

Wisdom of World Religions

Prof Kenneth Rose

Week 4 Study Guides

Day 10

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

Theme: The law of mind action

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton: "The way we choose to see the world creates the world we see!" (WWR 216).

Suggested Readings in *Wisdom from World Religions*:

- W1, L1, 1-2
- W18, L2, 153-154
- W32, L5, 274-275

Video 1 Learning Objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To articulate SJT's understanding of the relation between how people think and the quality and content of their lives.
- To discover the source of this law in the optimistic outlook of the New Thought movement of a century and more ago and in the Indian idea of *karma*.
- To evaluate the claim that the mind creates our reality by objectifying our innermost thoughts.

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- Do you think your thoughts affect your world? Can you trace connections between certain kinds of thoughts and certain kinds of outcomes?
- How do you feel about positive thinking and positive psychology?

Proficients

- Do you think that the law of karma is valid?
- Would you limit the law of cause and effect only to the physical world? Or does it hold also in social, psychological, and spiritual spheres as well?

Adepts

- Are you more inclined to be on the skeptical or accepting side when it comes to the claims that are made for positive psychology?
- Do you think that changing how we think can change our physical health?

Video 2: Introducing the Religions of the World

Topic: Daoism

Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

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

Discussion Questions

Seeker

- What do you now about Daoism?
- Is it more important to understand the origin of the world or to flourish in the world?

Proficient

- How would you describe wu-wei, or “nonforcing”?
- When it comes to formal rules of behavior, how might Confucianists and Daoists differ?

Adept

- Are there two varieties of Daoism?
- Do Confucianism and Daoism conflict?

Unit 3 Learning Objective

Objective: To employ a spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: “Refuse to entertain any thought in your mind that you would not wish objectified in your life” (WWR 205)

Day 11

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

Theme: A guiding inner power

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton

“The world abounds with meaningful stories of wondrous connections between individuals and the divine” (65).

Suggested Readings in *Wisdom from World Religions*:

- W8, L1. 64-65
- W36, L1, 303-304
- W38, L3, 323

Unit 1 Learning Objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To identify what SJT's means by a guiding inner power.
- To defend this function of the soul against materialist skepticism and reductionism
- To recommend becoming acquainted with this inner guiding power

Discussion Questions

Seeker

- What do you think is the source of conscience?

Proficient

- Can a naturalistic approach—or an approach that does not stray beyond the boundaries of mainstream contemporary science and philosophy—adequately account for the sense of obligation that we sense as human beings?

Adept

- Beyond the personally and socially shaped-conscience, is there a transcendental source of insight and obligation that forms the irreducible base of our moral reasoning?

Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World

Topic: Shinto

Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

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

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- What do you know about Shinto?
- How do religions relate to each other in Japan?

Proficients

- What are the kami the soul of Japanese religion?
- How does one remove *tsumi*?

Adepts

- What does the mirror symbolize in Shinto?
- How do you respond to the Shinto saying, "Turning to the gods in a time of trouble"?

Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: See beyond activities of the personality to the greater spiritual force of the immortal soul” (WWR 323).

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

Video 4: Interview with Prof. Edward Kelly, PhD

Edward F. Kelly, PhD, Research Professor in the Division of Perceptual Studies, School of Medicine, and in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, USA

Dr. Kelly’s Research interests focus on:

- psychical research
- functional neuroimaging

He is the lead author of four books including:

- Beyond Physicalism: Toward Reconciliation of Science and Spirituality,
- Altered States of Consciousness and Psi
- Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century.

Day 12

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

Theme: An attitude of gratitude (154).

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton

“It is a law of life that if we develop an attitude of gratitude, our happiness increases” (WWR 16).

Suggested Readings in *Wisdom from World Religions*:

- W2, L4, 16-17
- W 10, L3, 83-84
- W14, L4, 121-122
- W 40, L4, 341-342

Unit 1 Learning Objectives (QM 2.1-5)

- To show why the practice of gratitude is central to SJT’s practical mysticism.
- To practice the practice of gratitude as described by SJT.
- To analyze the notion of gratitude in light of current research on happiness.

Discussion Questions

Seekers

- Are you surprised to learn that the apparently simple practice of gratitude, or “good things in life exercise” can be so effective in increasing happiness levels and decreasing depression?
- Do you usually connect gratitude with and spirituality and religion?

Proficients

- Are there limits to gratitude? Are there contexts for which gratitude is an inappropriate response? Or will a wider perspective show the relevance of gratitude?
- How can the practice of gratitude fundamentally alter our perception of the world, as held by SJT? (WWR 83).

Adepts

- How do you respond to SJT’s claim that “everything is already completely blessed” (WWR 121)?
- What is the connection between creativity and gratitude?

Unit 2: Introducing the Religions of the World **Topic: Zoroastrianism**

Learning objectives (QM 2.1-5)

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

Discussion Questions

Seeker

- What do you know about Zoroaster?
- Do you think that ideas such as the Messiah, Heaven and Hell and the Day of Judgment originated in the Bible?

Proficient

- What three ideas sum up the essence of Zoroastrianism?
- What is the difference between a ceremonial and ethical view of sin?

Adept

- Can you trace the influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and, possibly, Buddhism?
- In what ways does the teaching of Zoroaster differ from Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and Buddhism?

Unit 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: “Just start praising everything in your life”

Theme: “Just start praising everything in your life” (WWR 121).

Objective:

- To employ a spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: “Just start praising everything in your life” (WWR 121).

Unit 4: Office Hours with Prof. Rose