## THE ENHANCING LIFE PROJECT

Templeton Foundation Proposal William Schweiker & Günter Thomas

## TOPICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

with introductory comments

The following bibliography is divided into topics crucial for "Enhancing Life Studies". Rather than being exhaustive it offers exemplary positions and literature, introducing the field and its relevant questions. In every section we describe the key problems important to *Enhancing Life Studies* and then ask:

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

In addition to the following bibliography, participants in *The Enhancing Life Project* may reflect on *The Essential Worldwide Laws of Life* (Templeton Foundation Press, 2012) by Sir John Templeton as a beneficial reference to understanding the overall goals and intent of the project.

- I. Religious Hopes and Conceptions of Counter-worlds
- II. Theology and the Enhancement of this Life
- III. Philosophy
- IV. Spiritual Dimensions in Science, Spiritual Laws and Religious Practices Enhancing Life
- V. Politics and Economy
- VI. Law and its Development and Improvement
- VII. Quality of Life Research and Enhancing Life
- VIII. Technology for Enhancing Life
- IX. Communication Media, and the Enhancement of Life

## X. Social Sciences

# I. THE RELIGIOUS HOPES AND CONCEPTIONS OF COUNTER-WORLDS

Christian faith from its very beginning was thoroughly shaped by the belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this respect, the unity of love, faith and hope formed Christian life or at least always remained a critical measure of it. This hope was in many ways reformulated in diverse cultural contexts and intellectual climates. It gave people confidence to take great risks in withstanding and restricting the destruction and diminishing of life. This hope for a divine life spanning across human life and death encouraged people to turn to the very disadvantaged and poor in order to enhance their life both spiritually and practically. In so doing, Christians 'witness' as part of creation to the faithfulness and caring love of God for this creation. The pilgrimage from this world to a heavenly realm however, can also weaken the "faithfulness to this earth" and severely limit the human aspiration to enhance this life in its fullness and richness. Confronted with many forms of a fundamental critique of religion, many religious traditions have either radically reduced their hope in a life and world transcending this world, or, quite the opposite, have severed the ties between their hopes and a world shaped by the sciences and human aspirations to transform this world.

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

With *Enhancing Life Studies* we will shift and refocus the religious debate about hopes and eschatology by asking: What conceptions of a counter-world (broadly understood) help to imagine, to shape, and to promote the enhancement of this life – by opening up the spiritual resources and making people *spiritually guided stewards for the enhancement of life?* In "Enhancing Life Studies" we want to face a double challenge: First, we need to discern and reformulate notions of counter-worlds by learning from the insights provided by the science and religion debates (i.e. religious naturalism). Second, we want to move beyond that debate by taking up the specific challenge of analyzing and exploring the powerful, deeply grounded but widely overlooked link between counter-worlds and the social, personal and spiritual forces in favor of enhancing life. We ask what aspirations for enhancing life assume implicitly a strong notion of counter-world and follow spiritual laws? Furthermore, how is the spiritual enhancement of life by hope, grace, and gratitude intimately connected to courageous and bold initiatives for enhancing life in the fields of economy, technology, art and law – and eventually acts of charity and giving? What makes people spiritually guided stewards for the courageous enhancement of life?

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## II. THEOLOGY AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF THIS LIFE

One of the important "spiritual laws" that guided the early Christian community was neatly formulated by St. Augustine: in the Christian life, only God is to be enjoyed in himself, the things of this earth are to be used for the sake of human life and the life of faith, and, finally, other people and oneself are to be enjoyed because of a relation to God and used in the earthly affairs of life. This three-part spiritual law, defined by the relation between human acts of use and those of enjoyment, has shaped not only the piety and practice of many Christian communities, but it has also oriented Christian reflection on the status and use of the whole realm of creation, social life, and personal relations. What is more, analogous "spiritual laws" to this one found in Christianity can be found in other religious traditions. A Buddhist, for example, is not to "cling" to desire for things of this world as the realm of *samsara*, but also must have compassion for all that do suffer, human or non-human. In doing so, a Buddhist takes refuge in the *Dharma*. However, now that humans have the technological means to fundamentally alter and enhance forms of life, human and non-human, are there "spiritual laws" for enhancing life other than those defined by the distinction between "use" and "enjoyment?" Can we discern orientation for the

enhancing of this life in ways other than an opposition between what is to be enjoyed and what is to be used?

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

With *Enhancing Life Studies* we will shift and refocus the religious debate about the use of this life in order to explore the connection between enhancing finite life and enhancing spiritual life. We thereby face a double challenge: First, we need to discern and reformulate notions of the value of finite life by uncovering and articulating the spiritual laws that orient human personal and communal life in regard to that value. Second, we want to move beyond the rigid distinction between "use" and "enjoyment," a distinction which has too often lead to de-valuing this present life in order to explore and analyze a more complex multi-dimensional account of the value of finite life in terms of needs and potentialities (see Project Description).

We also ask: what aspirations for enhancing life assume implicitly a strong notion of value not reducible to "use-value" or "enjoyment" that is formulated by spiritual laws? What gives people spiritual orientation for the enhancement of *this* life?

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## II.7 ENHANCING LIFE IN OTHER WORLD FAITH TRADITIONS

Issues relating to the multiple means of enhancing life emerge not only in the Judeo-Christian faith traditions. Against the background of the Christian orientation in the Enhancing Life Project we see illuminative debates in other faith traditions which increasingly shape the life on this planet in the next centuries-in particular Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The following bibliographies with more recent publications reflect the inner-religious and academic debates about ways, means, techniques, and spheres for the enhancement of life. These conversations can provide enriching insights for the more Christianity oriented research projects and can be made available by scholars working in, on, or out of these faith traditions. Each of these World Faith Traditions can make quite specific contributions to the field of Enhancing Life Studies, one more on the transformation of public life, others more to the spiritual transformation of the person. We do expect that all of them are valuable reservoirs for the uncovering of spiritual laws.

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## III. PHILOSOPY

One of the oldest definitions of philosophy owed to Socrates and Plato was this: philosophy is learning to die. This conception of philosophy can be found through the historical legacy of the West even into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in thinkers like Martin Heidegger. This learning to die meant at least several things. (1) Learning not to trust one's sense perceptions that can err but to seek for deeper, true insight into the nature of reality; philosophy thereby relies on a distinction between appearance and reality. (2) Learning to abstract from particular sense impressions, experiences, or inherited cultural forms in order to discover or to create through abstraction more general, even universal, truths about being or mind; philosophy thereby relies on a logic of the particular and the universal. (3) Learning how to escape the fear of death and thus achieve liberation from the sources of human fear (fate, anticipation of pain and grief; undue attachment or love of others; beliefs about the gods or God) in order to attain self-sufficiency and with it true happiness (eudaimonia). In other words, "philosophy" in its most profound sense was a way of life that sought to enhance life either through overcoming finite existence or through strengthening one to endure this finite life with resoluteness and authenticity.

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

Enhancing Life Studies seeks to shift and refocus the debate about philosophy and natural and spiritual life. Indeed, the religions often seem ultimately focused on life, richer, true life, and the resources of the religions may thereby aid in thinking philosophically about enhancing life. Likewise with the present technological power to enhance life, conceptions of life need to be philosophically examined and assessed not under the rubric of death and dying, but with respect to life itself. Finally as noted above, longstanding and powerful assumptions about philosophy do aim to enhance life and in this way become both a resource but also a challenge to refection on enhancing life. We are asking, in other words, what are the philosophical contributions to thinking about enhancing life, and, conversely, how do religious and spiritual forms enrich our understanding of philosophy itself?

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# IV. SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS IN SCIENCE, SPIRITUAL LAWS, AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES ENHANCING LIFE

Over the past three decades a considerable number of studies have been dedicated to the investigation of the dimension of spirituality, practices and spiritual laws in quite diverse fields of life ranging from prayer, to forgiveness, and the power of love. *Enhancing Life Studies* can build on these insights and will take advantage of this research. For this reason and in this case we have to rephrase our key question from:

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

# To this one: What can be supplemented and advanced further? Where do we need to move from here?

What is peculiar in *Enhancing Life Studies* vis-á-vis this body of research is the emphasis on the spiritual realities encouraging the dynamic and ongoing process of enhancing life. In addition, with the turn to "life" *Enhancing Life Studies* will invest scholarly attention to a rich and multilayered concept of life based on spiritual realities and advanced through spiritual needs and aspirations. The focus on "life" reaches out to a number of academic disciplines while at the same time through the concentration on needs and aspirations as well as narratives and frames of enhancing life this Project achieves breath and concentration.

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## V. POLITICS AND ECONOMY

Politics and economics are central disciplines for understanding social life. They aim at the use and distribution of authority for the sake of security (politics) as well as the creation of wealth and commerce necessary for the flourishing of personal and social life. In this respect, each of these disciplines is crucial for *Enhancing Life Studies*. Indeed, these disciplines and their domains of inquiry touch basic issues in the Project: How are we understand people's needs, aspirations, longings, hopes, and their sense of commitment and their willingness to take over responsibility for their shared 'polis' in relation to enhancing life? How should we conceive of and measure "value" in relation to living realities and their enhancement? How are we to understand and assess people's selfdetermiation in relation to enhancing social life?

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

The Enhancing Life Project seeks to learn from and also contribute to politics and economics not simply in terms of political and economic systems and the theoretical debates and empirical judgments that surround them. That is, the Project is not an attempt to show that, say, democracy or free market capitalism are the best means to enhance social life, although those are important questions for assessing and measuring the enhancement of life. Additionally, we want to see if and how one is able to articulate and relate spiritual power and spiritual value as crucial to enhancing life in its many forms. Consistent with our methodological procedure of attention to the multiple dimensions of life, political conceptions of self-determination and economic theories of value can and must be enriched by exploring the enhancement of social autonomy and value from other perspectives, including religious ones, say, how these issues dovetail with Christian conceptions of "use" and "enjoyment." (See Theology Section above). In and through this examination, Enhancing Life Studies will also seek to articulate the spiritual laws for the enhancement of life through actions necessary to preserve the social values and at the same time to transform social life meeting the challenges of the future.

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## VI. LAW: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

That the law of a society is not an eternal object but involves change and development is an historically well examined fact and subject to theoretical analysis and reconstruction. Given the complexity of social, cultural, technological and economic developments the legal system needs to adjust to new situations and their requirements. Whether one follows more the positivist school and its conceptualism, whether one follows legal realists, or eventually favors natural law traditions, one has to meet the challenge to develop and coordinate the legal rules in order to preserve the spiritual insights manifest and present in the law.

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

We contend that the development of the laws of the legal system are not only reacting and responding to changing societal and cultural contexts, but the dynamic underneath the change is the striving to enhance life and to preserve the spiritual insights in the law. Conversely, heated debates about changes of the law must be seen as conflicts about understanding life and the values and goods we see as the basis of enhancing life.

During recent debates, a strong body of literature emerged focusing on the crucial impact of Christianity on the development of modern law traditions. *Enhancing Life Studies* appreciates this research and aspires to fully explore what enhancing life implies in the legal realm.

Enhancing Life Studies will will ask three type of challenging and future-oriented questions:

- (i) To what extend and where does the legal realm presuppose and need spiritual laws at its base and for its life-sustaining development?
- (ii) How can the legal system enable, encourage and support people in their aspirations for enhancing life?
- (iii) How can the law be open to spiritual realities transcending the law, like mercy, forgiveness, and radical love?
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## VII. QUALITY OF LIFE RESEARCH AND ENHANCING LIFE

During the past two decades Quality of Life Research has made tremendous progress in evaluating and assessing the life quality of people in many walks of life. This large branch of research moved away from strictly materialistic standards of measurement into complex models including cultural, political, religious, and health related indicators, to name just a few. Quality of Life Research increasingly tries to account for religious and cultural diversity. At the same time, it acknowledges that the perceived quality of life is bound to specific ways of perceiving, experiencing, and judging life – that is to say, to human hope for, valuation of, and envisioning the enhancement of life. The proposed project is prima facie closely related to this vibrant field of research. And yet:

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

Two aspects need to be noted. First, *Enhancing Life Studies* is interdisciplinary research strongly related to areas of life (like law, media etc.), *Enhancing Life Studies* wants to investigate the dynamic web of formative forces, values, needs, and aspirations that are deeply *embedded in manifold forms* in social life, human action, and the socio-cultural imaginary. Such research needs both the depth and breath of distinct disciplines of academic inquiry and communication among disciplines. Second, Quality of Life Studies look at religion first and foremost as just one factor in the set of quality-assessing factors. *Enhancing Life Studies* will, however, explore the spiritual laws operative in many spheres of life, of planning, thinking, and imagination beyond explicit religiosity. Based on a rich anthropology and a rich understanding of life they look at spiritual aspects in all human aspirations for an ongoing and dynamic enhancing of life.

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## VIII. TECHNOLOGY FOR ENHANCING LIFE

There is little doubt that we are living in a technological age even if "technology" in a broad sense is co-extensive with human existence insofar as human beings have been tool-makers and tool-users. Nevertheless, the current global age is sometimes called the "anthropocene" to

designate a geological and chronological age marked by the global evidence and extent that now characterizes human action and power. Technology as the engine driving the anthropocene is then absolutely central to this project and to *Enhancing Life Studies* as a whole. There is, however, an elusive "law" that seems to characterize contemporary technological innovation and expression that is the inverse of deep cultural assumption in the West. That deep assumption in the "socio-cultural imaginary" is this: "ought implies can," that is, insofar as human beings live by social, political, economic, and religious obligations and codes, then, fundamentally, they are free creatures who can orient their lives. The embedded socio-cultural assumption in much current technology *seems* to invert the prior assumption: "can implies ought." That is to say, technological advancement enhancing what we can do, the range of human activities ought to become its own aim. This inversion of principles, as we could call it, leads both to the unfettered celebration of technology in itself *and* to strident attacks on technologically enhancing enhancing life. Are there other options for thought?

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

As noted *Enhancing Life Studies* see technology as basic to human existence, but it also seeks the spiritual laws and related principles that will allow us to grasp the full flourishing of life and in measureable ways. In this way, the Project seeks to articulate what is the proper aim of freedom and what are the aims of the technological imaginary and technological engineering, both bringing about technological transformations for enhancing life. In other words, the maximizing of both freedom and technological means in social and personal life must be oriented not simply to more freedom and greater technological achievements, but to the enhancing of life in all its forms and dimensions by truly enabling and enhancing technology.

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# IX. COMMUNICATION, MEDIA, AND ENHANCEMENT OF SOCIAL LIFE

Without any doubt, new communication technologies have changed everyday life in unforeseen ways and to an unimagined extend. They altered – not totally, but significantly – the way people relate to each other, share insights and information, and how they allow their personal inner space of imagination, hoping, and belonging to be informed by public forces of communication. These technologies not only deeply influence our private lives, but also influence political, legal, religious, artistic, educational, and eventually economic action. While the degree of change is hardly debatable there is much public and academic debate (using the very same media!) whether we are increasingly "alone together" and become detached spectators of other people's worries, or, whether these communication technologies enable forms of participation unknown in the past and thus foster democracy and vitalize public life.

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

"Enhancing Life Studies" with the emphasis on spiritual laws, human needs, aspirations, and the search for making life 'richer' and 'deeper' can shift the perspective in public debate and scholarly attention. The technological developments in media communication are not only and exclusively driven by technological achievements and economic interests. Instead, we do need to explore what impulses for enhancing individual and social life are present through communication. In particular, we need to know what spiritual laws are working in this search for communication, understanding, belonging, and human sharing.

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#### X. SOCIAL SCIENCES

The social sciences that emerged parallel to the natural sciences in the modern West have been part of a social-technological program of enhancing life and creating a new future oriented and progressive kind of society. The idea of social engineering lies at the root of the social sciences. And yet among the many voices wanting to understand and to contour and form social life there is an increasing awareness of the difficulties to determine what is not only changing but in fact enhancing the shared life of a country, a culture, and eventually of humankind. Some psychologists and social scientists have sought to distinguish between basic and more complex human needs and thus offered more refined frameworks to model enhancement (See Project Description). As a consequence, the role of cultural values and spiritual resources and orientations comes to the forefront of discerning the ways of enhancing life. This becomes manifest in attempts to speak of the spiritual/sacred nature of the human person.

What is submerged, what is implicit, and what is not sufficiently examined? Where can "Enhancing Life Studies" make a difference? Where do we want to shift scholarly attention?

Enhancing Life Studies will further shift the focus to cultural values, deep orientations, and non-material resources. In particular these studies will ask: What moves people to enhance both their personal as well as their communal life in institutions? Enhancing Life Studies assume that the spiritual realities are not only embedded, perceived, and lived out by individual persons, but can be rooted in "socio-cultural imaginaries" which in turn influence the formation of society's institutions ranging from family life to educational institutions or economic formations. Again, in turn, Enhancing Life Studies will investigate in what respect and under what conditions social institutions are helpful in order to discover the spiritual aspirations of people and help actions directed towards the enhancement of life.

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