

RVP International Seminar 2026

*Self, Solidarity, and Civility**

Meeting Information

- **Date:** September 9, 2026
- **Session:** 11th session of a 5-week seminar (Middle of Week 4)
- **Location & Duration:** Virtual (multi-country participants) | 3,30 h.
- **Facilitator/Host:** João J. Vila-Chã, SJ
- **Attendees:** João (Portugal/Washington DC), Lidia (Poland/Washington DC), Zhao Xin (China/Washington DC), Mohan (India), Dian (Indonesia), Maduabuchi Frank (Nigeria), Nubong (Cameroon), Michał (Poland/Washington DC), Ravi Vincent (India), Yeping (Washington DC), Franklin (Peru), Rubina Bhatti (Pakistan/Washington DC).

Key Outcomes

This was the 11th session (middle of Week 4) of a five-week seminar held on September 9, 2026, bringing together scholars from Nigeria, Poland, China, India, Cameroon, Peru, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the United States. The session opened with a guest presentation by Dr. Rubina Bhatti on the structural discrimination facing Christian minorities in Pakistan, followed by comparative reflections on Nigeria and India. The second half engaged deeply with Hartmut Rosa's theories of **social acceleration** and **resonance**, exploring their implications for selfhood, solidarity, and political life. The session closed with an announcement that the next two sessions will pivot to **Confucian virtue politics** via Sungmoon Kim's work.

Guest Presentation: Christian Minorities in Pakistan

Structural Overview

- Pakistan's total population is **241 million**; Muslims constitute **96.3%**; Christians **1.3%**, Hindus **1.6%**.

* Document elaborated with the Assistance of AI under the Supervision of Prof. João J. Vila-Chã. Before being distributed, the document was submitted to the revision/approval of the Participants in the Seminar.

- The country is formally the **Islamic Republic of Pakistan** — religion and state are not separated; Islam is the state religion.
- Dr. Rubina noted that Christians face **intersecting discrimination** across religion, class, gender, and age, with **economic discrimination** identified as the root cause.

Economic Marginalization

- Christians are concentrated in two economic sectors: **bonded (agricultural, brick kiln, or domestic) labor** — described as modern slavery — and **sanitary/sewage work**.
- Bonded labor is often **intergenerational**: a grandfather's debt binds descendants indefinitely, preventing children from accessing education or healthcare.
- Only **2% of Christians** reach higher education (equivalent to completing 10 years of school in Pakistan, or 12 in the U.S. system).
- **58,000 government positions** reserved for religious minorities (primarily Christians) remain **vacant** because qualifying candidates cannot be found — a direct consequence of educational exclusion.
- The government offers **5% job quotas**, educational quotas, and student scholarships, but Christians are too poor to access them.

2

Sanitation Work and Social Stigma

- Government job postings for sanitary/sweeper roles are explicitly marked "**non-Muslims only**", institutionalizing the association of Christians with filth.
- The word *Pakistan* means "land of pure people," with purity implicitly reserved for Muslims; non-Muslims are coded as impure.
- Workers cleaning drainage systems frequently **die from poisonous gases** with no safety equipment or legal protection.
- This economic positioning denies Christians political influence and social integration.

Legal and Political Discrimination

- Two internationally recognized issues: **blasphemy laws** and **forced conversion** (including kidnapping of minor girls).
- Approximately **1,000 Hindu and Christian girls** are abducted and forcibly converted annually, most of them minors.

- In Punjab’s provincial assembly (371 seats), only **8 seats** are reserved for all religious minorities combined (Hindu, Sikh, Christian).
- Currently, the only minority minister is a **Sikh**, despite Sikhs numbering only ~5,000, while Christians at 1.3% of the population hold no ministerial representation.
- Only **one woman** from minority communities held a reserved seat in the last legislative tenure.
- A bill on forced conversions tabled by religious minorities was **defeated** — legislators who attempted it were “beaten badly” with no votes in support.

Dr. Rubina’s Research and Recommendations

- Current fellowship at the **MacLean Center** focuses on how **modernization of the brick kiln industry** can liberate Christians from bonded labor.
- Working with the business school to develop a **value-based economic empowerment framework** grounded in human dignity.
- Argument: economic empowerment → political influence → social acceptance as equal citizens.
- Recommendation to the seminar: rather than amplifying victim narratives, scholars should produce **research that highlights Pakistani Christians as leaders, contributors, and development experts.**
- Noted that Jesus himself is remembered as a teacher and prince of peace, not as a persecuted figure — the same reframing should apply.
- Upcoming trip to **Pakistan with a delegation of American investors** to advance economic bridge-building.
- Praised **Dr. Hu** (Yeping) as an example of strong women’s leadership that brings a “caring alongside justice” approach to sensitive issues.

Comparative Perspectives: Nigeria and India

Nigeria (Maduabuchi Frank (Dukor))

- Christians are **not a national minority** in Nigeria; the absence of a reliable census since 1966 obscures the true Muslim/Christian ratio.
- **Structural power** — not demographic majority — has empowered Muslims: northern Muslim-majority regions have governed Nigeria for most of the post-1966 period.

- Boko Haram and jihadist banditry reinforce the false perception of Christian minority status; violence is concentrated in the **north**.
- Recent killings reported: **15 people in Sokoto** and **40+ in Adamawa**, all in the northern periphery.
- The **Southeast** (Igbo homeland) is nearly 100% Christian; the Southwest and South-South are mixed.

India (Ravi Vincent & Mohan)

- Official Christian population: **2%**, unofficially estimated at **4%**; large concentrations in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and other southern states.
- Some churches in Telugu-speaking states can accommodate huge numbers of worshippers.
- Constitutional right to worship freely exists, but **Hindu nationalist extremists** are targeting churches, missionaries, and prayer groups — predominantly in the north, now spreading south.
- **Anti-conversion bills** have led to imprisonment of Christians engaging in peaceful protest.
- Mohan's broader diagnosis: **South Asia as a whole** (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal) is moving toward **theocracy**, with majoritarianism embedded in constitutions regardless of democratic labels.
- Each country blames others for persecuting Christians/Muslims while practicing its own majoritarianism; a **unified South Asian struggle** was called for.

4

Contemporary Political Context

AfD and German Elections (Lidia)

- Lidia met with **Jan-Werner Müller** (Princeton University), political scientist known for work on populism, for a two-hour discussion.
- Müller expressed **pessimism** about political elites' capacity to respond to the democratic crisis.
- The **Saxon-Anhalt election** results were a trigger for concern: **AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)** performed strongly.
- AfD's platform: stop supporting Ukraine, reopen economic relations with Russia (framed around oil/energy needs), oppose stronger EU integration, and adopt a geopolitical realignment away from NATO solidarity.

- Poland views AfD as a direct threat: Poland depends on **NATO and the EU** as guarantors of security and sovereignty.
- National elections across Germany expected **next year**; AfD could win.

U.S. Political Acceleration (Adrienne)

- Adrienne displayed the U.S. flag as a conversation prompt, referencing a **social media post by the U.S. President** overlaying the American flag on a map covering Mexico, Canada, Central America, the Caribbean, Greenland, and Iceland.
- Key concern: the boundary between **political joke and political reality** has collapsed — what appears humorous normalizes expansionist rhetoric.
- Subtly propagandistic language and imagery are **procedurally conditioning** public acceptance of territorial aggression (e.g., Greenland takeover, tariff war with Canada).
- The ideological divisiveness operates not just domestically but as a **global medium** of influence.

5

European Fiscal Surveillance (Michał)

- European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen** proposed raising taxes across EU-27 to cover budget deficits; opposed by **five “stingy” countries** (Sweden, Finland, Austria, Netherlands, and one other). 3233
- New proposed measures: mandatory **ID verification for transactions over €10,000**; for notaries/lawyers, threshold drops to **€3,000**; **facial recognition cameras on all ATMs**.
- A **European digital ID profile** is being processed for all EU citizens.
- Michał’s economic argument: European gasoline costs **€2.40/liter (\$11/gallon)** vs. **~\$4/gallon** in the U.S. — the ~\$7 difference largely covers accumulated debt and tax burden, not product cost.
- João connected this to the **rise of populist parties** (AfD, Le Pen): citizens feeling overtaxed and under-served take “revenge” at the ballot box.
- Michał’s concern: presumption of guilt embedded in surveillance architecture — citizens must prove innocence before transacting — erodes **social trust**.

Cameroon (Nubong Henri Ndifor)

- Universities across all **10 regions of Cameroon** launched a strike at the start of the academic year over wages too low to meet basic living standards. 38

- Research allowances for lecturers unpaid for **2–3 years**, accumulating to millions of CFA francs owed.
- Ongoing **Anglophone crisis** (since 2016) remains unresolved; femicide reported in the East region.
- Political fragmentation: **30+ parties** contesting elections, producing divisiveness without clear democratic alternation.

Rosa's Social Acceleration: Seminar Discussion

6

The Self Under Acceleration (Circle 1)

- **Lidia's synthesis:** Rosa's central claim is that acceleration does not destroy identity directly — it **weakens the temporal stability** that made durable biographical identity possible.
- The **contraction of the present** means that knowledge, expectations, and action orientations become outdated faster; the past loses its capacity to guide the future.
- Result: a shift from **stable biographical identity** ("I was, I am, I am becoming") toward **situational identity** — constantly updated, unable to sustain a coherent life narrative.
- Lidia's personal reflection: she recognized herself as potentially a **product of acceleration** — her constant learning, role-switching, and intellectual restlessness may not be autonomous choice but structural compulsion ("standing still feels like falling behind").
- **Yeping's historical framing:** Pre-modern identity was fixed by religion, tradition, and God (Taylor's "outward" reference); modernity temporalized identity inward through individual self-realization; late modernity renders identity **situational and movement-based**, with no fixed reference.
- **Franklin's body-self paradox:** Acceleration produces a decoupling between the **self's ambitions** (more publications, roles, connections) and the **body's natural rhythms**; simultaneously, people use technology to *decelerate* aging (surgery, fitness), creating a structural contradiction.
- **Ravi Vincent** highlighted Rosa's concept of the **"social chameleon"** — adapting personality to social situations — as an innate human condition that acceleration intensifies; he also traced the economic arc from **Fordism** (stable jobs, mass production) → **post-Fordism** (flexible, outsourced labor) → **turbo-capitalism** (aggressive, hyper-competitive).

- **Mohan:** Identity politics is weaponized by populist and far-right governments to suppress minorities; true identity should mean **complete equality**, not domination.

Solidarity and Intersubjective Relations (Circle 2)

- **Xin's analysis of the slippery slope:** Acceleration does not make contemplation logically impossible — it destroys the **social conditions** contemplation requires (slowness, silence, sustained attention).
- Drawing on **Klaus-Michael Kodalle:** time feels like painful pressure only under overload; but a person who never commits to anything experiences “frozen, empty time” even while busy.
- Contemplative and dialogical formation are destroyed not by speed itself but by **(1) overload** (competing demands) and **(2) inability to commit** — both produced by “greedy institutions” demanding full, undivided time.
- The seminar itself is an **“oasis of deceleration”** — it functions only because participants collectively agree to protect a block of time from institutional pressure; this protection must be active and deliberate.
- **Wang En** introduced theologian **James K.A. Smith** (inspired by Augustine): humans are not primarily thinkers but **lovers/desirers** — “you are what you love, not what you know.” Cultural liturgies (consumerism, techno-optimism, social media performance) train desire toward control and acceleration.
- Smith's solution: **counter-liturgies** — new daily practices that reorient desire, create shared love/desire as the foundation of genuine solidarity and community.
- **Franklin:** Acceleration erodes solidarity by converting communities into **competitive arenas** — academic colleagues become rivals; states, companies, and individuals all race for first place, leaving no structural space for solidarity.
- **Michał:** Solidarity has been reduced in contemporary usage to either **(1) charity** (disaster relief donations) or **(2) symbolic identification** (“we are all Irish”) — both are impoverished compared to the **Polish Solidarity movement's** deeper meaning: the transcendence of ego-fear to affirm the dignity of others.
- Michał's historical testimony: Poland's transformation in 1989 — achieved without war, through 10 million workers' solidarity — as proof that deep solidarity can restructure entire political systems.
- **Dukor's extended analysis:** Traced the arc from **traditional/substantial identity** (inherited from family/caste) → **modern achieved identity** (individual biography rewritten through effort) → Rosa's projected **late-modern situational identity** (floating, fragmented, desynchronized).

- In late modernity: **pathological individualism**, exhaustion, rigidity, alienation, and temporal insecurity emerge; the self can no longer cognize itself.
- Dukor raised the question of whether late modernity is a **social reality already arrived or a projection** — and whether it resembles the Christian apocalyptic or the existentialist “state of absurdity.”
- Recovery requires not just slowing down but creating **social time** in which selves achieve continuity, relationships acquire duration, and communities reproduce shared meaning across generations. 68
- **Nubong:** Rosa’s framework is limited by what appears to be its **egocentric/sociological lens** — it lacks an ontological and metaphysical account of the self; the transcendent dimension (God, the absolute) has been “bracketed,” leaving the self as a biological machine oriented toward profit.
- Ubuntu philosophy’s “I am because we are” offers a relational corrective; technology should not determine the essence of selfhood.
- **Ravi Vincent’s synthesis:** Rosa’s **four dimensions of resonance** as a phenomenological grammar of solidarity: (1) **being affected** — something happening to another matters to me; (2) **being moved** — empathy activates response, not mere spectatorship; (3) **transformation** — resonant encounter changes both parties; (4) **uncontrollability** — resonance cannot be forced or planned, only conditions for it can be created.
- Durable solidarity requires **temporal durability** — precisely what acceleration structurally undermines.

Rosa’s Concept of Resonance vs. Alienation

- **Yeping:** Rosa contrasts **alienation** (relationless relation — isolation, disconnection) with **resonance** (a new mode of being-with-others involving response, echo, and mutual transformation).
- Resonance is not a psychological metaphor but a structural alternative to the logic of control and escalation.
- Rosa’s later book (~600 pages) elaborates resonance as the response to the paradoxes of modernity — João described it as a “brilliant reading of social reality” applicable beyond the West to China and elsewhere. 7
- The “**hectic standstill**” metaphor: like a traffic jam on a highway — frantic movement with no sense of forward progress — captures the predicament of late modernity where the meaning of history becomes unarticulable.

- Ultimately, Rosa challenges the seminar to ask: **where is history going?** — a question dormant since Augustine, suppressed by post-1989 optimism, now urgently re-opened by the return of war and democratic erosion.
-

Next Steps and Action Items

- **Presenters for Friday and Monday sessions:** Three volunteers agreed to present Sungmoon Kim's *Theorizing Confucian Virtue Politics*:
 - **Zhao Xin:** Pages 1-58
 - **Lidia:** Pages 59-88
 - **Wang En:** Pages 89-114
 - **Monday session:** João intends to add Kim's most recent book on **constitutionalism** for discussion; decision on reading scope deferred to Friday.
 - **João:** Will decide on Friday what to assign for Monday; plans to keep Kim's work as the focus for multiple sessions to allow deeper assimilation, especially for non-Asian participants.
 - **Dr. Rubina:** Traveling to Pakistan imminently with a **delegation of American investors**; João extended wishes for success and for impact to reach the poorest communities.
 - **Recording note:** The first part of the session (Dr. Rubina's presentation) was **not recorded** due to a configuration oversight — João expressed regret, noting it would have been valuable for public dissemination.
-

Open Questions

- Is **late modernity** (Rosa's projection) already a social reality or still a hypothesis about a stage yet to arrive? Dukor raised this explicitly and left it unresolved.
- Can **resonant solidarity** survive institutionalized acceleration, or does it require protected enclaves (like this seminar) that are themselves fragile?
- What **win-win framework** will end the war in Ukraine, and will it replicate the post-WWII compromise that subjugated Eastern Europe to Soviet control?
- Is there a **better economic model** for the EU than raising taxes — or is the state simply spending beyond its means and passing the cost to citizens? João and Michał left this open.

- How can Pakistani Christians access government quotas and scholarships when **poverty itself** is the barrier to qualifying? Dr. Rubina identified this as the core paradox of the current system.

Reading for Upcoming Session:

Kim, Sungmoon. *Theorizing Confucian Virtue Politics: The Political Philosophy of Mencius and Xunzi*. Cambridge, United Kingdom; Cambridge University Press, 2020.

10

APPENDIX

Please, look at the following (machine assisted) attempt to summarize Hartmut Rosa's position as (partially) articulated in the following works:

Rosa, Hartmut. *Resonance: A Sociology of the Relationship to the World*. Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019.

———. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. Translated by Jonathan Trejo-Mathys. New Directions for Critical Theory. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

Hartmut Rosa's social theory offers a unified diagnosis of late modernity and a normative response to it. His central claim is that modern societies are organized by a self-reinforcing regime of **social acceleration**: technologies and communications become faster; institutions, skills, relationships, and expectations change more rapidly; and everyday life is lived under intensifying pressures of time. The issue is not speed in itself, but the point at which accelerated change outpaces persons' and institutions' capacities to appropriate, interpret, deliberate on, and direct their common world.

Rosa accordingly reinterprets **globalization**. Its novelty lies less in the geographical expansion of connections than in the radical reduction of the time and friction involved in moving capital, information, commodities, images, and decisions across distance. Digitalization, post-Fordist production, and geopolitical opening have produced a space of flows in which coordination tends toward real time. This regime does not abolish place, embodiment, or borders; rather, it distributes mobility unequally. Capital and privileged actors acquire exceptional temporal flexibility, whereas many workers, migrants, families, and public institutions remain territorially and bodily bound. Globalization is therefore selectively regulated: states often facilitate economically desirable mobility while restricting movements regarded as disruptive.

The cultural counterpart of this transformation is a weakening of durable temporal sequences. Modern individuals experience constant novelty, but not necessarily a meaningful historical direction. Rosa calls this paradox “**frenetic standstill**”: products, technologies, careers, fashions, and political agendas change ceaselessly, yet the dominant imperatives—growth, competitiveness, innovation, flexibility, and acceleration—appear increasingly non-negotiable. The present becomes crowded with demands but contracts as a horizon of stability; events occur in rapid succession without cohering into a collective narrative of development or progress.

This diagnosis bears directly on identity. Rosa distinguishes three ideal-typical forms of selfhood. In premodern societies, identity is largely inherited through relatively durable memberships, roles, and traditions. In classical modernity, identity becomes a more reflexive **biographical project**: persons choose occupations, commitments, affiliations, and forms of life, yet can still integrate these choices within a long-term narrative. Such an identity depends on institutions and expectations sufficiently stable to make education, employment, family formation, political engagement, and retirement intelligible as connected stages of a life.

Late modernity, by contrast, favors **situational identity**. When social change becomes intragenerational, careers, locations, skills, affiliations, partnerships, and values must repeatedly be revised. The issue is not simply greater freedom of choice, but the weakening of the temporal and institutional “rails” that allow choices to become durable commitments. Life is increasingly organized as a succession of projects, episodes, and contingent adaptations rather than as a coherent trajectory. Rosa’s contrast between the “player” and the “drifter” captures the ambiguity: situational flexibility can enable creativity and improvisation, yet it can also become compulsory adaptation in a world whose terms are set elsewhere.

The political consequence is a problem of **desynchronization**. Democratic politics needs time for public formation, argument, organization, legislation, implementation, and revision. But financial markets, media cycles, technological systems, and global production networks operate at speeds that territorially bounded institutions struggle to match. Politics therefore risks becoming reactive and administrative: it manages the consequences of accelerated processes rather than democratically shaping their direction. The relevant normative question is autonomy—not merely individual mobility or optionality, but the capacity of persons and political communities to determine the temporal conditions of their own lives.

Resonance supplies Rosa's constructive answer to this diagnosis. If acceleration names a pathology of modernity, resonance names a non-alienated **relationship to the world**. Resonance occurs when an other—a person, a work of art, a natural landscape, an intellectual question, a practice, or a political claim—affects us; when we answer in our own voice; and when the encounter transforms both our orientation and the significance of what we encounter. It is thus neither a private emotion nor a condition of easy harmony, but a responsive relation between self and world in which each retains its irreducible distinctness.

Rosa identifies four interconnected moments. First, **affection** means being genuinely touched or addressed, rather than merely stimulated. Second, **response** involves self-efficacy: the sense that one's voice can reach the world and matter within it, without reducing this to instrumental control. Third, **transformation** (*Anverwandlung*) means that a real encounter changes the subject's horizon rather than merely supplying information or confirming prior assumptions. Finally, resonance presupposes **unavailability** (*Unverfügbarkeit*): it cannot be manufactured, bought, programmed, or guaranteed. Institutions can cultivate conditions of openness, but they cannot command meaningful encounter or predetermine its result.

For this reason, resonance differs decisively from echo, agreement, or consumption. An algorithmic echo chamber returns one's own preferences; resonance requires an independent voice capable of surprising or challenging us. Friends may disagree intensely and remain resonant if they continue to hear and be affected by one another; resonance collapses when disagreement becomes contempt, silencing, or coercion. Its counter-concept is **alienation**, a "relation of relationlessness" in which people still confront the world but experience it as indifferent, hostile, or merely instrumental. The world then becomes mute—not absent, but unavailable as a meaningful interlocutor.

Rosa maps resonance across horizontal relations with others—love, friendship, solidarity, and democratic dialogue; diagonal relations with practices and things—work, education, craftsmanship, sport; and vertical relations to encompassing horizons—art, nature, religion, and history. A flourishing life does not consist in accumulating intense experiences, but in having relatively stable axes along which responsive encounters can occur. Modernity's logic of "dynamic stabilization," however, threatens these axes: societies must continually grow, innovate, and accelerate merely to reproduce themselves. As everything is rendered visible, reachable, manageable, and useful, the world becomes increasingly available for control but less capable of "speaking back."

Rosa's project is especially powerful in linking temporal structures, subjectivity, democratic agency, and world-relations. It also leaves difficult questions open:

whether resonance can serve as a sufficiently precise normative criterion; how inequalities of class, gender, race, geography, and colonial history shape access to resonant relations; and which concrete institutions could counter the dominance of growth and acceleration. Nevertheless, his fundamental insight is clear: a good society cannot be measured only by its wealth, speed, options, or reach. It must sustain conditions in which people can enter durable, responsive, and transformative relations with one another, with their practices and environments, and with a shared world that remains more than an object of control.

This evening, out of Georgetown University, an important conversation took place under the title «**AI, Catholic Social Teaching, and Pope Leo's Invitation to Dialogue with the World**», [here](#). The participants in the conversation are the following persons:

- Archbishop Gabriele Caccia is the Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See to the United States and was appointed to this post by Pope Leo XIV in March. He has previously served as Nuncio to Lebanon and to the Philippines, and most recently as Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York.
- Vilas Dhar has served on the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence and is the U.S. Government's nominated expert to the Global Partnership on AI. He is president of the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation, one of the world's foremost philanthropies advancing AI for public purposes.
- Molly Kinder is a leading expert on AI and its impact on work. She is currently the founding CEO of the Breakwater Initiative, a new organization building the policy response to AI's disruption of work. Previously, she was a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution studying AI's economic impacts.
- Anna Rowlands holds the St Hilda Chair in Catholic Social Thought and Practice at the University of Durham. She is a member of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and spoke at the Vatican's launch of Magnifica Humanitas in May.
- Jasmine Sun covers the culture and politics of AI as a contributor at the Atlantic and on her Substack, and has written for other outlets including the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. She previously led the core product team at Substack and has worked in AI policy.
- Eduardo Peñalver, president of Georgetown University, opened the dialogue.

— Kim Daniels, director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, moderated the conversation.

All Members of our Seminar on «Self, Solidarity, and Civility» are kindly invited to look at this conversation in order for everyone to eventually, share her or his thoughts on the matter.