

# PHYSICIST WINS \$1.4 MILLION AWARD FOR PROMOTING SPIRITUAL REALITY

K-House eNews for the Week of March 17, 2009

A French physicist whose life's work points to evidence of a spiritual dimension has won this year's Templeton Prize and its £1 million (\$1.4 million) award. On Monday, the Templeton Foundation announced that French physicist and philosopher Bernard d'Espagnat had won the world's largest monetary prize for his scientific contributions to progress in religion.

D'Espagnat is famous for his concept of a "veiled reality" - one that lies behind the world that we can touch and see. In his work on quantum mechanics, d'Espagnat did experiments that demonstrated that the essence of reality is far more than can be explained by the mere three dimensions we can directly experience. Subatomic particles behave in strange ways that can only be accounted for by additional dimensions beyond our direct touch.

For example, when the French physicist Alain Aspect and his team in France and Switzerland experimented on photons in the early 1980s, they found that a change in the polarization of one photon could be detected almost instantaneously (faster than light speed) in another photon miles away. Discoveries like this were not new; Niels Bohr had argued that subatomic particles were interconnected back in the early part of the 20th century, even while Einstein insisted that nothing could travel faster than the speed of light. This insta-communication between particles has created a series of disturbing questions: How could two distantly separated photons communicate instantly? What connected them? Are the laws of physics absolute? What is the ultimate nature of reality?

Through his experiments testing the "Bell's inequalities" theorem during the 1960s-1980s, d'Espagnat sought to acquire greater understanding of the very strange properties of subatomic particles. He learned that the physical world seemed to be merely an appearance veiling a much greater reality. Science, he argues, can only go so far in helping us explain the nature of the universe.

"Quantum mechanics introduced another point of view, which consists essentially that the aim of science is not to describe ultimate reality as it really is," d'Espagnat told *The Christian Science Monitor*. "Rather, it is to make account of reality as it appears to us, accounting for the limitations of our own mind and our own sensibilities."

We are intuitively aware of this something more, d'Espagnat argues. He believes that art and music and spirituality are all ways we connect to the "veiled reality." Nidhal Guessoum, chair of physics at American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, wrote that d'Espagnat "has constructed a coherent body of work which shows why it is credible that the human mind is capable of perceiving deeper realities."

Metaphysical naturalists in the scientific community might reject the idea of the spiritual, but in the field of quantum physics, the spiritual can almost, just almost, be seen through the light of colliding atoms.

The Templeton Prize is awarded each year to a person whom the judges believe "has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works." Past winners of the Templeton Prize have included scientists like cosmologist John D. Barrow and physicist Paul Davies, as well as spiritual leaders like Mother Theresa and Billy Graham. The winners do not necessarily hold any specific theological views, but simply affirm that there is more to reality than meets the eye.

D'Espagnat will receive his prize at London's Buckingham Palace on May 5.

Related Links:

- [Bernard d'Espagnat wins £1m Templeton Prize - The Times Online](#)
- [Work On 'Veiled Reality' Earns French Physicist \\$1.4 Million Award - The Christian Science Monitor](#)
- [French Physicist Wins \\$1.4 Million Religion Prize - AP](#)
- [Sir John Templeton: Iconic Innovator In Finance And Religion - The Christian Science Monitor](#)
- [Our Holographic Universe - Koinonia House](#)