

Wisdom from World Religions

Prof. Kenneth Rose

Week 2 Study Guides

Day 4 Study Guides

Unit 1 Study Guide: Sir John Templeton's Wisdom from World Religions

Theme: *Spiritual pluralism*

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton

"Our present religious views, while worthy, may be neither final nor complete" (WWR 40).

Readings in *Wisdom from World Religions*:

- W30, L1, 252-253
- W13, L5, 112-114
- W5, L1, 38-39

Video 1 Learning Objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To distinguish between religious and theological beliefs (cataphatic) and the mystical or spiritual views that go beyond them (apophatic).
- To identify the limitations that affect religious language when discussing ultimate spiritual realities.
- To contrast the changing parts of the world's religions from the parts that are the same in all religions.
- To estimate the benefits and risks of spiritual pluralism:

Discussion Questions

Seeker

- Do you think that religious truth is limited to one final and perfect expression?
- Do you think it is possible for new and unexpected spiritual truths to emerge?

Proficient

- How do our respond to the claim the you think that the each religion is a different path up the mountain?
- Are there truths that are the same across all religions?
- Do religious differences require choosing one form of religion over another?

Adept

- Do you agree with Sir John that words like “God, Buddha, Allah, Brahma, Muhammad, Wakantanka, the Divine, the Creator” are just different ways of talking about the same spiritual reality?

Unit 2 Study Guide: Introducing the Religions of the World

Topic: *Truth and Religious diversity*

Video 2 Learning Objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To distinguish between religious diversity as a social reality and religious diversity as a religious challenge or issue
- To discuss the tripolar typology of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism
- To argue that pluralism is the future of religion because of the nonfinality of religious languages

Discussion Questions

Seeker

- Is there one true religion?
- Are all religions true?

Proficient

- What is the difference between religious diversity as a social reality and religious diversity as a religious challenge or issue?
- Does the existence of multiple contrary religious teachings undercut the truth of all of them?

Adept

- Can you formulate a general principle that makes sense of or explains the diversity of human religiosity?
- Can you devise a typology or sorting scheme with 2-5 terms that displays the underlying logic of these varied approaches?

Unit 3 Study Guide: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: *Seeing Differently*

Video 3 Learning Objective: To employ a spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: *Seeing Differently*

Unit 4 Guest Lecture by Prof. Diana L. Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies
Fredric Wertham Professor of Law and Psychiatry in Society in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Member of the Faculty of Divinity.

Profile

<https://hds.harvard.edu/people/diana-l-eck>

Diana Eck's academic work has a dual focus—India and America. Her work on India focuses on popular religion, especially temples and places of pilgrimage, called tirthas. Her books include *Banaras: City of Light* and *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* and her most recent work, *India: A Sacred Geography*, published in 2012.

Her work on the United States focuses especially on the challenges of religious pluralism in a multireligious society. Since 1991, she has headed the Pluralism Project, which explores and interprets the religious dimensions of America's new immigration; the growth of Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, and Zoroastrian communities in the United States; and the new issues of religious pluralism and American civil society. The Pluralism Project's award-winning CD-ROM, *On Common Ground: World Religions in America*, was published in 1997; her book *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* was published in 2001. Her book *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey From Bozeman to Banaras* is in the area of Christian theology and interfaith dialogue. It won the Grawemeyer Book Award in 1995, and a 10th-anniversary edition was published in 2003.

Eck received the National Humanities Award from President Clinton and the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1998, the Montana Governor's Humanities Award in 2003, and the Melcher Lifetime Achievement Award from the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2003. In 2005–06 she served as president of the American Academy of Religion. Eck has worked closely with churches on issues of interreligious relations, including her own United Methodist Church and the World Council of Churches. She is currently chair of the Interfaith Relations Commission of the National Council of Churches. In 2009 Eck delivered the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh, a series of six lectures titled "The Age of Pluralism."

Selected publications

- *India: A Sacred Geography* (Harmony Books, 2012) [Publisher page](#)
- *A New Religious America: How a 'Christian Country' Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (Harper San Francisco, 2001) [Publisher page](#)
- *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (1993; rev. 10th anniversary edition, Beacon Press, 2003) [Publisher page](#)
- *Banaras, City of Light* (1982; Columbia University Press, 1999) [Publisher page](#)
- *Darsan, Seeing the Divine Image in India* (1982; 3rd ed., Columbia University Press, 1998) [Publisher page](#)

Day 5

Unit 1 Study Guide: A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton

"When we choose to allow our lives to be governed by spiritual principles, we may be sure that spirit will sustain us" (WWR 338).

Suggested Readings in *Wisdom from World Religions*:

- WWR xix, xx
- W1, L5
- W14, L3

Video 1 Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To state Sir John Templeton's understanding of spiritual laws
- To show spiritual laws they differ from—and are similar to—physical, social, legal, psychological, and moral laws.

- To relate the central theme in every wisdom traditions that living in accordance with *dharma*, or the spiritual laws of life, fosters well-being and spiritual attunement.
- To argue that the existence of spiritual laws suggests that we are free beings who can choose the good over the bad.

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- Can you name three spiritual laws that you have experienced in your own? It is not necessary to use Sir John's language. You can use your own wording, if you like. The key thing is to point out in your own experience a principle or law that guides your behavior and that you would feel is not helpful to violate.
- Sir John writes that "a timeless law or principle . . . being of spirit, is not visible." How can something be real without being visible?

Proficients

- What does it mean to claim, as Sir John does, that spiritual laws "are self-enforcing spiritual truths"? How does this work? Can you give an example of self-enforcing spiritual truths?

Adepts

- Given the findings of physics, biology, neuroscience, and social psychology, do you think that human beings are free agents in any degree?
- How do you account for the virtually universal human experience of conscience?
- Are there values or virtue that are good in themselves or are values and virtues good only if someone or some community calls them good (see Socrates!)?

Unit 2 Study Guide: Introducing the Religions of the World

Topic: Hinduism

Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- Provide a brief introduction to Hinduism
- Note its core teachings
- Note its contributions to spiritual understanding
- Note its contributions to virtuous living

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- What ideas or words are associated with Hinduism?
- How would you define *yoga*?

Proficients

How would you define the theory of karma?

- Do you find it helpful to think that life is defined by and guided toward wholeness by following dharma, or natural laws?

Adepts

- Do you think that inclusion characterizes Hinduism as a whole?
- Do you think reality or being is ultimately singular and spiritual in character?

Unit 3 Study Guide: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:

- *“Dare to develop personal spiritual truths that can be unassailable from outside forces” (WWR 145)*

Video 3 Learning Objective: To employ this spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton:

Video 4: Interview with Dr. Nathan Katz, Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Florida International University

- Research interests:
 - Tibetan Buddhism
 - Worldwide Jewry
 - India and Judaism
 - Jainism
 - Hinduism
- Author and editor of numerous books and articles, including:
 - *Who Are the Jews of India?*
 - *The Last Jews of Cochin: Jewish Identity in Hindu India*, with Ellen S. Goldberg
 - *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection: The Arahant of the Sutta Pitaka Compared with the Bodhisattva and the Mahasiddha*
 - *Spiritual Journey Home: Eastern Mysticism to the Western Wall*
 - *Buddhist and Western Philosophy: A Critical Comparative Study*
 - *Teach us to count our days: A story of survival, sacrifice and success*
 - *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin*
 - *Studies of Indian Jewish Ancestry*
 - *Kashrut, Caste and Kabbalah: The Religious Life of the Jews of Cochin*, with Ellen S. Goldberg
 - *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection*

- *Buddhist and Western Psychology*

Day 6

Unit 1 Study Guide: Divine Intelligence and Creativity

Video 1: Sir John Templeton's *Wisdom from World Religions*

Theme: Divine intelligence and creativity

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton: "A universal divine intelligence flows through all of us" (WWR 306).

Readings in *Wisdom from World Religions*:

- W1, L3, 4-6
- W11, L2, 89-91
- W17, L3, 146-147

Selections from *Wisdom from World Religions*

- "A universal divine intelligence flows through all of us" (WWR 306).
- "As an expression of divine intelligence, are we not always greater than any difficulty, condition, experience, or situation?" (WWR 102).
- "As helpers in divine creativity, why is it necessary to control our thoughts, directing them toward creativity, benefits, and progress?" (WWR 109).
- "Can it be that the soul is longing for something that is hidden within itself? Are we already imbued with the divine power to achieve the goals we desire? Is our life an adventure to realize our divinity? Could this be the reason we were created? Does the urge to live creatively come from the urge of the divine imagination that pushes itself out through us into self-expression? Is it possible that the true reality of each of us is the spirit that is the great light of our being? Are we in embodiment to work out our destiny?" (WWR 5).
- *This is expressed as* "Experiences of penetrating insight, the sudden appearance of solutions to seemingly intractable scientific problems, the incredible creativity that musical and mathematical inspiration often entails, and the sense of the presence of an awesome force are often seen as essential spiritual 'happenings' by the people who experience them" (WWR 90).

Video 1 Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To explain what Sir John means by the phrase "divine intelligence" and why he sees it as the basis of creativity.
- To argue that the "underlying controlling forces" of divine intelligence and creativity are "spiritual laws or universal principles" (WWR 221).
- To discover the source in American religious life from which SJT likely took the idea of divine intelligence.
- To compare views of what SJT calls "divine intelligence" in various religious and philosophical traditions

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- Do you think that, as SJT suggests, that “our life an adventure to realize our divinity” (WWR 5)?
- How do you respond to the phrase “divine intelligence”?

Proficients

- What is divine intelligence and how is it related to human intelligence?
- Is the universe intelligent?

Adepts

- What is creativity and what is its source?
- How does spiritual or mystical intelligence differ from scientific and prudential intelligence?

Video 2: Introducing the Religions of the World: Jainism

Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- Provide a brief introduction to Jainism
- Note its core teachings
- Note its contributions to spiritual understanding
- Note its contributions to virtuous living

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- Have you heard of Jainism?
- Do you know the story about the elephant and the blind people?
- Proficients
- Is theism, or belief in a personal deity, essential to religion?
- Why is *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, so important for Jains?

Adepts

- How does the Jain view of karma and mokṣa differ from the views of Hindus and Buddhists?
- Can many or even all perspectives be true in some way?

Unit 3 Study Guide: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: *Look deep within to the source and realize our divinity*

Video 3 Learning Objective: *To employ this spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton*

Unit 4: Office Hours with Professor Kenneth Rose