern and Christian religions. What to bring as a new religion, as a way -- I am

the way, the dynamism is important, it is not just religion but a way. This can put together different traditions, Buddhism is a way, same as other traditions. A common way can go and share, respect, company each other, it is more than dialogue.

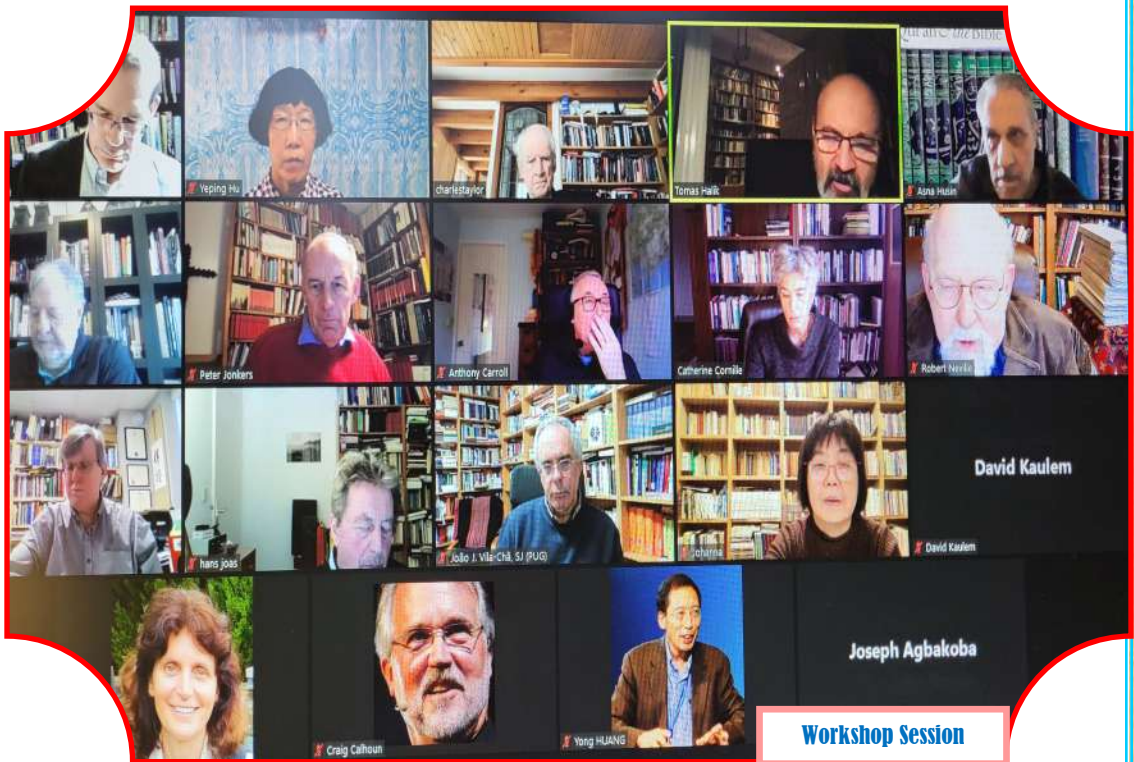


Accepting and integrating modernity in the postmodern global pluralist society, it is more than dialogue, but a way, we go together toward something, as pilgrimage.

For **Kaulem**, crossing boundaries is ambiguous, solidarity is heavy, how to create the environment for an international solidarity, African ubuntu tradition can be good for the global world, but it is also a struggle. International forces are sometimes positive but also paradoxical, which particularizes the international solidarity. Social imaginary can be an attempt to say whether there are ways to utilize something to bring people together. Christianity divided African people in ethnicity. Are there values that can put together and reduce the division, to understand what and who we are, how we can relate others? Power of capitalism and political boundaries have imposed on African contacts, African nation states are not adequate in their own boundaries. In this situation, regional bodies emerge, as an attempt to have African constituency, to start from local situations, to create something which is Zimbabwe. Our history is our own but not other's. We can make a contribution to social imaginaries that can work for Africa.

Liu asked whether we can develop a religious community without religion. There are differences

between religious change and religious transformation. New transformation like aesthetics-ethic-religious, divine reality, metaphysical experience cannot exclude the ultimate concern, there is too much human rational approach to issues. Through meeting we can achieve understanding, religious encounters among different cultures can be achieved through text images to find the divine world and the ultimate reality. In Daoist poetic reading, reading is the process of tracing back to Dao and logos. When an author writes the text, when people 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, 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. Beauty as *transcendentalia* of Being and beings is undefinable, untouchable, invisible both in nature and in art. In *Laozi*, the sage points out that the beautiful is ugly. Since the end of the last century in the West, aesthetics (adieu à l'esthétique) has turned out an anthropological step toward the intercultural boundaries. Why should we return to beauty? What beauty can redeem? How the aesthetic experience can transform the knowing and the desiring of human beings in the age of Anthropocene? After the pandemic, people have found out that the planet is not just human but more than human. If philosophizing is a way to think what has not been yet thought, could we start to think the imaginary society beyond anthropocentrism, so that we can find a way to harmonize with the nature (the self-so of myriad things), such as, seeing the things through the inside of things, in the Anthropocene.



In relation to the discussion of the thematic, **Neville** pointed out the metaphysical hypothesis. To be a thing is to consist of conditional and essential components for certain things, for instance, for harmony, religious traditions, social structure, etc., and a counter condition, counter-counter conditions, psychological conditions (Kierkegaard, Western). Religions start with ultimacy and the essential for religion is its pursuit of ultimacy — consist of saying that the world we live in (including religion) is all created, the creator cannot be substance, but an act, so is luck. This leads to important consequence. Social conditions are important, but there is deep division. What is social conditions, home tradition, Catholic including synodality, other traditions as self-contradictory. On the contrary, we do comparison, we do the subject matter. What are the conditions, we all have backgrounds which cannot be contradictory. We deal with social imaginaries, as one part of conditions, not necessarily religious, other nonreligious can make important contributions. Change can take place in different places, such as 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 plays a role to various



other conditions, Laozi's text for us is a spiritual matter, it was an advice to kings how to go correctly. Daodejin teaching is deeply personal but also how to be a king. Text can be read in different variety, for instance, Freud's texts, and can be drawn out the consequences others cannot see. Specifically, how do we reconcile global interests with interests in recovery of local interests (for instance, in local languages, purity of ethnic backgrounds, celebration of holidays, etc.)? 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?

According to **Vila-Cha**, small things have their virtues. When facing options, we should not focus on exclusion but inclusion. Development of transnational civil society is needed but cannot dismiss something important. The current war in Europe is the consequence of bad nationalism, bad national spirit. The Ukraine people have the capacity with the international help, Ukraine is more Ukraine because of the consequence of the war and the recognition of its national identity. It is necessary to discern a more systematic way of limits and possibilities and impossibilities of what is entailed in human experience, an institutionalized religion, and the nation-state in a political sense. Internation

formation (consciousness) comes out the nation-state, rule of law comes out the nation-state. We are far away from the implication of rule of law. Good possibility has not been yet developed or not sufficiently developed. Religious, psychological and national dialogue should be more substantiated. For the religious implication in the current war of social situations, religious communities do not stand up enough for an unjust war or just war, one of roles of religions is to discern in political conditions/situations.

Regarding the themes of the RVP Pre-Congress Conference, **Jonkers** thinks that the themes of citizenship, care, and self-determination express two dominant ways to define citizenship, each with its own merits and drawbacks. As a global network of researchers we are interested in – among other things – the value of citizenship. Emptiness and experience should be also examined according to different experiences



of transcendence, not only religious ones but also those of non-religious philosophies of life, like Buddhism, Confucianism etc. Other themes could be embodiment, transition, vulnerability, justice, citizenship and care, earth and sustainable world, infinity, emptiness and experience.

Presbey proposed that the general theme should be broader enough to subsume, overarching. It should make a room for the general concern. the theme on social transformation is more broader, because it can be transformation of religion or tradition, in a larger sense. Coming together in a global scale we work on issues related to environment. Nationalism, individual government's promises to deal with environment, global transnational companies and local government, international organizations are not enough, we need civil society to push the government further.

For **Sweet**, one of issues should be on universalism and go beyond the nation-state but more global. Global governance is concerned by the Chinese. Global and local, friends and enemies are concerns. Friends become rivals, same as countries. Division of human beings is a kind of turn, who are friends and enemies. Our society become more polarized, people retrench. There is (im) possibility of universalism but massive retrenchment. Global organizations deal with the global pandemic, but vaccine nationalism did not respond globally in terms of the pandemic. What is the possibility of crossing borders/cultures. If we are going to continue the practice of the RVP pre-Congress conference, one theme could take up like "culture and boundaries" or "cultures overcoming boundaries." Another theme could be "friends and enemies" or "who are our friends?" 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). Conversely, there are countries or cultures or orientations that many people once opposed, are now accepted or embraced. We need to seek to enter into dialogue even with countries or regions that for many are or have been pariahs, there may be room for some reflection. Third possible theme is related to global governance. When it seems that countries are focusing more on internal issues, there is a question whether a notion such as global governance makes much sense.

Nairobi and Washington, DC

April 14-15, 2023: "Healing a Wounded Society: Challenges, Reconciliation, and Hope in Rwanda." As the socio-political situation of the world has become more complex and uncertain, crises of all kinds have emerged in various areas of society: for instance, last three years' global pandemic, the current Russia-Ukraine war, the Middle East crisis, etc. All of these have not only challenged the global order but had strong impacts on our daily lives. Under such circumstances, we are urged not only to watch closely what is taking place at the current moment around the globe, but also to look back to certain historical events that then shocked the entire world in order to find some clues and logics for the present situation. The 1994 Rwanda genocide can be considered one such shocking historical moment that happened not too long ago in our recent human history.

Clashes and conflicts can be of many kinds. For S. Huntington, the major driver of the contemporary world's tensions is the difference of cultures that have their own religious identities. In terms of Rwanda's tragedy, it seemed an ethnic conflict had played a significant role. As hidden tensions among different ethnic groups were inflamed by external forces, cruel slaughters among neighbors near and far spiraled out of control. Such brutality is beyond human reasoning and imagination. However, even today conflicts and savage killings are still taking place in many parts of the world. Questions may arise: For what purpose do human beings want to eliminate one another? What is the cause of human hatred against others? Why are we not able to stop the large scale of human brutality that occurs constantly in our history? How might we prevent conflicts and clashes? Can we find good measures and methods? Are we able to learn from the lessons of the historical past?

On April 7, 2023, Rwanda and the international community will once again commemorated the genocide against the Tutsi which took place in April 1994. The McLean Center in collaboration with Hekima University College in Nairobi used this opportunity to hold an online conference entitled "Healing a Wounded Society: Challenges, Reconciliation, and Hope in Rwanda." The goal of this online conference was to honor the victims of the tragedy, but especially to explore theological and



Catherine Cornille



Catherine Cornille



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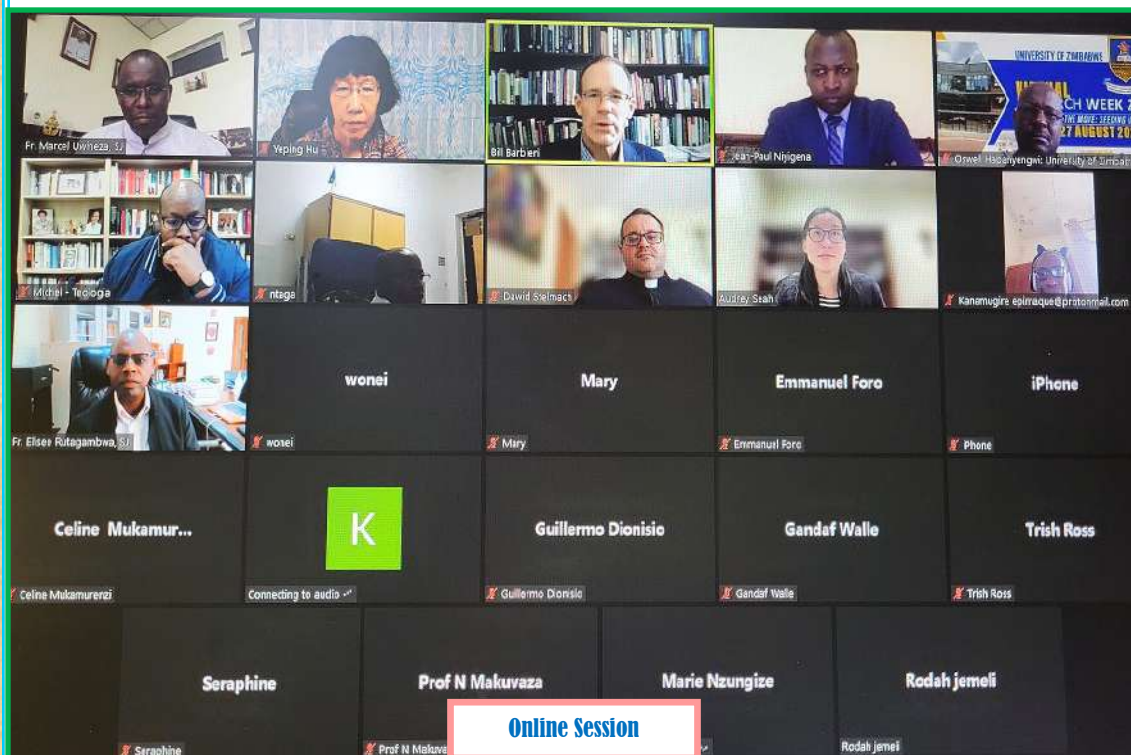
ethical dimensions of this unforgettable devastation. In our increasingly divided world today, it is necessary and urgent to find ways of healing deep tensions and wounds and promoting peace, reconciliation, and cooperation. During this two day online conference A group of scholars reflected on the Rwandan tragedy and shared their insights and experiences.

Marcel Uwineza, Principal of Hekima University College and **William A. Barbieri**, Director of the McLean Center, moderated the two day conference. In the first day, the following speakers presented their papers:

Jean Paul Niyigena (University of Rwanda, Rwanda) "Christian Theology: A Paradigm of Reconciliation," **Michel Segatagara Kamanzi** (Pontifical Biblical Institute, Italy) "The Righteous Shall Be in Everlasting Remembrance: Commemorating the Just," **Audrey Seah** (Loyola University Maryland,

USA) "Ritualizing Divine Mercy: Creating Narratives of Hope through Popular Religiosity," and **Jay Carney** (Creighton University, USA) "The Gifts and Challenges of Christian Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda." The second day had such presenters as **Elisee Rutagambwa** (Hekima University College) "The Politics and Ethics of Apology in the Post-Genocide Rwanda," **Dawid Stelmach** (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland) "Reconciliation in Rwanda: A Generation after the Genocide," **Leocadie Lushombo** (Santa Clara University, USA) "Paths to Healing, Reconciliation, and Sustainable Peace," and **William O'Neill** (Jesuit Refugee Service, Kenya) "Remembering Genocide: The Ethics of Amnestic Solidarity."

More than 40 participants from all parts of the world attended the conference and shared their ideas and experiences on the issue. The plans of future cooperation were discussed as well.



Bucharest, Romania

June 1-3, 2023: "Religion and Peace in Global Times." This conference was planned and hosted by **Wilhelm Dancă** (Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Bucharest), who has been collaborating with the RVP for many years. He has organized a few joint conferences and published a few conferences proceedings. **Dancă** was part of the research project "Faith in a Secular Age" and took part in the RVP 2006 seminar entitled "History and Cultural Identity." **Adina Bălan**, a member of the same faculty, coordinated the conference.



Adina Balan



Opening session: William Sweet, Wilhelm Dancă, Daniel Barbu



Wilhelm Dancă

According to the conference thematic description, each religion claims that it has the absolute and universal vocation. Such a claim seems causing conflicts. In historical terms, some disputes between religious and secular powers turned into war, for instance, the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) that ended with the Peace of Westphalia in Germany. The relationship between religion and conflict is ambiguous, but it has shaped the destiny of many peoples and nations across the world. In late modernity, the causes of wars were often political, economic, colonial, territorial, etc., while religion seemed only an ideological ingredient of various conflicts, even though religious authorities preached peace. Indeed, religion often becomes instrumentalized by various parties, however, common interests and mutual agreements between political and religious powers are in existence. For many, religion as an ideal incentive is worth fighting and dying for. This understanding of religion is not seen as faith in God but as religious belonging. As a nominalist function, such religion is rather a marker of identity. This can be observed in many conflicts between Christians and Muslims, between Sunni and Shia, or between the two Orthodox nations of Russia and Ukraine.

Despite many current efforts to equate peace and religion, it seems that the two notions form an



Group Photo

oxymoron. With its many sides: political, legal, ethical, and religious, peace is possible only if all these elements converge. Perhaps only when religion comes to peace, there can be a lasting peace. A distinction between religion and peace has to be made in order to understand what kind of role(s) religion plays in a given war. The key question here is how anyone feels entitled to kill in the name of God. Paul Ricoeur once pointed out that the danger of violence is inseparable from any strong convictions, of which religious belief is one. If this is the case, violence itself must be addressed and overcome. Hans

Küng suggested a world ethic based upon the principle that every human being is and should be treated as a human being before everything else. In 1989, in Central and Eastern Europe, in Africa



Conference Session

and in Asia, major political and social changes took place without bloodshed. This was possible because political leaders among others opposed violence in the name of religion. Indeed, religion does have an inner calling to non-violence. For instance, Christianity is the religion of forgiveness and love of enemies; other religions see themselves as religions of peace, brotherhood and goodwill among human beings. However, why then peace is not able to be realized among religious communities? Why many religious spokespersons tend to encourage fundamentalism and violent behavior? Why many religious leaders are not open to inter-religious dialogue? The purpose of the conference was to have a common reflection on issues related to issues of religion and peace in the framework of an interdisciplinary, interconfessional, and interreligious perspective. Together, it might be possible to find some answers to the above questions and raise new questions, walking side by side, as academics and as persons, religious or nonreligious, on the path toward peace.



Group Photo

The conference was divided into sessions: English and Romanian. **Dancă** opened the conference. **William Sweet** (St. Francis Xavier University, Canada) and **Daniel Barbu** (University of Bucharest)



Conference Session

gave the keynote speech respectively on “Religion, Peace, and the Human Person” and “Love, War, and Fairness: Is Peace Normatively Impossible?”



Conference Session

In the English session, the following participants presented their papers: **Emanuel Sălăgean** (Adventus University, Romania) “From Love to Global Peace in the Vision of George F. McLean,” **Karim Douglas Crow** (CUA McLean

Center for the Study of Culture and Values) “Intra-Religious Muslim Dialogue? Geostrategic and Religious: Implications of Sunni-Shi’ ah Rivalry,” **Asna Husin** (Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Indonesia) “Knowledge Is Light’: Seeking the Basis for Peace Between Muslim and Christian,” along with scholars from University of Bucharest: **Wilhelm Dancă** “Peace of Religions or Christian

Denominations: Some Remarks on the ‘De pace fidei’ by Nicolaus Cusanus in the Context of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict,” **Eduard Giurgi** “Peace in the World Conditioned by the Peace in the Heart: a Closer Look at Pacem in terries,” **Otniel Bunaciu** “Blessed Are the Peace-



Conference Session

Maker: A Reflection on Karl Barth's Understanding on War and Peace from the Perspective of the Today's Situation in Europe," **Adina Bălan** "Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding," and **Florian Ioniță** "Father Georges Lemaitre: Author of the 'primordial atom' Theory (Big Bang)." **Gerald Du-roisin** from the Church Notre-Dame in Belgium also presented a paper titled "The mediatio unionis: Elements of Mariology and Ecclesiology for Our Time."

The Romanian session included the following speakers from University of Bucharest: **Hristo-for-Tarciziu Șerban** "Împăcarea cu Dumnezeu, înfăptuită de Isus

Christos: sursa păcii dintre oameni," **Cristian Bălănean** "Coabitarea valorilor creștine cu democrația în Uniunea Europeană pe linia Sartori-Hayek," **Daniela-Ionela Mare** "Persoana consacrată: 'făcător de pace'?"

Gabriela Blebea-Nicolae "De ce dușmănim?," **Ilie-Grigore Cătălin** "Conflict economic, discernământ religios," and **Ana Moldovan Rafail** "Pavlichienii, o identitate marcată de conflict. Războiului ruso- turc din 1806-1812," along with scholars from other Romanian Universities: **Lorena Stuparu** (Ion I. C. Brătianu Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations of Romanian Academy) "Armonia

religiilor în viziunea lui Mircea Eliade," **Roxana Zanea** (Octav Onicescu National College) "Distrușând locurile sacre: patrimoniul sacru în fața conflictelor," and **Elena Oliviana Epurescu** (University of Polytechnics of Bucharest) "Pacea din noi și pacea de lângă noi."

After the conference, the organizer invited the foreign participants to visit some museums so that they could have the opportunity to learn more about the history and cultural tradition of the Romanian people. Both the conference and the visit enriched their stay in Bucharest.



Visit to the Ethnic Park



City Visit



Visit to the Museum

Tbilisi, Georgia

June 5-6, 2023: “**Technology and Social Responsibility: The Challenges of New/Old Reality.**” The conference was planned and conceptualized when **Tinatin Bochorishvili** (Professor and Deputy

Director of the Scientific Research Institute at the University of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia) visited Washington, DC in September 2022. In the early 1990s after Georgia’s Independence, **Bochorishvili** along with a group of Georgian scholars invited by **George F. McLean** paid their first visit to Washington. Since then she has organized a few joint conferences and published a book entitled *Politics, Ethics, and the Challenges to Democracy in “New Independent States* in the RVP publication series. **Bochorishvili**



Tinatin Bochorishvili



Konstantine Topuria



Group Photo

took part in the 2022 RVP seminar “Political Order and the Ethics of Peace.”

The conference theme stated that the interest of development and innovation of technology, especially artificial intelligence, has risen across the world. Technology was initially envisaged as a hope for the improvement and advancement of human wellbeing. However, fascination with technology has shifted our attention from human interiority/subjectivity to the objective/physical world, thus



Opening Session

shaped our behavior in both public and private spheres. With the unlimited expansion and use of technology, it has brought about a dehumanizing effect. Today we are experiencing its domination and control in our daily lives, which has created a new real and virtual reality in our times. The challenges and benefits of technology are not new, numerous literatures have been produced in various aspects and perspectives. This conference tried to revisit some important issues related to tech-



nology, such as, what are the logical, cosmological, and ontological dimensions, as well as the socio-political problems; what has been the unfolding of technology from its historical account up to the present form; can technology be developed on a more humane basis; how it can be implemented in accord with human values and virtues (not just merely human needs); how it can be incorporated with human dignity and social harmony; how it can be situated in a peaceful world. Themes discussed in conference included: Artificial Intelligence, ethical considerations, advances in technology, technological impact on society (social, political, economic, cultural, ecological, etc.), future of humanity, the meaning of technology, and progress in science and technology.

Bochorishvili moderated the entire conference. At the opening session, **Konstantine Topuria**, Rector of the University of Georgia, gave welcoming remarks; and **Bochorishvili** recalled the history of the close collaboration between the Georgian academies and the RVP, and **Hu Yeping** stated



the thematic importance. The following speakers presented their papers during the two day conference: **João J. Vila-Chã** "Technology and the In-Between of Power and Responsibility," **Karim Douglas Crow** "From Technology to Technodicy: Responsibility for Evil in the Anthropic Era," **Zurab Tchiberashvili** (Ilia State University, Georgia) "Political Philosophy of John Rawls in the Era of Social Media," **Asna Husin** (Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Indonesia) "Does Technology Pose Profound



Conference Break

Meanings Beyond the Obvious?," **Sencer Yeralan** (ADA University Baku, Azerbaijan) "Generative AI: Challenges to Higher Education," **Dan Chițoiu** (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania) "Perceiving Reality: New Technologies Impact and Spiritual Practice Role," and **Tatia Kekelia** (Ilia State University, Georgia) "Synopticon: Challenge or Fatal Curse?," **Irine Pkhakadze** (Akaki Tsereteli State University, Georgia) "Medical Education and Artificial Intelligence," **Elizbar Elizbarashvili** (Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia) and **Sophiko Kvantaliani** (Technical University of Georgia, Georgia) "Nick Bostrom's 'Future Shock' and the New Metaphysics," and **Emanuel Sălăgean** (University of Bucharest, Romania) "The Future of the Human Being in the Context of the Development of New Technologies and AI in the Vision of George F. McLean."

After the conference, **Bochorishvili** invited some participants to visit Mtskheta, one of the oldest cities in Georgia and the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral of Twelve Apostles (built in 1010-1029), the most important religious center and the largest ecclesiastic construction of mediaeval Georgia. They also visited the national museum and the old town of Tbilisi.



Visit to the Ancient Church



June 9-11, 2023: “Intercultural Dialogue and the Transformation of Borders.” The conference was thematized and organized by **Pavol Dancák**, Chair of Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Greek-Catholic Theological Faculty, University of Prešov, Prešov, Slovakia. **Dancák** took part in the RVP 2016 seminar “Re-Learning to be Human in Global Times: The Role and Structure of Mercy and Compassion” as well as the 202 seminar “Nations, States and the Transformation of Boundaries.” **Dada Longauerova**, a member of the same faculty, coordinated the conference.



Pavol Dancák



Opening Session: Peter Rusnák, Peter Šturák, Gabriel Para, William A. Barbieri



Dada Longauerova

According to the conference thematic, the issue of borders and their changes has been the major concern for centuries around the world and the border transformation has been problematic for many reasons. Central Europe is not an isolated island but a region with people migrated from many countries. For centuries they have traded, worked, and mixed with each other, and have lived together relatively peacefully with their different backgrounds of cultures, traditions, and religions. However, their coexistence has been disrupted quite often by conflicts and wars. The current border studies show that recent developments in Europe have profoundly transformed the meaning of borders. The dialectical tension between the static and dynamic elements of borders has changed dramatically. Although the degree of openness of borders remains a fundamental condition for cooperation, the border transformation at international, national, and local levels is effected by socio-political, economic, and cultural changes. In the light of current social realities, it is necessary to re-think the transformation of borders from a philosophical perspective, to clarify the very notion of



Group Photo

borders and their transformation in the context of great changes. The transformation of borders can be adequately comprehended through intercultural dialogue, in which such basic notions as culture, dialogue, religion, and solidarity can be reflected. Although these ideas imply participation of diverse communities, in reality different interpretations and practices result in isolationism and antagonistic hostile attitudes. The need for philosophical reflection on the transformation of borders is not only conditioned by the historical experience of the European region but also by the activities of current scientific and technological field, especially the new challenges arising from the unlimited use of technology. Since the empirical sciences are defined by a specific theme and method, they do



Conference Session

not deal with the impact of their own accounts within the holistic dimension of human life. There is a mercantilization of culture, dialogue, religion, and solidarity even in the context of the transformation of borders. The interpretation of these concepts varies depending on the specific historical, religious, and social situations. The conference invited participants to critically examine the impact of religion, solidarity, and intercultural dialogue in the process of the border transformation, because such a critical examination is indispensable to have a proper understanding of borders and boundaries. The following topics were discussed during the conference: philosophical reflection on intercultural dialogue and solidarity in global context, cultural preconditions of the border transformation, the impact of technologies on communication across borders and boundaries, the formation



Group Photo

of human communities, the historical context of the border transformation and socio-political, cultural, and religious changes in Central Europe.

At the opening session, from the University of Prešov, **Gabriel Paľa**, First Vice Rector, **Peter Štúrák**, Dean of the Greek-Catholic Theological Faculty, and **Peter Rusnák**, Apostolic Administrator, delivered opening remarks respectively. **William A. Barbieri** spoke on behalf of the Council and



Visit to the Cathedral

the McLean Center. After the opening session, participants listened to the experience of the current war near the border of Slovakia and Ukraine through an exhibition.

In the first session "Borders and Boundaries," three scholars presented their papers: **João J. Vila-Chã** "Understanding Borders and Boundaries in Our Times," **Władysław Zuziak** (Pontifical University of John Paul II, Poland) "What It Means to be European: On the Benefits of Diversity," and **Marcel Mojzeš** (Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovakia) "Theology of Incarnation as a Christian Basis for the Intercultural Dialogue and the Transformation of Borders." Session II "Social Challenges and the Other" included the following speakers: **Radoslav Lojan** (Catholic University of Ružomberok, Slovakia) "Nicolae Steinhardt and His Concept of Social Order" and **Krzysztof Mech** "Hermeneutics of the Other: Triple Challenge." In the third session "Cultural Diversity and Religious Heritages," speakers included **Ioan Dura** (Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania) "Reconstructing the Architecture of Religious Diversity: The Significance of Borders in Contemporary Society" and a joint presentation from Poland **Sylvia Jaskuła-Korporowicz** (University of Białystok) and **Leszek Korporowicz** (Jagiellonian University) "Communicating Heritage: Crossing Cultural Borders."



Exhibition on the War

Archbishop of Košice **Cyril Vasiľ** came to Prešov to share his research on "The Greek

Catholic Church among Changing Borders and Cultures in Central Europe” in the afternoon of June 9th followed by the fifth session “Central European Experience” with the following speakers **Adam Źaliński** (Jagiellonian University, Poland) “Participatory Heritage and Heritage without Heirs: Values, Community Formation, and Engagement in Preservation of Religious Sites” and **Katarína Valčová** (Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia) “Critical Assessment of the Concept ‘Panorthosia’ as Possible and Effective Principle for Intercultural Dialogue.”

In the following day, in the session of “Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue,” the presentation included **Michal Valčo** (Comenius University)

“The Transhumanist Challenge to Intercultural Dialogue” and **Maria Kardis** and **Marek Rembierz** (University of Prešov) “The Armoral Archetype of the ‘Eternal Child’ by Michel Maffesoli in the Perspective of Cultural Change in Central Europe.” The session “Education and Justice” was presented by **Marek Rembierz** (University of Silesia, Poland) “Transformations of the Intercultural Education: Pedagogical Explorations on the Borderlands” and **William Barbieri** “Constitutive Justice and the Transformation of Boundaries.” In the session “Cultural and religious Diversities across Borders,” speakers from University of Prešov included **Pavol Dancák** “Contemporary People from Hideouts and the Problem of Border Transformation,” **Daniel Slivka** “Multicultural Diversity Forensic Research and Analysis in Slovakia,” and **Sandra Zácutná** and **Rudolf Dupkala** “Intercultural and Inter-Religious Dialogue in the Contexts of Axiological Pluralism (An Emphasis on the Dialogue of Christianity with Judaism and Islam).” In the last session, **Do Thi Kim Hoa** (Institute of Philosophy, Vietnam) spoke on “Transformations in Vietnam’s Traditional Village Culture Amidst Global Integration.”

During the conference, participants visited both Greek and Roman Catholic Cathedrals in the



City Visit



Visit to the National Park

city. After the conference, visitors visited Levoča, the Basilica of St. James, the city museum, especially the oldest and best-known pilgrimage site where John Paul II celebrated the mass with more than 600 thousand people attended on June 3, 1995, They also visited High Tatras, the national park.

Taipei, Taiwan

July 5-6, 2023: “Human Community and Common Values in the 21st Century.” This conference was planned and organized by **Katia Lenehan**, Professor of Academia Catholica, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taipei, Taiwan. **Lenehan** took part in the RVP 2012 seminar “Building Community in a



William Sweet



John Selvamani



Katia Lenehan



Vincent Han-Sun Chian



João J. Vila-Chã

Mobile/Global Age” and organized the 2013 conference entitled “Spiritual Foundations and Chinese Culture: A Philosophical Approach” which was published under the same title in the RVP publication series “Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change.”

The 2023 conference theme stated that a human community is about human beings who live together in time and space and share something in common, e.g., cultures, traditions, religions, etc. Although human communities vary in sizes, locations, formations, they all are based upon certain principles, norms, custom, and so on. Human civilizations engage sets of cultures which are founded on major religions as S. Huntington claims. This indicates that cultures and cultural traditions consist of sets of values and virtues developed by people of communities on how to cultivate their life in their particular geographical and historical circumstances. Such sets of values and virtues are formulated through long-term experiences and struggles according to which each people have their own preferences due to their own living conditions. A community can be small or large, but people in each community undertake their own history and lifeworld unfolded in different kinds of relationships. All communities are formed by their members who are interconnected yet different from one another. What bring people together are shared common values. The word “common” itself presupposes the connotation of a community in which a vision of shared common values are produced by its members. Today in our complex 21st century, in order to live together peacefully among different cultural traditions, civilizations, and religions and to construct a human community in its best form, it seems rather urgent and necessary to look for common values that can be shared by all



Conference Session

peoples and cultures. The conference raised following points: Is it possible to pursue common values among diverse communities? What are the common values that can be shared by all peoples? How to achieve diversity in unity or unity in diversity? What are fundamental principles for forming human communities? How to achieve mutual recognition among different communities? How to implement cross-cultural and cross-religious dialogues and communications in order to find consensus? What are traditional value systems? Can they still function in the twenty-first century? What are new values that should be produced in the new challenging world?



At the opening session introduced by **John Selvamani**, Director of Fu Jen Academia Catholica and **Katia Lenehan**, President of Fu Jen Catholic University, **Vincent Han-Sun Chiang** and **William Sweet** gave opening remarks respectively. **João J. Vila-Chã** presented the book *Thinking with/for Many Others* dedicated to **Vincent Shen** to the library. The first session "Values in a Pluralistic World" was moderated by **Tran Van Doan** with the following speakers **William Sweet** "Dialogue, Values, Culture, and Tradition," **Peter Jonkers** (Tilburg University, Netherlands) "What Holds the World Together? Controversies about Values in Times of Pluralism," and **Mishra Pramod Kumar and Patel Ishwar Chand** (Academy for Asia Pacific Studies, India) "Common Values in a Multicultural World of the Century." The second session "Justice, Communication and Common Sense" chaired by **John Selvamani** had three speakers from the Academia Catholica: **Tran Van Doan** "The



Rediscovery of Righteousness and the Search for a Violence-Free System of Justice," **Katia Lenehan** "Person as a Communicative Agent: The Communicative Paradigms of Confucianism and Christianity" and **Wayne Chen** "Common Sense:

Properties, Problems, and Its Relationship to Science in the Context of Lonergan's Cognitional Theory." **Peter Jonkers** moderated the third session "Shared Values and Meaning" with presentation by **Christine Carmela R. Ramos** (Mapua University, Philippines) "Reformulating Indigenous Thinking to Address Environmental Education in the Philippines" and **Michal Valčo** (Comenius University, Slovakia) "Transhumanism as a Challenge to Traditional Value Systems: A Comparison of the Christian and Secular Humanist Perspectives." The fourth session "Diversity and Unity" was moderated by **João J. Vila-Chã** and presented by **Sălăgean Adin Emanuel** (University of Bucharest, Romania) "Unity by Diversity. A Model of Unity in Diversity Proposed by George F. McLean in Re-



At the Banquet

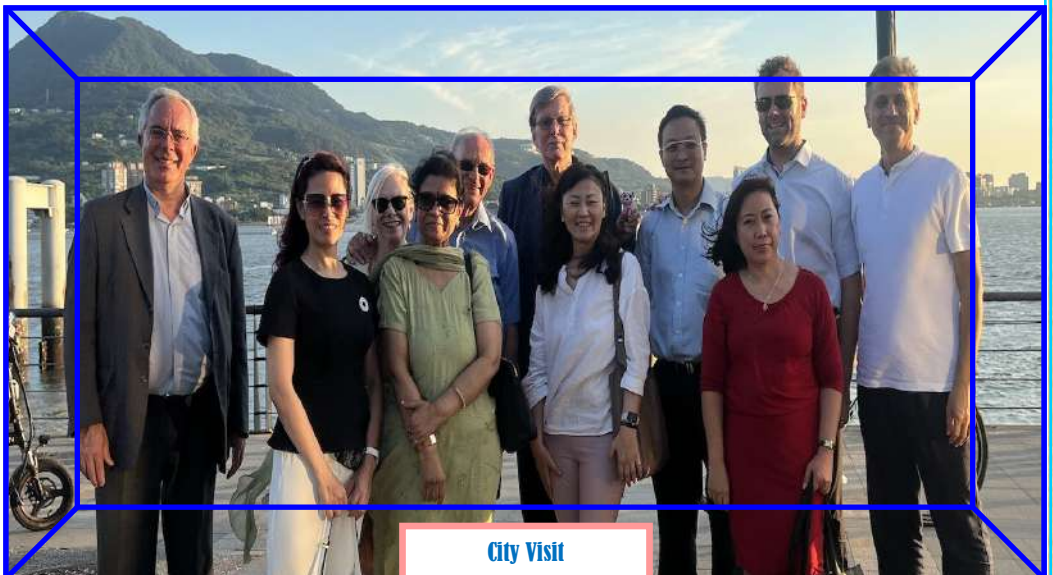


Book Presentation

lation to the Theology and Philosophy of Nicolaus Cusanus" and **Seema Bose** (University of Delhi, India) "Unity in Diversity: Hindu Perspective." **William Sweet** chaired the fifth session "Values in the Socio-Political Sphere" with the following speakers **João J. Vila-Chã** "At the Intersection of Individuality and Community: The Politics of the Person and the Search for Common Values" and **Hung Tsz Wan Andrew** (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong) "John Rawls and Michael Sandel on Market Economy and Meritocracy." The session six "Values in Cultural Traditions" was chaired by **Katia Lenehan** and included **Do Thi Kim Hoa** (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam) "The Contribution of Confucianism to the Value System of Democracy in Vietnam," **Justin Nnaemeka Onyeukaziri** (Fu Jen Academia Catholica) "Social Edification as the Essence of Beauty in Chinese and African Philosophies," and **Amit Mishra** (Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, India) "Efforts by India to Create a Stronger Bonhomie Among Diverse Cultural Communities Throughout the Nation and the World Through Cultural Globalization."

In the concluding session, **John Selvamani** and **William Sweet** gave final remarks on the possibility of continued cooperation. **Sweet** presented the book *Philosophy Re-engaging Cultures and Ways of Life* to the library.

The participants were invited not only to a banquet to enjoy the food but also to tour the city and visit the National Palace Museum in Taipei after the conference.



City Visit

July 9-10, 2023: “National Values in the New Context.” The conference is the continuation of the cooperation between the Institute of Philosophy, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences and the RVP beginning in the 1990s. A good number of members from the Institute took part in the RVP annual seminars: **Pham Van Duc** (2002, former Director), **Phong Tran Tuan** (2004, current Vice Director), **Hoang Thi Tho** (2005), **Nguyen Ngoc Ha** (2006), **Luong Dinh Hai** (2007), **Nguyen Tai Dong** (2011, current Director), **Le Thuy Hanh** (2016), **Do Thi Kim Hoa** (2017), **Nguyen Thu Nghia** (2018), and **Vu Thi Thu Hang** (2019). **Phong Tran Tuan** coordinated the conference.



João J. Vila-Chã



Nguyen Tai Dong and Tran Tuan Phong



William Sweet

The conference focused on the meaning and changes of values in the new national and international context. According to the conference description, values determine the vitality, strength, and sustainability of a nation and a culture. Since the value of a nation is closely related to its history and culture and reflects its distinctive characteristics and cultural identity, the development and prosperity of a nation cannot be separated from the guidance of its values. The value of a nation plays an important role in orienting and adjusting thinking and acting of its people and guides them in their daily life. It also provides a standard for people to judge what is right and what is wrong. In our today's world, phenomena of competition and rivalry among nations indicate the struggle of different value systems. Such a struggle may lead to conflicts and even brutal wars. Some powerful countries want to show the superiority of their own values over the weaker ones. In



Group Photo

the age of globalization and communication, people want to learn from other each so that they can develop and enrich their own values. In order to develop a common value system of humanity for common peaceful and prosperous co-existence among nations, a constructive dialogue among representatives of different national values is needed, because such a dialogue can enable people to re-



flect critically on the current situation of one's own national value system, to learn from other nations' experiences in order to enrich one's own national values. The conference discussed the following issues among scholars from Vietnam and other countries: (1) theories and approaches to national values, (2) foundations for developing national values, (3) primary contents of a national value system, (4) functions and roles of national values in the nation-building, (5) the relationship between traditional values and modern values, (6) international experiences in building national values, (7) national values in the context of cultural dialogues and conflicts, and (8) national values and the possibility of building a common value system of humankind.

During the conference a special session entitled "Philosophy: the West, the East and Vietnam" was dedicated to **Tran Van Doan** (Senior Researcher, Academia Catholica, Fu Jen Catholic University) for his long-term cooperation with the Institute and for his dedicated contribution to the development of Vietnamese philosophy.



At the opening session, **Nguyen Tai Dong** and **Tran Tuan Phong** gave welcome remarks, and **João J. Vila-Chã** presented the book dedicated to Vincent Shen to the library. **Nguyen Tai Dong** and **Ouyang Kang** chaired the first session with the following presentations: **Pham Van Duc** “The Problem of Acceptance of the Theoretical Values of Humanity in the Process of Renovation in Viet Nam,” **William Sweet** “National Values, Culture, and Philosophy,” **Tran Van Doan** “Instrumental Pragmatism: The Way or the Pseudo-Way of Viet Nam



Education?” **Tran Tuan Phong** “Some Reflections on Vietnamese National Values: Ho Chi Minh and the Values of Independence, Freedom, and Happiness,” **João J. Vila-Chã** “The Virtue of Nations or the Need for Borders: National Values and the Reconfiguration of the World,” and **Christoph Stueckelberger** (Switzerland) “Balanced Global and Contextual Ethical Values: A Comparison of Official National Value Systems and Proposals for the New Context.” The second session was co-chaired by **Tran Tuan Phong** and **William Sweet** and presented by **Nguyen Tai Dong** “National Values System of Viet Nam,” **Nguyen Vu Hao** “National Character in the View of Psychoanalysis,” **Dong Jing** (China) “Strengthen the Spirituality to Realize the Great rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation,” **Nei Ya Tin** “On the White Revolution: Uncontrolled Surveillance: A Revolution Away from Big Data,” **Tsai Wei Min** (Taiwan) “The Evolution of National Sovereignty Value under the Globalization of Science and Technology-Taking Taiwan as an Example,” **Michal Valco** (Slovakia) “Exploring the Foundations of Human Value Systems: Insights from Slovakia’s Historical Experience,” **Luong Dinh Hai** “Viet Nam’s National Value System in the Current Context,” **Christine Carmela R. Ramos** (Philippines) “Filipino Philosophy and Cultural Heritage Reflections on Filipino



Concept of Love: Values, Convictions, Beliefs, and Ways of Thinking,” and **Maria Kardis** (Slovakia) “The Identity of the Individual in a Global Cultural Supermarket.” The special session “Philosophy: the West, the East and Vietnam” in honor of **Tran Van Doan** on the occasion of his 75th birthday



Conference Session

was co-chaired by **Pham Van Duc** and **João J. Vila-Chã** and included speakers **Ouyang Kang** (China) “Strengthen Cultural Dialogue, Attach Importance to Mutual Learning among Civilizations, and Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind,” **Katarina Valcova** (Slovakia) “Religious Identity as a Supportive Tool for the Codification and Development of the National Language: An Example from Slovakia,” **Vu Thi Thu Hang** “From Ho Chi Minh Thought on ‘Wealthy People, Strong Country’ to the ‘Wealth People, Strong Country’ Values in Building the Vietnamese National Values System Today,” **Xu Jian Fei** (China) “Socialist Core Values as an Important Support for Maintaining the Spiritual Independence of the Chinese Nation,” and **Ho Pao Shen** (China) “Necessary Perfect Masks, Regress and the Possibility of Unmanifestable Dispositions.” **Nguyen Trong Chuan**, **Ho Si Quy**, **William Sweet**, and **Wang Shang Wen** (Taiwan) spoke about **Tran Van Doan’s** contribution to intercultural philosophy in Vietnam and in Asia.

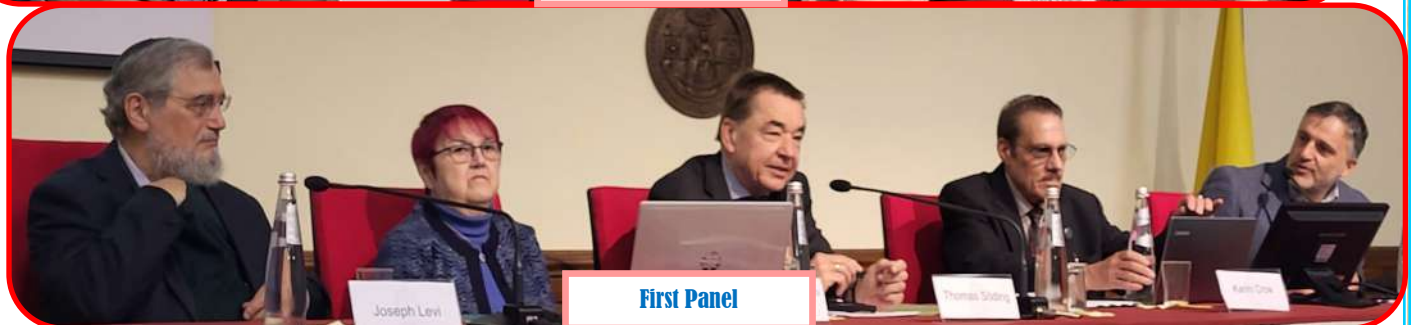
At the closing session **Nguyen Tai Dong** and **William Sweet** spoke respectively and also presented the book. After the conference, some participants visited the museum and toured the city.



City Visit

Rome, Italy

December 11-12, 2023: "The Hermeneutics of Change in the Abrahamic Traditions." The conference was the result of the research project, organized by the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy with a support from the Raskob foundation and a collaboration of the Pontifical Gregorian University. The purpose of the project was to (1) encourage systematic reflection on the mechanisms of adaptation within each of the Abrahamic traditions and (2) promote dialogue on and comparative analysis of the hermeneutics of change across those traditions, and (3) help envision constructive ways in which those traditions may transform themselves in order to maintain their





viability and vitality in the face of future existential challenges. As the project description stated religions today inhabit a world that has been described as experiencing a continuous acceleration of social change, in which ongoing scientific and technological developments persistently alter the fabric of daily life, powerful tides of modernization and secularization erode traditional outlooks and practices, and forces of globalization thrust communities and cultures into ever greater proximity and potential conflict with one another. These conditions provide a “stress test” for the abilities of religious traditions to cope with rapid systemic change, and they raise a profound, yet insufficiently explored, question: What effective practices and resources do religions have, singly and collectively, for adapting themselves to the challenge of changing times and maintaining their viability while retaining their integrity? In actuality, major religious traditions such as the Abrahamic traditions have long negotiated the delicate historical task of shifting their teachings and practices to adjust to new conditions while preserving core commitments and rites. In a sense, this is the core function of any tradition worthy of the name. Rarely have religious authorities made explicit the principles and mechanisms informing this process. Hence, the following queries become relevant to any contemporary religious person: How would one characterize the approach of one’s tradition to religious



change? Is this process self-conscious and historically critical? To what extent does one's tradition engage with the issue of how to respond to ("secular") "modernity"? How does one's tradition identify which sorts of historical developments require a response? What models of response, e.g.,



resistance, reform, dialectic, transformation, does one's tradition employ? What internal categories and concepts has it developed for thinking about and responding to a rapidly, even radically, changing world? What resources does one's tradition have for dealing with the specific historical



shifts associated with (1) the mutual encounter of world religions, (2) secularization, and (3) scientific advancements, new technologies, and ecological crisis? To what extent

might it confront the issue of historical resilience *in concert with* other religious communities? Is it useful to think about the present moment in terms of something like a "New Axial Age"? Does one's tradition need to modify or significantly change its own approach to change?



The December 11-12 gathering at the Pontifical Gregorian University consisted of a small scholars-only seminar on the first day, followed the next day by a set of panel presentations open to the public. The workshop approached the question of the comparative hermeneutics of religious



Group Photo

change especially in light of the aspect related to the mutual encounter of world religions. For the three public panels engaged to some degree the overarching set of questions animating the conference, but also focus a bit more narrowly on a few particular facets of the “hermeneutics of change.” The first panel highlighted ways in which the “sacred texts” of the respective traditions provide resources for adaptation, both historically and moving forward; the second panel considered how epochal shifts, processes of institutional development, and evolving political and legal cultures have shaped strategies of change; and the third panel reflected on emergent capacities of the traditions to grapple resiliently with existential challenges.

In the opening of the public panels, **Mark Lewis, SJ** (Rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University) gave welcome remarks, **William A. Barbieri** (Director, CUA McLean Center for the Study of Culture and Values) provided the thematic description, and **João J. Vila-Chã, SJ** (Pontifical Gregorian University) moderated the session. During the first session “The Sacred Texts of the Abrahamic



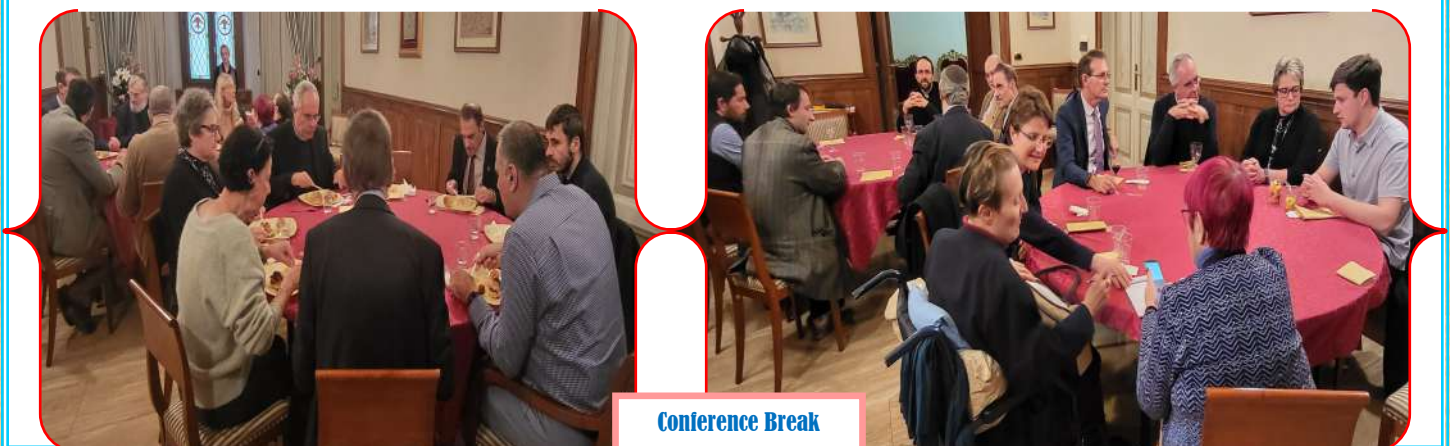
Conference Break

Traditions as Sources for Historical Change” moderated by **Joseph Levi** (Sheman-Scuola di Studi e Cultura Ebraici, Florence) and **Massimo Gargiulo** (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome), the following speakers presented their views from each own traditions: **Thomas Söding** (Ruhr University Bochum, Germany) “The Opened Book: Orientation in the World by Faith and Reason: A Christian Hermeneutic of Change,” **Elena Lea Bartolini De Angeli** (L'Istituto Superiore di Scienze Religiose, Milan) “Resources for Adaptation to New Contexts in the Sacred Texts of the Jewish Tradition,” and



Conference Break

Karim Crow (McLean Center for the Study of Culture and Values) “How Do Traditions Remain Viable in the Present?.” In the second session “Social, Cultural, and Institutional Contexts of Change in the Abrahamic Traditions” moderated by **Federico Stella** (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome) and **João J. Vila-Chã**, speakers included **Leora Batnitzky** (Princeton University, USA) “On the Importance of Telling Stories: Implications for Pluralism Within and Beyond Jewish Communities,” **Ilaria Ramelli** (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan) “Strategies of Change: Historical Case Studies and the Value of Philosophical Theology,” and **Adnane Mokrani** (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome) “The Hermeneutical Challenge in Contemporary Islamic Theology.” The third session “Resources for Coping with Emerging Existential Challenges in the Abrahamic Traditions” was moderated by **Adina Balan, CJ** (Talitha Kum International Network, Rome) and **Karim Crow** and had such speakers as **Mohammed Hashas** (Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli, Rome) “Contemporary Islamic Thought and the Question of Reforms,” **David Meyer** (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome) “Engaging the Notion of Tikkun in Attempting to Rescue Judaism from Demographic Existential Decline and Theological Abyss,” and **Laurent Basanese** (Dicastero per il Dialogo Interreligioso, Rome) “The Challenge of Fraternity: The Imagination and Construction of Another Possible World.” **Barbieri** and **Vila-Chã** concluded the meeting by inviting people to continue studying issues raised by speakers and participants.



Conference Break

SPECIAL RESEARCH PROJECTS

Washington, DC

“Understanding the Signs of Our Times: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives.” This special research project is a collaboration with the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy and the University of Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany. It was initiated during the global pandemic which brought not only deep anxieties and fears but also profound quests and search for root causes and answers for our challenging situations -- socio-political, cultural, ecological, etc. In order to understand the uniqueness and specificity of our times and to look for some resources that may help us deepen our understanding, this project intends to explore the philosophical-theological writings of **Romano Guardini**, one of most important Catholic intellectuals in the 20th century. The goal was not just to focus on **Guardini** himself or one particular religious tradition but to look into urgent issues and challenges the entire humanity is facing today. **Guardini’s** philosophical and theological



William A. Barbieri



Yvonne D. Schlobitten



João J. Vila-Chã



Holger Zaborowski

insight could provide us with a specific perspective to study and diagnose the contemporary conundrums and to inspire us to develop new insights and thoughts compatible and corresponding to the

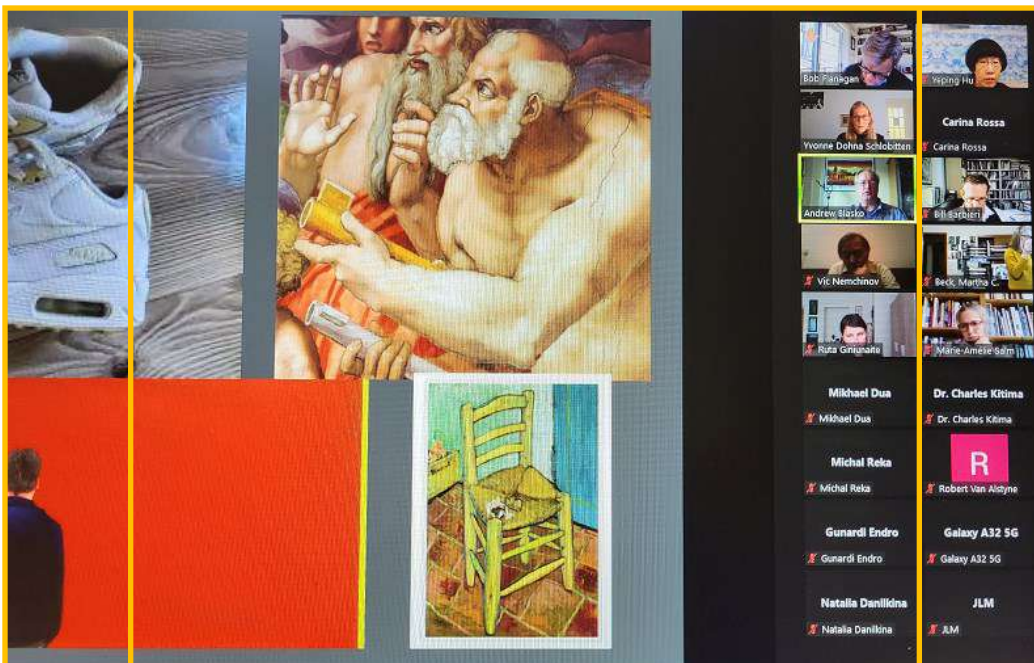
complex and globalized world in our times. The focus of this project is as follows: the crisis of the modern world, the impact of technology, morality and spirituality. A set of online seminars was conducted and will continue in the following years to study four most important works written by **Guardini**: (1) *The End of the Modern World*, (2) *The Letter from Lake Como*, (3) *The Virtues: On Forms of Moral Life*, and (4) *Spirit of Liturgy*. Two in-person conferences have been planned to be held at the University of Erfurt on “Modernity, Culture and Person” in November 2024 and at the Gregorian University on “Spirituality and Religious Experience” in March 2025.

The project is coordinated by **William A. Barbieri** from the RVP, **Yvonne Dohna Schlobitten**, Professor of Theological Aesthetics and **João J. Vila-Chã**, Professor of Philosophy from the Gregorian University, and **Holger Zaborowski**, Professor of Philosophy from University of Erfurt.



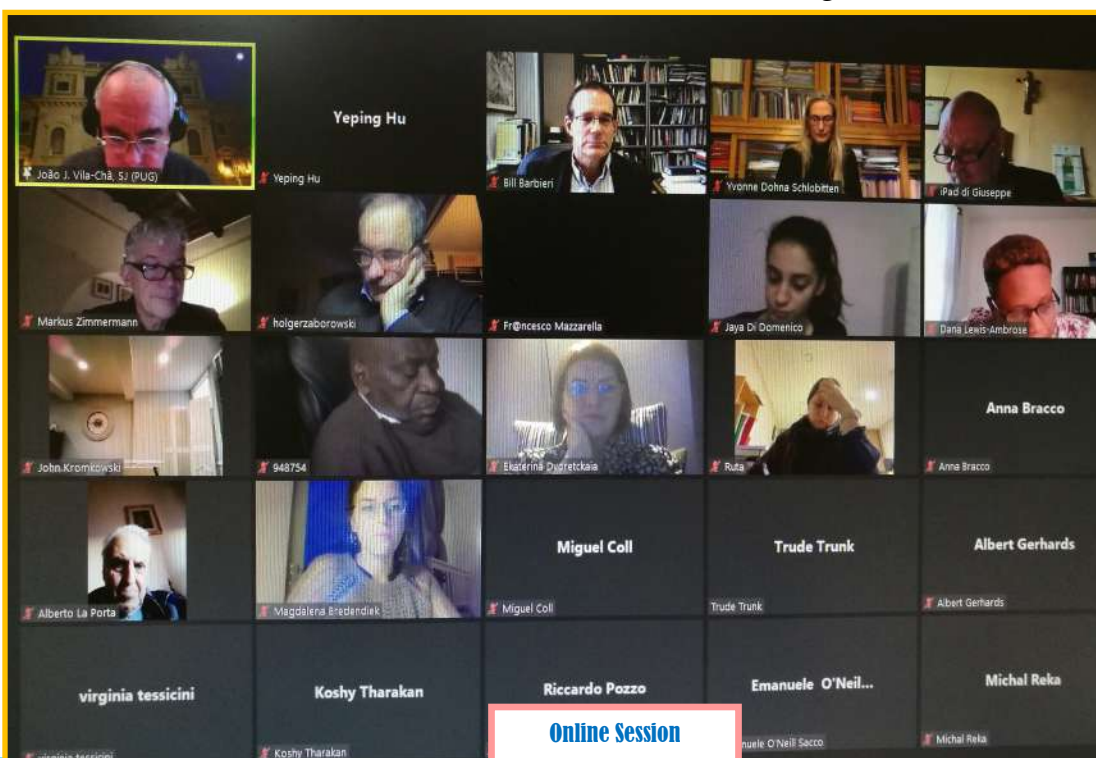
The first online seminar, "The Crisis of the Modern World," was held on October 18 and November 1, 2021 respectively. **Holger Zaborowski** reflected on the book *The End of the Modern World*. The second online seminar was conducted on April 2 and 9, 2022. **Yvonne Dohna Schlobitten** shared her reflection on the thought of **Guardini's** Aesthetics. The third online seminar focused on *Power and Responsibility* and *the Challenge of Technologies (The Letter from Lake Como)*. **João J. Vila-Chã** made a presentation on March 27, 2023. The fourth online seminar will be on *The Virtues: On Forms of Moral Life* in October 2023. **William A. Barbieri** will share his thought on the theme. The last online seminar will focus on *Spirit of Liturgy* and will be presented by **Holger Zaborowski** and **Yvonne Dohna Schlobitten** in March, 2024.

The online seminar entitled "The Meaning of Romano Guardini's Thought in the Contemporary World" was held on January 15, 2022. It was part of a series of meetings under the general theme "The Space of Knowledge: Grounding



Cross-disciplinarity and Cross-culturality in Romano Guardini's Threefold Seeing of the World." Speakers included **Michael Rutz** (President, Guardini Stiftung, Berlin) "The Story of 'Weltanschauung' for the Guardini Chair"; **Giuseppe Fraticello** (President, Center for the Study of the Catholic Comprehension of the World, Rome) "The Role of 'Weltanschauung' in the Contemporary Scientific Thinking"; **Yvonne Dohna Schlobitten** "The Origin and Nature of Guardini's Polar Opposition" **João J. Vila-Chã** "From Guardini to Levinas: On the Meta-Ontological Dimension of the Problem"; **Holger Zaborowski** "The Look and Call of the Beautiful: Art in a Technological Age."

William A. Barbieri moderated the session and also spoke on "Views of the World: Guardini and Visual Ethics." Students and scholars from different countries took part in the seminar and shared their reflections.



Washington, DC

March-April, 2023 “Moving the Needle: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Motivating Ecological Change.” This was a set of presentations related to the issues of ecological crises and environmental changes. It was sponsored by the CUA McLean Center for the Study of Culture and Values. Three speakers from Germany were invited by **William A. Barbieri**, Director of the McLean Center. **Markus Vogt** (Professor and Chair for Christian Social Ethics, Ludwig Maximilian University) spoke on “Safeguarding Creation: The Global Climate Crisis as a Challenge for Theology and Church,” **Ivo Frankenheimer** (doctorate researcher, Ludwig Maximilian University) discussed “The Epistemology of Change in Nature, Environment, and Society,” and **Pia Wimmer** (doctorate researcher, University of Augsburg) talked about “Stories of Change: The Potential of Narrative Ethics for a Great Transformation.”



Markus Vogt



Ivo Frankenheimer



Pia Wimmer

