What's in a (Change of) Name? Much—but Not *That* Much—and *Not* What Wiebe Claims

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Abstract

Donald Wiebe claims that the IAHR leadership (already before an Extended Executive Committee (EEC) meeting in Delphi) had decided to water down the academic standards of the IAHR with a proposal to change its name to “International Association for the Study of Religions.” His criticism, we argue, is based on a series of misunderstandings as regards: 1) the difference between the consultative body (EEC) and the decision-making body (EC), 2) the difference between the preliminary points of view of individuals and final proposals by the EC, 3) personal conversations, 4) the link between the proposal to change the name and the wish to tighten up the academic profile of the IAHR. Moreover, if the final decision-making bodies, the International Committee and the General Assembly, adopt the proposal, the new name as little as the old can make the IAHR more or less scientific. Tightening up the academic, scientific profile of the IAHR takes more than a change of name.

Keywords

International Association for the History of Religions – IAHR – scientific study of religion – study of religions – *Religionswissenschaft* – globalization – EASR – NAASR – Zwi Werblowsky – Marburg – *NVMEN*

1 Words of Thanks

In an “Open Letter” of September 26, shortly after a special Extended Executive Committee (EEC) IAHR meeting in Delphi, Prof. Donald Wiebe informed the IAHR President and Executive Committee (EC) about his decision to “no longer support the IAHR or continue with my Honorary Life Membership in the Association.”

In his response to Prof. Wiebe, the President, having expressed his deep regrets, wrote:

You have for (close to four) decades been a staunch supporter of the IAHR and served the IAHR time and again in capacities as Congress Director, Treasurer, member of various IAHR committees, etc. You have been a key player and mover in many, many respects, and the support to the IAHR, also offered through and via the NAASR, cannot be overestimated.

Thus, you richly deserved an IAHR Honorary Life Membership—and you have tirelessly continued to serve the IAHR ever since.

I, as well as the entire EC, thus consider your decision a great loss to the IAHR as well as to the academic, scientific study of religion promoted by the IAHR—and I can assure you that I am acutely aware that you “do not take this step lightly.”

Your participation in the Delphi IAHR Extended Executive Committee (EEC) meeting as one of the specially invited IAHR scholars and colleagues proved beyond a doubt that your dedication to the IAHR and its purpose was as strong as ever.

Prof. Wiebe’s “A Report on the Special Executive Committee Meeting of the International Association for the History of Religions in Delphi” (Wiebe 2020) shows, as does most likely his announced, forthcoming book on “the Fall of the IAHR from the Delphi Summit,” that his life-long dedication to the promotion of a scientific study of religion as well as his concern for the well-being and future of the IAHR and its stated aims is unshattered. Whenever Wiebe perceives some kind and some degree of a “failure of nerve” as regards the practice and promotion of a strictly scientific study of religion, he takes the time and energy to express his concern and criticism. The value of this “fervor” of his can hardly be overestimated, and we are happy to see that it has not come to an end as has, unfortunately, his status as an IAHR Honorary Life Member.

Consequently, our first task is to once again thank Prof. Wiebe for his continuous concern for the IAHR and the scientific study of religion, and thus also for this most recent piece of criticism directed not least at the IAHR leadership.

Though Prof. Wiebe in his letter of resignation wrote that he would “no longer support the IAHR,” we see this criticism as (a kind of) support. Prof. Wiebe’s criticism, thus, is not something we take lightly, and we shall do our best to respond in an equally constructive and appropriate way.

We shall do so with reference to what has already been written to Prof. Wiebe (in responses to his letter of resignation), to the participants to the EEC meeting in Delphi, to the IAHR International Committee (IC) members, and thus to the member organizations and members of the IAHR at large. The response, thus, partly consists of quotes and references to relevant texts.

Before “facing the music,” we also extend thanks to the *MTSR* editors for their show of interest in the IAHR and its well-being, and for giving us an opportunity to respond directly to Prof. Wiebe—despite the fact that our response(s), though indirectly, have by now been shared with the IAHR membership, via the IAHR online folder and the *IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement*.

2 Some Basic Misunderstandings

Our second task is to try to eliminate some misunderstandings (or misleading expressions) implicit in Prof. Wiebe’s article, misunderstandings that may mislead *MTSR* readers.

2.1 *Consultative vs. Decision-Making Bodies*

The first misunderstanding is implied in the title of Prof. Wiebe’s article. His article is not and cannot be what it claims it to be, namely “A Report on the Special Executive Committee Meeting of the International Association for the History of Religions in Delphi.”

Why? Because Prof. Wiebe, as one of several specially invited guests,¹ took part in the EEC meeting, a meeting that took place in the days before the EC meeting, a meeting for the current members of the IAHR EC only.

1 Prof. Wiebe writes that he did not immediately accept the invitation to participate in the EEC meeting in Delphi. He was, he writes, “not satisfied that the current EC’s criteria for membership on the EEC assured a fair representation of views about the history and nature of the IAHR” (Wiebe 2020: 151). The criteria for an invitation to be a participant (“member” is a slightly misleading term which in this context ought to be reserved for the members of the EC) to the EEC meeting were stated in the “Letter of Invitation”: “Since finances are limited, since we are forced to make a selection of colleagues, and since we trust that the deliberations will be more fruitful with a smaller number of invitees, we have decided to limit ourselves to inviting: former IAHR Presidents, former General Secretaries, former directors or co-directors of the IAHR world congresses since 1995, the director of the upcoming IAHR World Congress in 2020, the two *NVMEN* managing editors, and the Managing Editor

Prof. Wiebe did *not* take part in this meeting of the EC, as little as did any other of the specially invited guests, and the minutes from this EC meeting as well as minutes from any other EC meeting are, in accordance with the IAHR By-Laws (Rule 20c), not to be circulated to anybody outside the EC, apart from the *NVMEN* managing and reviews editors.

What Prof. Wiebe thus can “report” on is solely what took place during that EEC meeting, including what he and others might gather from documents pre-circulated to the participants, as well as from papers, including other versions of pre-circulated papers, and documents read and circulated *during* the meeting, documents circulating electronically *after* the meeting (among the participants), and, finally, documents in which the EC reports to the membership at large the conclusions drawn by the EC as regards possible proposals to be put before the IAHR International Committee, IC, (and maybe the General Assembly, GA) in the IAHR quinquennial World Congress in Otago, 2020.

Moreover, Prof. Wiebe’s “report”, of course, is, primarily and understandably, a selected summary of what Prof. Wiebe considers problematic, indeed so problematic that it made it necessary for him to resign as an IAHR Honorary Life Member. We do not claim to have nor to give “the full story,” neither here nor anywhere, but readers interested in a bit more context for Prof. Wiebe’s

of the IAHR Book Series (Katja Triplett who is also a member of the IAHR EC). With the active participation of the many relatively young scholars elected to the IAHR EC in Erfurt 2015, we think the invitees to the meeting guarantee diversity both in terms of gender, age, and geographical area. With the meeting place in Delphi, Greece, it has been decided, in collaboration with Panayotis Pachis, the President of the GSSCR, the Greek Society for the Study of Culture and Religion, to arrange a one day seminar, prior to the extended EC meeting, for Greek colleagues on ‘Theoretical Frameworks for the Study of Ancient Greek Religion.’ Prof. Panayotis Pachis, however, who has been an adamant supporter of the IAHR and a great help as regards the venue in Delphi, is invited to stay on and participate in the extended meeting” (Jensen, Fujiwara & Bornet 2018: 3).

However, the IAHR President was delegated the right to, at his discretion, extend a personal invitation to a few more persons “if he deems it of importance to the furthering of the aims of the Delphi meeting.” Consequently, he extended a special invitation to the then AASR President, Prof. Elias Bongmba, and to the then ACSRM President, Prof. Juan Cruz Esquivel. Later on, when informed that IAHR Honorary Life Member, Prof. Luther M. Martin, was invited by Prof. Pachis to give a keynote lecture at the planned conference on the day before the EEC meeting, the IAHR President extended a special invitation to Prof. Martin since he and the EC thought that Prof. Martin’s presence in Delphi at the time of the EEC meeting constituted “a great opportunity” to have Prof. Martin contribute, with his “vast and profound knowledge and experience in regard to the IAHR,” to the discussions. While Prof. Martin declined the invitation, both Prof. Bongmba and Prof. Esquivel accepted it. However, Prof. Esquivel’s obligations at home in the end prevented him from coming.

article and harsh criticism are referred to the mentioned online folder named "Delphi Dossier" to be used for the IAHR IC meeting in Otago in August 2020.²

What has been said now also means that *MTSR* readers must differentiate between the EEC meeting and the EC meeting. It was made crystal clear to the invited EEC guests that the meeting in which they participated was a *consultative* body and not a decision-making body. They were invited in order to engage in inspiring conversation with each other and the members of the EC on the issues selected as the core issues to be discussed.

Enriched, hopefully, by the previous days of discussion, with or without specific suggestions from the invited guests, the IAHR EC would then gather and deliberate on issues discussed during the EEC meeting, maybe also taking some decisions as regards proposals to be put forward to the IC about the future of the IAHR.

The EC, thus, was the only decision-making body gathered in Delphi, and it is only what has been discussed and decided during that meeting that will be on the table of the IC and the GA.

It is, thus, not what was discussed at the EEC meeting, nor what was discussed at the EC meeting, but what will be discussed and decided in Otago in August by the IC and the GA that really matters. The truly decision-making body is the IC, and in certain regards, the GA. To think that what was said at the EEC and what was discussed and decided by the EC is the "last word" on these matters would be a grave misunderstanding.

This, we think, has some consequences as regards Prof. Wiebe's criticism. Though interesting, important and worthwhile "reporting" on, discussing and criticizing what happened and what was said by whom, before and during the EEC meeting, in written papers or orally, during days of fierce discussions, we are adamant that it is far more important to report what actually turned out as the decisions and (preliminary) results of the EEC and EC meetings in Delphi.

The, at times bumpy, road toward decisions, proposals, and recommendations is interesting, not least for those who walked it, but it ought to be the factual and actual proposals coming from the EC meeting that attracts the attention and criticism of IAHR members. Mistaking the positions and stances, criticized here by Prof. Wiebe (no matter if his report on their existence before, during and after the EEC meeting is accurate or not), for the positions and stances of the IAHR leadership when it is actually leading the IAHR by way of proposals for the IC to decide upon, would be equal to mistaking

2 The access to the dossier is restricted to IAHR member association/societies and affiliates.

individual arguments of a political debate for the official decision following the debate.

The ultimate leadership of the IAHR is with the IC consisting of up to two delegates from each member association (with voting rights), and one delegate from each affiliate (without voting rights). And, as regards amendments to the Constitution, *inter alia*, a change of the organization's name, the GA is the final decision-making body.

It may, of course, also be of interest, to detect and discuss what may—during the EEC meeting discussions, via the pre-circulated papers and the papers read at the meeting—transpire as different, nay even, conflicting, suggestions, proposals, and points of view, held by the various members of the IAHR EC. But then it ought also to be noticed that such disagreements and different points of view are the norm, not only to be expected but also desirable. As long as the EC, as was the case in Delphi, at some point reaches a compromise and consensus as regards, e.g., a proposal to be submitted to the IC, it may be more telling for the future directions of the IAHR and for the stance and position of the IAHR leadership, if criticism is focused first and foremost on those actual proposals, on the agreement reached and not on whatever disagreements that preceded it.

We do not think the IAHR EC meeting up there in the mountains of Delphi will bring the IAHR to the brink of its total demise. The IAHR EEC meeting in Delphi was stormy at times, but the agreements reached and the proposals put forward do not signal the “fall” of the IAHR.

2.2 *The Delphi Agenda*

Having said this, we think some other possible misunderstanding also must be dealt with: reading Prof. Wiebe's article it might seem as if Prof. Wiebe has detected (though not documented) some “hidden agenda,” some kind of “masterplan,” and that the several days of discussions with the EEC were but a “charade,” a “cover up” for some (clandestine) plot staged by the EC in advance. This was not so.

There was no “masterplan” or “hidden agenda” for the Delphi meeting and its outcome(s). Neither in general, nor in regard to, e.g., the name change and the name favored by a majority at the EEC meeting as well as at the regular EC meeting. Nor in regard to what Wiebe describes as “a subordination of the IAHR's historical epistemic commitment to the extra-scientific tasks [...]” and the “commitment of the EC to an “inclusivist” future for the IAHR, *which it concluded prior to the Delphi meeting*, [...]” (Wiebe 2020: 154, our emphasis).

The core issues to be discussed in Delphi were clearly stated in the “Letter of Invitation” and in the more elaborate document “Suggested Main Themes &

Reading Resources”³ (see ahead). The EC wanted to take “stock of the whereabouts of the IAHR: where are ‘we,’ how did ‘we’ get there, how are ‘we’ doing, and where are ‘we’ going?” (Jensen, Fujiwara & Bornet 2018: 1), and we wrote as follows to the invited guests:

To do so in a concerted and strategic way—and in a way that actually helps bridge the past, present and future, at the same time as it reflects and respects the diversity within the IAHR in regard to gender, generation, and geography—the IAHR Executive Committee invited you and other colleagues (see the list of participants) to participate actively in what we now call the Delphi 2019 Extended Executive Committee Meeting. We need your knowledge, your experience, your ideas, your visions, and—not least—your analytical-critical competences as regards the study of religion and the IAHR past and present.

We kindly ask you to bring to the meeting whatever questions and “qualms” (including maybe some about the provisional “agenda” presented here), ideas and visions, that you may have. We want you to openly put on the table for discussion whatever constructive criticism as regards the past, present and future work and workings of the IAHR, that you may bring with you.

JENSEN, FUJIWARA & BORNET 2019a: 1

That’s what we wrote, and that’s what we wanted. That was the plan. We, the EC, wanted to be actively participating in the discussions but first and foremost wanted to listen and learn from discussions.

2.3 *Papers Invited, Papers Read*

Participants to the meeting (as well as IAHR members in general) were invited to send in advance proposals and statements to be circulated and read during the meeting. Prof. Wiebe submitted two position papers, and Prof. Taves one. On top of these one of the absent members of the EC (Prof. Maddox) and one of the invited guests to the EEC meeting (*NVMEN* co-editor Prof. Feldt) submitted papers. Then president of the Finnish association, Prof. Peter Nynäs, also submitted a proposal to the IAHR EC in advance of the meeting, and during the meeting Prof. Yolotl Gonzales furthermore handed in and read a paper.

3 This is the full name of the document, the name used in the references, and the name given also in the Delphi Dossier. Since this document, as well as others referred to here and elsewhere, in the process up to the publication of some documents in the Delphi Dossier were for internal use, they have been named in various ways along the way. Consequently, the reader, in quotes from earlier documents, will come across more than one name or abbreviation for the same document.

Prof. Wiebe writes:

Unexpectedly, the EC invited Professor Ann Taves, Deputy Secretary General of the IAHR, to present a position paper in the opening session of the EEC (distributed along with my papers, prior to the Delphi meeting) that challenged “the kind of academic, scientific study of religion staked out by Werblowsky” and the defence of Werblowsky’s position in my papers. Taves’s presentation made sense of the warning I had already received from a member of the EC that a change of name was in the offing but it would not include “science” or “scientific study” that I had put forward in my position paper.

WIEBE 2020: 152

Prof. Taves, quite correctly, handed in prior to the meeting in Delphi to the Secretary General a paper (Taves 2019), a revised version of an earlier paper, arguing in favor of a move from religious studies to worldview studies, and it did include some kind of response in a section on the Cognitive Science of Religion to writings of Leonardo Ambasciano and Wiebe shared with Taves before the meeting. But it did *not* include anything about Zwi Werblowsky⁴ (as the reader might come to think if reading the above quote from Wiebe), and, moreover, the EC had not, as claimed by Wiebe, “invited” Taves to submit this pre-circulated paper.⁵

Neither was the paper which was actually *read* by Prof. Taves during the opening session invited by the EC. Prof. Taves, just like Prof. Wiebe, was given time to present their pre-circulated papers orally. Neither of them, however, did so. Prof. Wiebe chose to read and circulate a revised paper, directly responding to the pre-circulated paper by Prof. Taves, and Prof. Taves chose

4 R. J. Zwi Werblowsky was an Israeli scholar of religion who served as an IAHR General Secretary from 1975 to 1985. He submitted a paper which contained “basic minimum conditions for the study of the history of religions” to the General Assembly of the Marburg World Congress of the IAHR in 1960 (Schimmel 1960: 235; Jensen & Geertz 2016: 81).

5 It may, of course, be discussed to what a degree the submission of a paper by a member of the EC present at the meeting was in line with the expressed intention, i.e. to mainly listen to the specially invited guests and to save EC discussions for the following EC meeting. It may also be discussed (and it has been discussed) to what a degree a paper written and a position taken by the Deputy Secretary General could be (mis-)taken for being representative of the stance and position of the EC as such. However, the invitation to participants to the EEC to submit position papers or comments was also extended to EC members, and the invitation said nothing that was meant to “prohibit” members of the EC to also submit a paper. But this is not equal to “inviting” Prof. Taves to submit a paper, as claimed by Prof. Wiebe.

to improvise a speech, namely a summary of (her) critical readings of the Werblowsky Marburg 1960 statement (cf. note 4). So, yes: Prof. Taves' critical reading of Werblowsky came unexpected, as unexpectedly as did Prof. Wiebe's direct response to and critique of Prof. Taves' pre-circulated paper.

It can (cf. note 5) be discussed (and it *has* been discussed) to what a degree Prof. Taves' critical reading of the Werblowsky statement during the meeting could be (mis-)taken for being representative of the stance and position of the EC as such. And thus also to what a degree it contrasts and conflicts with what had been stated in various ways in the "Letter of Invitation" and "Suggested Main Themes and Reading Resources," sent from the desk of the President on behalf of the EC and with the signatures of the Secretary General and the Treasurer. But, it was not delivered on the invitation of the EC, and Prof. Taves did not speak on behalf of the EC.

In his first response to Prof. Wiebe's "Open Letter" (of resignation from his status as Honorary Life Member), the IAHR President Jensen wrote:

Having said this, I can also assure you that there was no hidden (or as you write "real") agenda. The agenda was written in the "Letter of Invitation" and in the more detailed document on "Suggested Main Themes and Reading Resources" sent to all participants as we got closer to the meeting.

These two documents, signed by me, the President, as well as by the Secretary General and the Treasurer "on behalf of the Executive Committee," were representative of the Executive Committee.

What was said and spoken by members of the EC, including the ones you mention, was not said and spoken on behalf of the EC. Each member of the EC speaking his or her opinion at that EEC meeting, spoke only on his or her own behalf. Be it the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General, any other member of the EC, or me, the President.

The document distributed during the meeting on so-called "scenarios" for possible paths to be taken by the IAHR in the future was worked out by members of the EC, but the EC had *not* discussed which of the scenarios it preferred, *and* whatever opinion or preference expressed by whatever member of the EC at the meeting was but the opinion and preference of that individual member. Only the central part of the introductory welcome talk given by me, the IAHR President, namely the reading of the below quote, i.e. the quote from the document on "Suggested Main Themes and Reading Resources" (a quote also sent to all participants later on in order to stress what was to be the core "agenda" at the meeting) was spoken on behalf of the entire EC.

President Jensen continued:

During the meeting one or maybe two members of the IAHR EC, as you quite correctly note, expressed themselves in ways that might indicate that they no longer subscribed to the Marburg 1960 Werblowsky statement. They expressed criticism and scepticism as to whether the 1960 statement, in part or in total, can and should serve as a starting point for (the construction of) an IAHR “corporate identity,” now in 2019 and in the time ahead.

It is my qualified guess that the colleagues arriving at that opinion did so because they tried to apply a kind of scientific-historical critical reading also to the Marburg 1960 Werblowsky statement, a kind of reading not rarely considered a *sine qua non* for a scholar of religion.

The EEC meeting, thus, may be said to have indicated that there was not unanimous agreement among the current members of the EC in regard to the Marburg 1960 Werblowsky statement and its usefulness as regards an identification of the “corporate identity” of the IAHR 2019 and beyond,—and as regards a “taking stock” of how well the IAHR is doing when expanding or “globalizing.”

But disagreement is natural (and healthy), especially as long as some kind of consensus can be reached, and as long as agreement as to future strategic and concerted steps can be reached despite the disagreements.

2.4 *A Lunch Hunch*

With regard to getting rid of other possible misunderstandings and the claim that there was a “hidden agenda,” allow us to add a few words on the “warning” that Wiebe says he received “from a member of the EC” that a change of name was in the offing but that “it would not include ‘science’ or ‘scientific study’ that I had put forward in my position paper” (Wiebe 2020: 152).

We cannot know for sure with whom Wiebe had a conversation that included something like this. Nor can we verify in any way what was said and what (actually) was the meaning of what was said. President Jensen, however (once famous—in Denmark at least—for having “warned,” in an almost Pythia-like way, the Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten* against the dire consequences of the printing of the Muhammad-cartoons), remembers that he had a nice talk over lunch the day before the meeting with Profs. Wiebe and Sweetman. When discussing the fact that the question about a possible name change was now (again) on the table, but this time (contrary to what was the case in the IAHR World Congress in Erfurt, 2015.), put there by the EC itself, Jensen—as

he remembers it—said that he was almost absolutely certain that “times had changed” and that the EC would—in contrast to what was the case in Erfurt—be ready for a change of name. But he also said, he thinks, that he was almost equally certain that the name proposed by Prof. Wiebe would not be the name favored by the majority of the EC.

He said so *not* because there had been anything close to a meeting or discussion in the EC about the name change and about any possible new name. Neither a face-to-face meeting nor via email or some other electronic means. Nor had he himself been in personal contact with the individual members of the EC before the meeting in Delphi, in regard to this or any other issue to be discussed. No, Jensen said so because this was the “hunch” he had, his “qualified opinion” or “impression,” based not just on “feelings” but on whatever he “had gathered” in this respect from talks with IAHR colleagues and IAHR EC members after Erfurt 2015.

Jensen has met, over the years, so many colleagues from around the world who have, as remarked by Prof. Wiebe in his article, problems with “science” and/or “scientific,” including colleagues, the work of whom Jensen has no problem characterizing as first-class examples of “science of religion” or “scientific study of religion(s).”

Whether or not some of these colleagues have an “almost neurotic fear” as regards the terms is, in this context, not what matters. What matters is that they are there, within the IAHR membership, and that their opinions therefore matter.

It is part of the “job” of a President (and Secretary General) to have such “hunches” and “qualified opinions” of matters like this, but it and the talk with Profs. Sweetman and Wiebe over lunch most certainly does not go to show that there was anything close to a “masterplan” or “conclusion” arrived at *before* the meeting in Delphi.

The “warning” was given to maybe “help” Prof. Wiebe from not getting too disappointed,—a “warning” that Jensen moreover thought timely since Prof. Wiebe, *as Jensen remembers it*, expressed his pleasure with this view to finally having the EC in favor of a change of name. Even if not to the name proposed by him.

3 The Name Change: Proposal and Aims

In his article Prof. Wiebe, with reference to the proposals from the EC made public in the *IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement November 2019*, writes:

[...] the central issues dealt with are how the EC can extricate the IAHR from its current strict and exclusivist scientific framework but to do so without jeopardizing its presently highly valued scientific profile. To that end, the EC proposes to change the name of the Association to the “International Association for the Study of Religion” (IASR), thereby evading the strictures of a scientific historiography in its current name and by simultaneously laying claim to that scientific reputation by “tightening up [its] scientific profile.”

WIEBE 2020: 154-155

This was and is not the aim of the proposal of the IAHR EC to change the name to IASR and to insert “scientific” (and more) in § 1 of the IAHR Constitution. The name was *not* chosen for the reasons given by Wiebe.

Moreover, it was not at all the overall aim of the call for the EEC meeting to discuss the name. And, the aim was not to move, in a clandestine way, away from “its current strict and exclusivist scientific framework but to do so without jeopardizing its presently highly valued scientific profile” (Wiebe 2020: 154).

Preparing for the Delphi meeting, an initiative taken by the President with reference to his promise to do his best to bridge the IAHR past, present and future, the President suggested that the question about the name be included on the list of themes and subthemes to be discussed in Delphi. Not as the core or most important issue but as one matter to be discussed.

The President (and later the EC) thought that it would be nice if the EC took this opportunity to start a discussion on its own initiative rather than having to, as was the case in Erfurt, discuss a proposal made by others. He also thought that maybe “times had changed,” i.e., that the current EC, with several relatively younger scholars onboard, might have other views on the name change than the out-going EC in Erfurt in 2015.

Moreover, he thought it might prove helpful to discuss the matter, not as the main matter, but as one matter and within the framework of the overall theme for the meeting in Delphi:

One of the most important questions, maybe the “toughest” and most difficult one, is this: how well are we actually doing while “globalising,” not in regard to the increased numbers of members and affiliates from all around the world, but in regard to our stated aim, namely to promote and carve out more and more space all over the globe for the academic, scientific, analytical, historical, cross-cultural study of religion?

Thinking about, *inter alia*, the Marburg 1960 famous quote from the statement of Zwi Werblowsky:

if the IAHR has any *raison d'être* it is by reason of a division of labour which makes the Organization the responsible organ and the international meeting ground for those scholars who wish to serve the cause of *Religionswissenschaft* in its strict sense (Werblowsky "Marburg— and After," *Numen* 7, 220; cf. also Jensen & Geertz 2016, 66).

the IAHR EC thinks it is time we ask ourselves this: when expanding, when "globalising" the IAHR, do we then also succeed in doing it along the lines indicated by the view expressed by Werblowsky, a view and a stance, then and later, supported by almost each and every IAHR officer expressing him- or herself about the IAHR "identity" and task?

As expressed by Prof. Pye (1996, 39, italics in the original) "globalisation" and "international and regional diversification" of the IAHR "*demands not less, but more clarity about its [the IAHR] independence from specific religious standpoints.*"

The question then is: have we been good enough at making this clear and have we been good enough at implementing what we state in Article 1 of the Constitution and what we demand of, e.g., IAHR Special and Regional Conferences, namely that they are in line with Article 1? We have incorporated the globalisation and diversity strategy in the Constitution and By-Laws, and we have accompanied that with the tightening up of Article 1 and the rules regarding IAHR Special and Regional Conferences. But is it enough?

Or to formulate it a slightly different manner: do "we", the participants to the meeting in Delphi, and thus the current EC too, actually agree that the Werblowsky Marburg 1960 statement is still a useful starting point for an agreement or consensus of what constitutes what Prof. Pye (Pye 2009, 292), with reference exactly to Werblowsky and Marburg 1960, has called the "corporate identity" of the IAHR? Are we ready to stand up for and defend this point of departure for the kind of academic and scientific approach promoted by the IAHR as well as the linked understanding of the "*raison d'être*" of the IAHR?

JENSEN, FUJIWARA & BORNET 2019a

3.1 *The Name: Taking over the Agenda*

This was meant to be the overall and most important theme and issue of the Delphi meeting, not the name! What happened, maybe unfortunately so, was

that the name (change) to a large degree overshadowed the main issue(s), and that the time spent on discussing the name took most of the time at the meeting. As if everything hinged on the name, to be changed, and if yes, to what? That was not at all the intention of the IAHR leadership, and maybe the chair(s) of the meeting ought to have been more restrictive in regard to the time allotted to the discussions about the name.

One reason why the name took up so much time was, of course, that one of the papers submitted by Prof. Wiebe was yet another strong argument and proposal in favor of a change of name to "The International Association for the Scientific and Historical Study of Religion."

It was thus not least Prof. Wiebe's "agenda" so to speak that set the agenda for the IAHR EEC meeting in Delphi, and it was maybe also to a large degree Prof. Wiebe who was the first and foremost to insist on an intimate link between the (choice of) name (current and future), the "identity" of the IAHR, and the will and capability of the IAHR leaders and membership to abide by and continue to honor and practice the "Werblowsky stance" and, thus, "*Religionswissenschaft* in its strict sense."

True enough, and as indicated above, on the list in the "Suggested Main Themes and Reading Resources" document sent to all invitees, readers do find the "name" thing. But it is there as the very last item of subthemes and (minor yet linked) issues to be discussed *somehow* in connection to the main theme(s). The paragraph in question reads:

Considering many of the above mentioned questions, the name of our association ought maybe (once again) be reconsidered. Is it time for the IAHR EC itself to start a discussion about changing the name of the Association, e.g. in order to better signal that the "history of religions" as of old maybe does not quite correspond, despite its possible function as an umbrella term, to the research and practice of the IAHR and its members and affiliates. *And* to signal the efforts to continuously tighten up the academic, scientific profile, despite respect for and understanding of the various religious, cultural, political contexts of our members.

JENSEN, FUJIWARA & BORNET 2019a: 7-8

So, though not the top item and most important issue, it is there, and yes: the question about a change and choice of name is in the invitation *somehow* linked to the question about efforts to tighten up the academic, scientific profile of the IAHR.

3.2 *The Name and the "Scenarios"*

Likewise, in the document, circulated on the second day of the meeting, on possible future "scenarios" for the IAHR, Prof. Wiebe's suggestion for a new name figures as the name for the association in the "scenario B," also called "Exclusive Model," while *The International Association for the Study of Religion/s* (IASR) figures as the new name for "scenario C," also called "Inclusive Model." The only thing said about the name mentioned in "scenario C," however, is this:

2. The name

"The International Association for the Study of Religion/s"

(According to the minutes of the IC meeting in Erfurt, the only viable alternative name to History of Religions was considered to be Study of Religion(s), which is the denomination of the majority of the IAHR member associations and societies (IAHR *e-Bulletin Supplement*, August, 2017, p. 23). The name is, therefore, most inclusive.)

FUJIWARA 2019

Apart from thus appearing in the context of the more "Inclusive Model," this is what is actually said in the document regarding the name and its possible signals as regards a more or less exclusive or inclusive future association. That is not much, and not much that can be used to document that the IASR, the name that ended up being proposed by the EC to the IC, was chosen and proposed in order to evade "the strictures of a scientific historiography in its current name and by simultaneously laying claim to that scientific reputation by 'tightening up [its] scientific profile.'"

Without going into details as regards the two "model scenarios," and their relation to each other (there are quite a few things that overlap) and the "current model" ("scenario A"), (also quite a few overlapping aspects whether with scenario B or C), we find it safe to say that scenario B most likely is closer than scenario C to what Wiebe considers as the "Werbblowsky stance" and thus also to his ideas and visions for the kind of science or scientific study of religion that he finds appropriate for the IAHR, now and in the future.

When Wiebe writes that his reading of documents which "framed the Delphi discussion" has convinced him of the "[...] commitment of the EC to an 'inclusivist' future for the IAHR, which it concluded prior to the Delphi meeting," (Wiebe 2020: 154) we once again have to say that this was not the case. True: Deputy Secretary General Taves mentioned that she and Acting Secretary General Fujiwara were in favor of "scenario C" during the discussions. But, let

us quote again what was already quoted from our response to Prof. Wiebe's "Open Letter":

The document distributed during the meeting on so-called "scenarios" for possible paths to be taken by the IAHR in the future was worked out by members of the EC, but the EC had *not* discussed which of the scenarios it preferred, *and* whatever opinion or preference expressed by whatever member of the EC at the meeting was but the opinion and preference of that individual member.

It will be up to the in-coming 2020-2025 EC and the IAHR IC to discuss whether to make any use whatsoever of the scenarios (and whatever proposal linked to the various scenarios) presented in Delphi.

3.3 *The Proposal to Change the Name*

Anyway, back to the name: despite the fact that the question about the name was listed as the last of matters to be discussed, there was, as indicated, almost no end to the time dedicated to the discussion about the name. Prof. Wiebe most certainly was given a fair chance to argue his case, first by way of his written pre-circulated proposal, secondly during the meeting where he also had quite a lot of time to argue in favor of his proposal and name, and/or for and against whatever other name put on the table by various participants.

After a long, at times robust, discussion, making it clear that opinions and preferences differed, in the EEC as well as among members of the EC, it became clear that a significant majority of those gathered in Delphi was in favor of a change of name. On the basis of the long discussion, the disagreement and various proposals, the participants of the meeting, invited guests and EC members, were asked to indicate, by way of a secret ballot, which name they preferred in case of a change of name.

A majority was, as already clear to readers, in favor of recommending to the EC that it submits a proposal to the IC for changing the name of IAHR to IASR, i.e., from "history of religions" to "study of religions." The second choice was "science of religion."

The day after the EEC meeting, the IAHR EC met for its ordinary meeting. Once again members of the EC discussed at length whether to propose a name change and what name to propose. Despite different opinions, also in the EC, the end result was to propose a change of name to IASR. This decision was first communicated to the participants of the Delphi EEC meeting along with a report on other decisions taken by the EC in Delphi in "Summary of

Conclusions ...”.⁶ Since then the decision and proposal has by now also been communicated to the IAHR membership at large (*IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement, November 2019*).

In the “Summary of Conclusions ...,” sent to the EEC participants only (and with a plea not to disseminate it since the wording of the information later to be sent to the membership at large might differ slightly from the wording of the “Summary of Conclusions ...”), it reads:

1. Proposal to Change the Name

With reference

- to the stated intention of the Executive Committee (EC) to seriously consider to recommend a change of name,
 - to the thorough (not least because of the detailed and well-argued proposal from Prof. Wiebe) discussions at the EEC meeting about the change of name ...,
 - to the large majority of the EEC participants in favour of a name change, and
 - to the large majority of the EEC participants in favour of a change of the name International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) to the International Association for the Study of Religions (IASR),
- the EC decided to put a formal proposal forward to the International Committee (IC) meeting in Otago 2020, for the IC to, hopefully, on the strong and unanimous recommendation of the EC, recommend the mentioned name change to the General Assembly (GA) for the GA to adopt the proposed name change with a 2/3 majority in favour. [The name is in the Constitution, and the EC agreed that it must be put forward first to the IC and then to the GA.]

The decision to recommend this and not another name, was taken because

- it was recommended by the majority in the EEC (cf. the “vote” taken at the end of the meeting),
- it was also recommended by the majority of the EC,
- it would match member associations’ names,
- it would reflect that the academic scientific study of religion has changed (it had changed already in Sydney 1985, cf. remarks in “Suggested Main Themes and Reading Resources” p. 4),

6 Jensen, Fujiwara, & Bornet 2019b. See References for the full title of the document here referred to only as “Summary of Conclusions ...”.

- it (with the plural “s”) would, however, at the same time signal some continuity with the “old” name.

Mention was made, also, of another reason for changing the name, namely that “history of religions,” formerly often seen as the apt umbrella term, nowadays more and more often tends to be seen as either one of many approaches (amongst, *inter alia*, sociology of religion, cognitivist studies of religion), and that it also, particularly among US based scholars maybe, tends to be misunderstood as a European term, despite all the positive denotations and connotations of “history” and “history of religion” that it has had.

[The EC also discussed how to do as regards the French name as well as other such consequences of a name change]

JENSEN, FUJIWARA & BORNET 2019b: 1-2

That’s that. Nothing more, nothing less.

We have no problems openly “admitting” and as already indicated that some members of the EC (as far as we recall two) would have preferred “Science of Religion.”⁷ However, when the proposal to change the name to IASR is put on the table by the out-going EC in Otago, the recommendation from the EC will

7 We also have no problems adding that one of those two was the President. He, now as before, openly admits that he prefers IAHR (for several reasons) to any other name. He also admits that he would have preferred “Science of Religion” over “Study of Religions.” In contrast to quite a few colleagues around the globe as well as some participants to meetings in Delphi, he has no problem at all linking the term “science” to the kind of studies of religion(s) that he thinks the IAHR should promote, now as before and in the future. However, he also has no qualms admitting that his preference for the IAHR may—apart from other reasons—be a sign of a conservative approach that actually disregards present and past developments as well as the arguments and wishes of colleagues, including Wiebe and earlier on Wiebe and Martin, for a change. Thinking of, e.g., Max Müller and even more often of Werblowsky and “Religionswissenschaft in its strict sense,” he reminds himself of a colleague who recently asked whether anyone today would choose “history of religions” as the name for the association. Having said this, the President has to add that he does not see it as his job as a president to stand in the way for a decision taken, after years (in Delphi days) of debate, by a majority of colleagues in the EC who had, furthermore, taken heed of the recommendations by the participants to the EEC meeting. The job of the President, of the EC and the IAHR leadership, is to find a way toward some sort of compromise, consensus or balance between the various, at times opposite views and preferences, and, when such a decision and agreement has been reached, each and everybody backs it up. Including the President. Except, of course, if the President finds the majority decision to be in absolute conflict with the stated and constitutional aims and purposes of the IAHR and his own strong convictions in that regard. In that case the President will have to protest and to make his protest public,—and to—maybe—step down. This, though, is not the case, the President thinks, in regard to the proposal to change the name to IASR nor in regard to other decisions taken by the EC in Delphi.

be “strong and unanimous” as stated in the quote. This is how things are. This is what democracy, openness, and leadership is also about. We thus also happen to disagree with Wiebe when he dismisses our reference to the majority of names of the IAHR member associations as something that “flaunts follower-ship rather than leadership by the EC.”

We do recognize and admit that “study of religion(s),” before (cf. Wiebe and our statement in this regard in the *IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement*, November 2019), today and most likely tomorrow, seems too “generic” and “amorphous” to some colleagues. Nevertheless, the EC had and has no intention whatsoever to choose this name in order to move the IAHR “beyond its current scientific objectives as a benefit for its [the EC] expansionist agenda” (Wiebe 2020: 155).

There is nothing in any “secret” or “hidden” reasonings of the current EC nor in the documents pertaining to the Delphi meeting that can justify the “allegations” of Prof. Wiebe when he writes that:

This EC has not had the courage to openly argue for an IAHR that can, like the American Academy of Religion or the European Academy of Religion, include moral, social, political, and cultural issues in its agendas and objectives. However, its insistence on changing the name of the IAHR to the generic and amorphous “International Association for the Study of Religions” (IASR) achieves the same ends. The openness and inclusiveness of the phrase “study of religion” will make it impossible to even delineate, let alone criticize, a discrepancy between the scientific ideals of the IAHR, and the extra-scientific practices that would be welcomed by a new IASR.

WIEBE 2020: 156

3.4 *A Name Doesn't Do the Trick*

Coming back in a few moments to Prof. Wiebe's claims that the IAHR leadership at the meeting in Delphi, be it the meeting of the EEC or the EC, wanted to “include moral, social, political, and cultural issues in its agendas and objectives,” allow us for this moment to linger at Wiebe's claim that the choice of name and the proposal to change the name is a smart way to commit the IAHR to “extrascientific tasks,” immediately or in the future of the IAHR, at the same time as we go on paying “lip service” (Wiebe 2020: 151) to the Werblowsky stance.

First of all: we simply do not think that such a trick can be done by way of a change of name. If the name matters that much, and if Wiebe is right in writing that “those societies and associations [which have the “study of religions”

in their name] have never been recognized as having had a scientific profile" (Wiebe 2020: 155), then, admittedly, it would all be quite easy, very black or very white.

Members⁸ who, relatively recently, have changed names from "history of religions" to "study of religions," members some of which most definitely will swear they try their best to adhere to Werblowsky's "basic minimum presuppositions" for "*Religionswissenschaft* in its strict sense," would then have to be dismissed as having no "scientific profile" and/or "extra-scientific" aims?⁹

While we do think that, in the IAHR and inside its many member associations, there is space for improvement as regards the study or science of religion, for example at IAHR conferences or at the conferences of members and affiliates or in the work of individual members within those associations, we also think that such improvement is part and parcel of what is implied by "scientific" endeavors, and not something that is part and parcel of, or endemic to, the *names*.

Whether the name is IAHR or the proposed IASR, the name cannot do the trick, i.e., safeguard or ruin the scientific integrity of the IAHR and its members and affiliates. It is, actually, also noteworthy that Wiebe criticizes the current and most recent IAHR ECs for paying "little attention to ensuring that the Association's practice would match its published scientific commitments, [...]" and for "the lip-service of successive executive committees to the IAHR's *raison d'être* as a scientific organization" (Wiebe 2020: 151).

If the name really could do the trick, why did it, according to Wiebe, not do the trick earlier on? It seems, rather, evident that Wiebe, despite his praise, in this article in *MTSR*, of the virtues linked to "history of religion," does *not* think that the name IAHR has been able to prevent neither the IAHR leadership nor membership from betraying the noble cause and scientific ideals of the IAHR in the past. Why should another name do that trick better (or worse) than the IAHR?

8 One example could be the Danish Association for the Study of Religions (DASR) formerly Danish Association for the History of Religions (DAHR), a member association for decades headed by, respectively former IAHR General Secretaries, Armin W. Geertz, and Tim Jensen, and a member association with which Prof. Wiebe has had close ties for decades.

9 And what about the NAASR, the North American Association for the Study of Religion? Has the "openness and inclusiveness of the phrase 'study of religion'" (Wiebe 2020) made it impossible for NAASR and its members to, as said by Wiebe with reference to the IASR, "delineate, let alone criticize, a discrepancy between [...] scientific ideals [...], and [...] extra-scientific practices" (Wiebe 2020)? We do not think so, and we also do not think that this is so because of the name or because in this case the plural "s" is missing from "religion."

Not putting our trust in the name, neither the one or the other, the EC, thus, in the “Suggested Main Themes and Reading Resources” document as well as in its deliberations at the EC meeting in Delphi, linked the name game to the questions about how best to continue with the “globalization” and expansion *without* selling out its ideals and without leaving behind its commitment to the “ethos” of the Werblowsky Marburg 1960 statement. More about this in a minute.

Lingering for a short while with the name and Wiebe's allegations that the IAHR leadership's proposal to change the name from IAHR to IASR signals a plan to turn the IAHR into some kind of international copy of the American Academy of Religion or the European Academy of Religion, some kind of “World Academy of Religion(s)”, please allow us to quote again from the “Summary of Conclusions ...” of EC deliberations, where it says:

Moreover, the EC agreed that changing the name to the International Association for the Study of Religions, might signal an important difference between, on the one hand, this Association, and, on the other, so-called “academies of religion,” e.g. the European Academy of Religion, and thus also between the kind of studies and approaches to religion(s) promoted by the IAHR/IASR and those practiced and promoted by, e.g., the European Academy of Religion.

JENSEN, FUJIWARA & BORNET 2019b: 2

This text, a summary not of *discussions* at the EEC but of *decisions* and deliberations of the EC, cannot, no matter what Wiebe might think of the EASR, the European Association for the Study of Religions, (due to its name, from observations of its annual conferences, or from, e.g., the joint statement of the IAHR and EASR presidents as regards the European Academy of Religion)¹⁰, be seen as an indication of a more “inclusivist” policy, of (yet another) step in the direction of taking the IAHR down the road toward an Association open to “social, moral, political, and even religious objectives rather than remaining committed to seeking scientific knowledge about religion and religions,” of a “subordination of the IAHR's historical epistemic commitment to the extra-scientific tasks,” or of a “more inclusive kind of academic enterprise from that of its historical mandate as scientific” (Wiebe 2020: 155).

10 See <http://www.easr.eu/2018/02/20/easr-iahr-joint-statement-on-the-european-academy-of-religion/> (last accessed February 23, 2020).

3.5 “Tightening up” Takes More than a (Change of) Name

However, let us now move a few steps away from the name, stressing once again that we never thought the name could do the trick and never wanted it to. The EC, before, during and after the EEC and EC meetings in Delphi was highly aware that a change of name (to whatever new name) had to be intimately linked to a tightening up of the academic, scientific profile of the IAHR/IASR. What was on the plate in Delphi was not “just” a change of name but (a change of name *accompanied by*) a tightening up of the scientific, academic profile of the IAHR.

The “Summary of Conclusions ...” speaks its own clear language *also* about this:

This tightening up, closely linked, as said to the change of name, both during the EEC meeting and the EC meeting, is also closely linked to the questions asked (cf. the document on “Suggested Main Themes and Reading Resources”) about the “globalisation” (or internationalisation/expansion of the IAHR).

The IAHR EC at its meeting expressed its clear wish to continue to promote and carve out more space for the academic, scientific study of religions promoted by the IAHR, and it wanted to do so along the lines it had done so ever since Marburg 1988, and also in line with what, *inter alia*, Michael Pye and Armin W. Geertz, recommended during their talks at the EEC meeting. There was thus also agreement that such expansion or globalisation as stated long ago by Michael Pye “*demands not less, but more clarity about its [the IAHR] independence from specific religious standpoints.*” (cf. “Suggested Main Themes and Reading Resources”, p. 4)

JENSEN, FUJIWARA & BORNET 2019b: 2

We do admit that we cannot see what’s wrong about this. Wiebe claims that:

complaints have increasingly been raised about religious, social, political, and cultural objectives intruding its international congresses. And the pursuit by recent executive committees of the IAHR for a global expansion for the IAHR without vetting potential organizations with respect to their scientific priorities has now mired it in the same problems Werblowsky and his colleagues faced in Marburg in 1960.

WIEBE 2020: 153-154

We know and acknowledge that complaints or concerns about something similar to the intrusion of “religious, social, political, and cultural objectives”

into IAHR world congresses were raised in regard to Durban 2000 and Tokyo 2005, and we truly believe that the IAHR IC and GA faced the concerns raised, e.g., in Tokyo, and tried to tighten up the scientific profile of the IAHR and its conferences thereafter. Into the Constitution § 1 was inserted the final line saying that “the IAHR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, or other similar concerns,” and later on this was inserted into the IAHR guidelines for hosting an IAHR Special and Regional Conference, meaning that the IAHR leadership *did* try to make sure that such agendas did *not* intrude, neither into world congresses nor into other IAHR conferences.

This does not mean that we have been as successful as one (Wiebe and others) might wish. But we have tried, and the EC thus also is aware of complaints as regards Toronto 2010 and Erfurt 2015. The very call for the meeting in Delphi was part of the efforts to find more ways to tighten up, also as regards “vetting potential organizations with respect to their scientific priorities” (Wiebe 2020: 153-154). The IAHR EC, of course, has also discussed how to do so in the very best way.

In Delphi the EEC unfortunately spent too much time on discussing the name and not other maybe more important aspects linked to the core theme, and also not other means to tighten up the academic, scientific profile at the same time as it continues to globalize and expand and thus help “carve out” out more space in more places around the world for the kind of scientific, academic study of religion promoted by the IAHR.

The EC, nevertheless, in line with what was also said in its “Summary of Conclusions ...” sent to the EEC participants, states that

The tightening up, already visible in the last sentence added in 2010 to Article 1 and later included in the requirements for associations hosting an IAHR Special and Regional Conference, can and must take place on various levels: in the Constitution, in the Rules, and in practice as regards the running of an IAHR World Congress as well as an IAHR Special and Regional Conference.

JENSEN, FUJIWARA & BORNET 2019b: 2

and it consequently resolved, “with respect to papers read at IAHR conferences and congresses,” that

we cannot legislate our way to high quality scientific, academic papers. But we can and must try to get a closer, more hands on, relationship in the preparation for the academic program as well as what regards e.g. welcome talks by Deans, Vice-Chancellors, etc.

It was therefore agreed to put forward to the IC in Otago proposals to change the IAHR Rules as regards the hosting of IAHR conferences. It was agreed that the wording of the proposal (to be finalised in the not too distant future) must include a demand that a member of the IAHR EC become a member of the local, host organizing *and* academic program committee, in order for him or her to have say in regard to, e.g., the acceptance and rejection of paper proposals.

JENSEN, FUJIWARA & BORNET 2019b: 3

The EC, thus is “working on it.”

3.6 “*The Scientific Study of Religions* (Religionswissenschaft)”

Last but not least: the EC decided to suggest to the IC that it recommends to the GA that “scientific” be inserted into § 1 of the IAHR Constitution. We quote from the *IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement*:

Original Article 1

“[...] The IAHR is a nonprofit worldwide organization which has as its objective the promotion of **the academic study of religions** through the international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject. The IAHR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, or other similar concerns.”

Proposal

“Article 1

[...] The IAHR is a nonprofit worldwide organization which has as its objective the promotion of **the scientific study of religions** (“*Religionswissenschaft*”) through the international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject. The IAHR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, or other similar concerns.”

IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement, November 2019: 7

In order to avoid giving the impression that the word “scientific” refers only to the natural sciences, the EC also suggests adding “*Religionswissenschaft*.” In this way, hopefully, it is also signaled that the IAHR despite timely innovations and changes stays in line with the “ethos” of the Marburg 1960 statement (Schimmel 1960) on the “identity” and specific task of the IAHR.

True enough: this insertion, suggested by Prof. Wiebe, and supported by a vast majority of EEC participants in Delphi, was not decided upon straight away at the EC meeting in Delphi. The reason was that doubt was raised as to where exactly in the IAHR Constitution (and linked information about the IAHR) the word was to be inserted. Following a post-Delphi electronic email communication among EEC participants, the EC unanimously decided to suggest what is in the quote above.

And, of course: Wiebe and others may wince at the insertion also of (*"Religionswissenschaft"*) but the EC decided to insert it exactly for the reasons given and no other. It may be added that we also discussed the possibility of writing (*"Religionswissenschaft"* in its strict sense") thus making the reference to Werblowsky 1960—and thus also the continued commitment of the EC to the Werblowsky statement—even more obvious.

We "rest our case" here, adding but this: it is, as said time and again, not the IAHR EC that decides in regard to the change of name or to the changes proposed to help "tighten up the academic, scientific profile" of the IAHR. A change of name must be put forward to the IAHR IC, for it to either reject it or to recommend it to the GA: the name is in the Constitution, and the Constitution can only be changed by a majority of members at the GA on the recommendation of the IAHR IC, the foremost "democratic" forum of the IAHR.

So, members and delegates to the IAHR IC and GA in Otago¹¹ have the final say. Not the IAHR EC leadership. We truly hope that the criticism of Prof. Wiebe articulated here in *MTSR*, this response of ours, Prof. Wiebe's other Delphi-related papers and all the other Delphi-related documents now gathered in an online folder for the IAHR IC and membership to read, can serve as basic "Readings" for delegates to the Otago IC in order for the delegates to have the best foundation for a qualified discussion and decision when meetings in Otago begin.

Hopefully, however, this stance and whatever text finally decided upon, does not prevent anybody from discussing, now and in the future, what, more exactly, a scientific study of religions can and cannot imply, in general and for the IAHR.

11 The Otago IC and GA, along with the Otago World Congress, have been canceled due to COVID-19. The next IC and GA will be re-scheduled.

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