



TEMPLETON
RELIGION
TRUST

Always Seeking.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

ART SEEKING UNDERSTANDING: ROUND 2

March 2021

1. About Templeton Religion Trust

Templeton Religion Trust (TRT) is a global charitable trust chartered by Sir John Templeton in 1984 with headquarters in Nassau, The Bahamas. TRT has been active since 2012 and supports projects as well as storytelling related to projects seeking to enrich the conversation about religion.

Learn more at templetonreligiontrust.org

2. About Art Seeking Understanding

Art Seeking Understanding (ASU) is a program strategy concerned with improving the methods of inquiry into the existence and nature of what Sir John called spiritual reality. Spiritual reality includes things like love, compassion, purpose, creativity, time, mind, infinity, complexity, and understanding, to name just a few, and these are for Sir John just as real as, and perhaps—as in the case of Ultimate reality—even more real than, tangible objects or physical forces like gravity.

ASU begins with Aesthetic Cognitivism (AC), a theory about the value of the arts that approaches them not simply (or not even) as sources of delight, amusement, pleasure, or emotional catharsis, but as sources of understanding. As Nelson Goodman put it in *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978), “the arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of the understanding.” But is there an empirically demonstrable connection between art and understanding vis à vis what Sir John referred to as spiritual reality and/or spiritual information in particular? And if so, what distinctive cognitive value does engagement with the arts (production and/or consumption) generate? Under what conditions and in what ways does participation in artistic activities encourage or stimulate spiritual understanding, insight, or growth (meaning- or sense-making)? Relatedly, if art has primarily to do with understanding, then what of beauty? Is it an unrelated aim, or one (in some cases) essential to understanding? And if essential, then what advantages, if any, does beautiful art have over non-beautiful (e.g. conceptual) art with reference to understanding?

Projects in this area would bring together artists and arts researchers, philosophers and theologians alongside scientists from a variety of sub-disciplines within the psychological, cognitive, and social sciences, including developmental psychology, cognitive science of religion, cognitive neuroscience, sociology, social psychology, personality psychology, psychometrics, and clinical psychology to conceive and design empirical and statistical studies of the cognitive significance of the arts with respect to spiritual realities and the discovery of new spiritual information. Discrete projects need not include representatives from each of these disciplines, but should

be ASU-aimed, i.e. moving towards engagement with artists and arts researchers, philosophers, theologians, and/or scientists at the intersection of these disciplines.

Before applying, applicants should read Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics* (pp. 52–79) and Christoph Baumberger, “Art and Understanding: In Defence of Aesthetic Cognitivism”. In addition, applicants should, at the very least, watch these Closer to Truth interviews:

<https://www.closetotruth.com/series/aesthetic-cognitivism-i-overview-and-concepts#video-78002>

<https://www.closetotruth.com/series/aesthetic-cognitivism-i-overview-and-concepts#video-78276>

<https://www.closetotruth.com/series/aesthetic-cognitivism-ii-intellectual-foundations#video-78512>

<https://www.closetotruth.com/series/aesthetic-cognitivism-iii-meaning-and-implications#video-78514>

<https://www.closetotruth.com/series/aesthetic-cognitivism-iv-research-and-methodology#video-78516>

Additional interviews are available at

<https://www.closetotruth.com/topics/consciousness/art-seeking-understanding> and may also be useful.

Information about previously funded grants in this program strategy is available at <https://templetonreligiontrust.org/art-seeking-understanding/> where applicants can also find a list of ASU Project Publications (to date) as well as ASU Resources, including two annotated bibliographies.

3. What We Fund

- Projects that are truth-seeking and/or discovery-oriented.
- Projects firmly situated within a particular discipline (e.g. the arts, theology, philosophy, the sciences) asking questions that cannot be answered without reference to one of these other disciplines.
- Projects with sharply focused questions and/or hypotheses, as well as an explicit methodology.
- Projects that are conceptual, empirical, and/or experimental. If conceptual, projects should be empirically-/experimentally-aimed.
- Projects on which appreciable progress can be made within 12–18 months.

4. Types of Awards

In this second round, TRT anticipates offering approximately 12 grants—including project grants and experimental pilot or proof-of-concept grants—of up to USD \$234,000 (or equivalent) for projects lasting 12–18 months (beginning 1 June 2022). The total request amount (max. \$234,000 or equivalent) should include direct and indirect costs, as well as funds for the Summer 2022 Workshop and the Grantee Toolkit. (See section 8 below.)

Successful grantees from this round may then be invited to submit follow-up proposals for 36-month projects up to USD \$1,000,000 (or equivalent).

5. Eligibility Criteria

- The applicant can be a non-profit organization, academic institution, for-profit company or another recognized institution that is incorporated in an eligible jurisdiction and is capable of receiving and administering funding.
- Travel & Lodging cost must be no more than 10% of the total budgeted direct costs.
- Institutional overhead or indirect costs must be no more than 15% of the total budgeted direct costs.
- Though cost-effectiveness of the proposal will be an evaluation criterion, requests of all sizes up to USD \$234,000 will be given equal consideration.
- At this time, TRT is only able to consider proposals submitted in English.

Please note that we will not fund:

- Work that already receives widespread, financial support from other sources.
- General donations or operational support. Projects should be well-defined and designed in such a way that they can be completed in no more than 12–18 months.
- Contributions to endowments, support for ‘brick and mortar’ buildings, or other capital projects.
- Projects with an exclusively historical focus.
- The creation of artistic works, artistic productions, or purchases.
- Ontological or critical discussions seeking to answer the questions “What is art?” and/or “Is this good art?”
- Projects having primarily to do with beauty (without reference to understanding), the therapeutic effects or uses of art, or animal cognition.

6. Evaluation Process

Proposals submitted in advance of the application deadline will first be assessed for eligibility based on the information outlined in this document. Proposals which meet the basic eligibility criteria will be reviewed by a minimum of four external experts. Top ranked proposals will be advanced to final review in November 2021 with

successful grantees being notified by/before the end of March 2022. All grant projects will begin 1 June 2022.

7. Application Process

Interested applicants should complete the online application form at https://webportalapp.com/sp/trt_rfp no later than **8:00am EST on 19 July 2021**. For RFP-related questions, please email rfpinfo@templetonreligiontrust.org.

8. Summer 2022 Workshop and the Grantee Toolkit

Grantees will be required to participate in a June 2022 “Meet the Grantees” Workshop in Edinburgh, Scotland. Proposals should include \$6,000 (or equivalent) T&L for each PI and/or Co-PI to cover expenses for this conference unless the applicant is based in the UK in which case \$4,000 (or equivalent) for each PI and/or Co-PI will suffice. All proposals must also include the following text in italics (cut/pasted) as an output:

Grantee Toolkit: We'll be working with Grey Matter Group (GMG), a marketing agency based in Grand Rapids, MI, to develop a streamlined marketing/communications strategy that will drive impact through focused messaging and the creation of relevant, sharable content. This will include a light launch plan + “what if religion” questions/memes (\$6,000), Art Seeking Understanding PR co-op (\$3,000), as well as the following content marketing materials: photography or graphic visualization/header (\$1,250), 3–4 minute live-action or 2-minute animated video (\$20,000), and one project report/webpage (\$5,000).

UK applicants should add VAT to the \$35,250 total.

9. Select Bibliography

- Baumberger, Christoph. “Art and Understanding: In Defence of Aesthetic Cognitivism,” in *Bilder sehen. Perspektiven der Bildwissenschaft*. Edited by Marc Greenlee et al, 41–67. Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner, 2013.
- Goodman, Nelson. *Languages of Art*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1978.
- . *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1978.
- Graham, Gordon. *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics*, 3rd ed. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005, 52–79.
- Templeton, Sir John. *The Humble Approach: Scientists Discover God*. Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 1981.