

Wisdom from World Religions

Prof. Kenneth Rose

Week 3 Study Guides

Day 7

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

Theme: The Humble Approach

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton: "Every person's concept of God is too small" (WWR 325).

Suggested Readings in *Wisdom from World Religions*:

- W3, L4, 25-26
- W15, L1, 125-126
- W20, L1, 170-171
- W38, L5, 325-326

Video 1 Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To discuss how Sir John used the word *humility* to create what he sometimes called "humility theology" and sometimes "the humble approach" in order "to indicate the understanding that the Creator infinitely exceeds anything anyone has ever thought or said about divinity" (WWR 25).
- To illustrate how humility theology begins with the suspicion that one's conception of the divine, or God, is too small.
- To argue that the central premise of Humility Theology that "every person's concept of God is too small" is a major but uncontroversial claim because it is well grounded in theological and religious traditions around the world.

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- Do you think that all scientific discoveries are, when seen through the lens of humility theology, also discoveries about the divine, about God?
- Do you think that humility is possible in the ongoing interactions between scientific and religious establishments?

Proficients

- Apply the claim that the divine exceeds everything that has been said about it to one teaching or doctrine in a religious tradition that is familiar to you.
- Do you think that progress in religious knowledge is as important as it is in science or do you think that religious truth has been fixed forever at some point in the past?
- How does the humble approach lead to progress?

Adepts

- The claim that the divine (“the Creator,” “divinity”) exceeds everything that has been said about it is well-known among the world’s theologians and religious philosophers. Do you find this to be a controversial claim? A helpful claim? A false claim?
- Is this claim supportive of traditional religious knowledge?
- How would the institutions of science and religion have to change in order to create a humble theology and a humble science?
- How does thinking that human knowledge of the divine is limited support the humble approach?

Video 2: Introducing the Religions of the World

Topic: Buddhism

Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

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

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- What is your first thought when you hear of the *Buddha*?
- What are the Four Passing Sights?

Proficients

- Can you state the Four Noble Truths?
- Do you think life is more or less satisfactory?

Adepts

- What are the Three Marks of Existence?
- What are the two basic types of Buddhist meditation or *bhāvanā*

Video 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: “Experiment with the meaning of life” (WWR 322).

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

- “Experiment with the meaning of life” (WWR 322).

Day 8: A Moral Wakeup Call

Unit 1: Sir John Templeton’s *Wisdom from World Religions*

Theme: A Moral Wakeup Call

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton

- “Ethics and spiritual principles should be the absolute basis of everything we do in life” (WWR 263).

Suggested Readings in *Wisdom from World Religions*:

- W14, L3, 119-120
- W31, L1, 266-267
- W35, L1, 296-297

Unit 1 Learning Objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To recognize John Templeton as a moral educator like Confucius and Lawrence Kohlberg.
- To identify the ultimate source of ethical principles.
- To identify some sources of moral instruction available to us in our daily lives.

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- What does SJT mean by “your house of living”? (WWR 297)
- Are human beings essentially good?
- Do our lives as lived square up with highest ethical values?

Proficients

- What is the source of morality and of the sense that we ought or ought not do something?
- Do you think that that some impulses are stronger than our mental power to control them?

Adepts

- Does the fact that we can make moral choices imply free will?
- In your view, is conscience inborn in us at birth, socially created, or divinely fashioned?

Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World: Sikhism

Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- Provide a brief introduction to Sikhism

- Note its core teachings
- Note its contributions to spiritual understanding
- Note its contributions to virtuous living

Discussion Questions

Seeker

- What do you know about Sikhism?
- In terms of number adherents, where in the top ten of religions would you place Sikhism?

Proficient

- What do you know about Guru Nanak?
- What is the *langar*?

Adept

- How is God or the supreme reality understood in Sikhism?
- What is *nirguna-bhakti*?

A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: “*The crowding-out technique*” (WWR 11).

Video 3 Learning Objective:

- To employ this spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton.

Unit 4 Video: Interview with Prof. Diana Obeid

- Instructor of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies at Christopher Newport University.
- Founding co-director of the Middle East and North Africa Studies program at Christopher Newport University.
- Teaches a variety of courses in Arab studies and the humanities
- Numerous presentations at academic conferences
- Teaches in Christopher Newport University’s Lifelong Learning Society

Prof. Obeid's Research interests include:

- Modern Middle East
- Arab prison literature
- Women and gender issues in the Arab world
- Translation studies

She is the author of the forthcoming book: *Nawal Al Saadawi and Hanan Al Shaykh's Authorship: Between Arab and Western Reception*

Day 9

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

Theme: *Expanding spiritual science and research*

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton: "Do we need new branches of science that would research unseen spiritual principles?" (WWR 162).

Suggested Readings in *Wisdom from World Religions*:

- W5, L2, 38-39
- W10, L1, 80-81
- W19, L1, 161-162
- W23, L1, 195-196

Unit 1 Learning Objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To discuss SJT's call to increase spiritual knowledge 100-fold every two centuries.
- To argue that John Templeton's Humble Approach applies to science as well as to religion.
- To analyze some areas where a partnership between science and religion can learn about dimensions of reality not currently studied by science.

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- Do you think science and religion can work together?

Proficients

- How would a humble science and religion work together?
- Do you think that Sir John's view of the relation between science and religion is workable?

Adepts

- Would science and religion be better served by working closely together, keeping their spheres separates from each other, or replacing one with the other?
- Can you think of any experiments or theoretical considerations that would support SJT's view that the material world rests within the larger embrace of spiritual realities?

Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World

Topic: Confucianism

Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- Provide a brief introduction to Confucianism

- Note its core teachings
- Note its contributions to spiritual understanding
- Note its contributions to virtuous living

Discussion Questions

Seeker

- Is Confucianism a religion or a philosophy?
- Why was Confucius concerned with etiquette?

Proficient

- How does one become a *junzi*, or “person of noble character”?
- What is the connection between moral rectification and the Five Relationships?

Adept

- What did Confucius mean when he wrote that “at sixty my ear was attuned”?
- What is the heart of moral rectification?

Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: *Update scriptures in light of science*

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

Unit 4: Office Hours with Prof. Rose