

# TEMPLETON REPORT

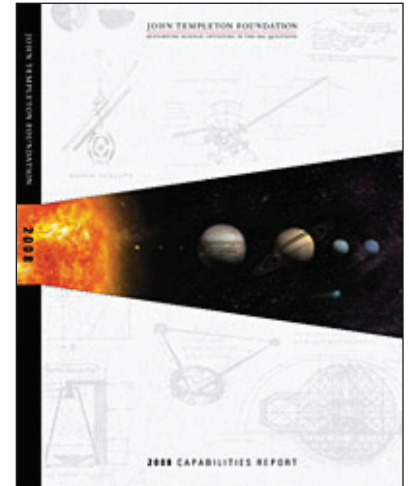
NEWS FROM THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

February 4, 2009

## The Foundation, from A to Z

Over the next month the John Templeton Foundation will be busy mailing out several thousand copies of its 2008 Capabilities Report. Published every two years (and now also available online), the report provides an overview of the Foundation's efforts to make good on the late Sir John Templeton's ambitious vision for addressing the Big Questions of human nature and purpose. Intended for scholars, scientists, journalists, and other opinion leaders, the 188-page document includes detailed profiles of programs in all of the Foundation's core funding areas, amounting to more than \$70 million in grants during 2008.

The Capabilities Report will be of particular interest to potential grantees because of its focus on innovative research in fields at the center of the Foundation's mission. The report features, for instance, a portrait of Harold Koenig, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke University Medical Center. Koenig currently oversees an eight-year, \$10-million grant for exploring the interplay of religion, spirituality, and health. Researchers who share these interests might wish to learn more about one of Koenig's RFPs or to apply for their own JTF funding (once the Foundation's recently announced restructuring of its grant-making program concludes in September 2009). As John M. Templeton, Jr., the Foundation's chairman and president, writes in his introduction to the report: "Our ideal is cutting-edge scholarly work, subject to peer review and held to the highest academic standards."



The inside cover of the Capabilities Report is a striking map of the world, covered with color-coded squares representing grants in eight different fields, ranging from the physical, mathematical, and life sciences to free enterprise, character education, and science-and-religion dialogue. Instances include the Pioneers of Prosperity Awards for entrepreneurship in Africa; the New Vision 400 conference, celebrating the 400th anniversary of the telescope in Beijing; a four-week seminar on science and religion in India; prizes for advanced mathematics administered by the Kurt Gödel Society in Vienna; the inaugural World Science Festival in New York City; and research at Stanford University on purpose among young people, at Oxford University on the cognitive and evolutionary origins of religious belief, and at the University of Chicago, Yale, and MIT on the wealth-creating potential of enterprise in the developing world.



Templeton grantees (clockwise from upper left): Harold Koenig, Martin Nowak, Helen Astin, and Alexander Astin.

Some of the research funded by the Templeton Foundation, especially in the physical and mathematical sciences, can seem rather esoteric to the general public. One of the most exciting multi-year JTF grants is Foundational Questions in Physics and Cosmology, directed by the physicists Max Tegmark of MIT and Anthony Aguirre of the University of California at Santa Cruz. Grantees are working on topics such as quantum gravity, multiple universes, and cosmic inflation. Other JTF-funded research is more accessible, like the work done by Alexander and Helen Astin of the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. The couple has done extensive survey work to try to understand the spiritual development of college students while they are in school.

The Capabilities Report also includes a section devoted to the many books supported by Templeton Foundation grants over the past two years. These include such titles as *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* by William Easterly, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* by Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Why Good Things Happen to Good People* by Stephen Post and Jill Neimark, and *Evolutionary Dynamics: Exploring the Equations of Life* by Martin Nowak.

As Charles L. Harper, Jr., the Foundation's senior executive vice president and chief strategist, explains in his own message in the Capabilities Report, the Foundation's "far-reaching agenda reflects the diverse interests of Sir John Templeton himself." JTF's work is "intellectually exciting and publicly ambitious," he writes, and it "allows us to work with remarkable people who have important, potentially transformative ideas."



Templeton grantees (clockwise from upper left): Stephen Post, William Easterly, Anthony Aguirre, and Max Tegmark.

The Templeton Foundation's 2008 Capabilities Report is available online, and printed copies can be ordered by writing to [communications@templeton.org](mailto:communications@templeton.org).

## NOTEBOOK

### Genesis Now

The astronomer Linda Shore recalls that, as a child, she enjoyed reading the first chapter of Genesis. "I was always interested in astronomy and those first four paragraphs. . . . They don't necessarily capture the essence of everything I know about the creation of the earth and the sun and the universe, but they capture the awe of it." Shore offers these thoughts in a recently released video called "Genesis Now." Created by the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco, with a grant from the Templeton Foundation, the video offers perspectives on Genesis from scientists, religious leaders, and artists.



Video

The video, which can now be seen online ([http://www.thecjm.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&view=article&id=114](http://www.thecjm.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&view=article&id=114)), was produced in connection with the museum's recent exhibit titled "In the Beginning: Artists Respond to Genesis." Both were intended to illustrate the continuing relevance of the biblical story of creation and to show how religious people can balance their beliefs with scientific knowledge. Saul Perlmutter, a professor of physics at the University of California at Berkeley, describes Genesis as a kind of "owner's manual for the world." In the video, he lists the important questions that the first book of the Bible tries to answer: "Where do we come from?" "What is it made of?" And, he jokes, "Why don't we fall through the floor?" Arnold Eisen, the chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, says that he likes to have his students read aloud the opening lines of Genesis from different translations of the Bible. As he wonders in the video, "How can it be that this most important line in the history of scripture, that we have different versions of it? It is a mark of how the text is trying to capture things beyond the ability of human beings to imagine."

### Defining Wisdom in *Newsweek*

In a recent piece titled “Don’t Forget the Owls” (January 19), Jerry Adler of *Newsweek* highlights the timeliness of the JTF-funded Defining Wisdom project. As Adler notes, apropos of the current economic crisis, “when things are going well, you don’t have to go searching for wisdom,” so “it’s no coincidence that several dozen researchers in fields ranging from neuroscience to art, music, and law have just received wisdom-seeking grants under the auspices of the University of Chicago” (and a \$3 million grant from the Templeton Foundation). More than 600 research proposals, from scholars across the world, were received for the Defining Wisdom grants competition, whose 23 winners were announced this past summer (for more details, see the November 12, 2008 issue of the *Templeton Report*).



### “Le capitalisme corrompt-il le sens moral?”

In its latest issue, Paris-based *Philosophie Magazine* features an exchange drawn from the Templeton Foundation’s current Big Questions campaign, which asks, “Does the free market corrode moral character?” The article includes responses, translated into French, by the political theorists Michael Walzer (*Evidemment!*) and John Gray (*Sans doute . . .*) and the economist Jagdish Bhagwati (*Au contraire!*). Essays from the series have also been reprinted in *Das Magazin* in Switzerland and in the Norwegian journal *Minerva*.



For more information, write to [communications@templeton.org](mailto:communications@templeton.org).

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