PROJECT MUSE®

“Not Just a Symbol”: Neil Gillman’s Theological Method and Critical Realism

Lawrence Troster

Conservative Judaism, Volume 61, Numbers 1-2, Fall/Winter 2008-2009,
pp. 105-119 (Article)

Published by Rabbinical Assembly

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/coj.0.0005>

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/264780>

“Not Just a Symbol”: Neil Gillman’s Theological Method and Critical Realism

LAWRENCE TROSTER

In my fourth year of rabbinical school at the Jewish Theological Seminary, I finally had the opportunity to study with Neil Gillman. For the three previous years, Neil had been the Dean of The Rabbinical School and was considered “The Man.” Having him as a teacher changed my theology and, consequently, my life. I had come into JTS with a strong background in Jewish history and Bible, but not much philosophy or theology. The class Neil taught was, in the curriculum at the time, a “Level 3 Methodology Class” in which we were to learn advanced Jewish theology. It was a class unlike any other I had taken at JTS. The final assignment was to write our own theology in some form, so I reformulated Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles of Faith. Neil urged me to try to have it published in *Conservative Judaism* and, when it was, my subsequent theological writing and deep interest in theology began.¹

During the class, we were studying what has since been called “Gillman on Gillman”: a method for recreating Jewish theology between the Scylla of literalism and the Charybdis of secular humanism. One particular topic we discussed was Paul Tillich’s concepts of symbols and myths from his book *Dynamics of Faith*. I made a comment about how something was “just a symbol,” expressing the idea that, if a ritual or a term for God or a theological concept was “just a symbol” or a myth or a metaphor, it does not hold any deep meaning or truth. Neil whacked me on the shoulder and shouted at me, “Not *just* a symbol!”² It was like being in a Zen koan and, if enlighten-

ment did not come immediately to me, I since have come to realize how influential that hit was in bringing me to where I am now theologically. From that encounter came my interest in the relationship of science and religion, my study of the thoughts of Hans Jonas, and my eventual theological interest in eco-spirituality.³ Central to that development is my use of “critical realism,” an epistemological theory which underlies Gillman’s theological method.⁴

The purpose of this article is to examine Gillman’s theological method and how it relates to critical realism. I will then show how critical realism relates to a perception of ritual and prayer that can maintain a kind of mature piety without resorting to literalism.

I use the term “theological method” because Gillman is primarily concerned with how myth and its expression in symbol, ritual, and liturgy actually functions in religious life and what myth reveals about the theological stances of a community or an individual. Gillman is more concerned with whether the myths work, whether they engender religious belief, piety, and action rather than what we can actually say about God and God’s actions in the world (i.e. creation, revelation, and redemption). This is one of the reasons why anthropology and other sources in the social sciences play such a large part in Gillman’s work.⁵

Ultimately, Gillman is agnostic about the real nature of God, yet he believes that our myths have some truths to impart about the nature of reality and divine action. While Gillman’s theological method can be called an epistemological method, it presupposes an underlying ontology which, in fact, arises *from* the epistemology. Critical realism can be seen in the same way: an ontology that arises from an epistemological method. Critical realism does not try to prove the existence of God or other traditional theological dogmas, but it does “argue for a logically defensible position for holding metaphysical beliefs.”⁶

From Revelation to Myth

Gillman first spelled out his theological program and method in an article in *Conservative Judaism* in 1983, “Toward a Theology for Conservative Judaism.”⁷ Since the modern historical perspective on the Bible rules out literal verbal revelation as a theological option for anyone not Orthodox, Gillman believes that a new theology of revelation is central to the creation

of a new theology for Conservative Judaism. After outlining the theologies of revelation of Rosenzweig, Buber, Heschel, and Kaplan, Gillman says that a non-literal view of revelation must include some form of human role in the creation of its content, which makes the Torah a kind of cultural document or myth. He says:

Popular usage to the contrary, to say that a theological claim is a myth is not synonymous with saying that it is a fiction, deliberate lie. But neither is it a literal, precise photograph or reproduction of reality.⁸

If theological language is not “factual” in the normal way that we understand the term, it does not follow that it is meaningless. Following Tillich, Gillman understands myths and the metaphors, symbols, and rituals that flow from those myths, as being based in real human experience as a way for people to make sense of reality.

The simple fact is that the Ultimate cannot enter into our scriptures, liturgies, theologies or rituals unless it is concretized in some human idiom. The issue, then, is not myth or no myth, but rather which myth, which set of symbols.⁹

Once we accept this concept of myth, we must also accept the fact that we *know* about it. We cannot go back to a naïve literalism. The myth then becomes what Tillich called a “broken myth,” which still holds the ability to evoke power or reveal some element of theological truth. To a questioner who once complained that religious metaphors are not “true,” Gillman replied:

What lies behind the question is the assumption that all metaphors are fictions, that only that which we can characterize literally and objectively has ontological reality . . . our language is replete with metaphors or constructs and that in these cases we do not deny that there is a reality ‘out there’ but rather claim that whatever the reality is, we can only grasp it impressionistically with a measure of subjectivity.¹⁰

Gillman links the use of myth in religion with the way other disciplines utilize explanatory metaphors and models, such as the ego in Freudian psy-

chology, the Big Bang Theory in astronomy, and the language of particle physics. While science may have different purposes from religion, at the epistemological level there is a point of contact in the attempt to represent reality. Gillman references the classic work of Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in which it is shown that many of the sciences work within a paradigm or conceptual construct similar to the way myth works for religion.¹¹

Gillman also connects his method to Heschel's critique of literalism and with the theologies of Rosenzweig, Buber, and Kaplan. He concludes this section with this bold and important assertion:

It need not be said that in denying the literalness of our characterizations of God, we are in no way denying His reality. If anything, our purpose is to make faith in that reality possible for contemporary Jews. We deny verbal revelation precisely in order to preserve the monotheistic God. The alternative is idolatrous.¹²

In other words, Gillman, similar to Maimonides' understanding of metaphoric language in the Bible, believes that literal notions of revelation make idols out of words. In the modern world, real faith and piety cannot rely on literalism. The tension of living with the "broken myth" is not only a historical and theological necessity, but the only real spiritual stance that we can live with if we are going to have an honest faith. This theology of myth allows us to create new theology that is in dialogue with the arts and sciences, and also allows us to open up Jewish practice to a more honest relationship with scripture and tradition.¹³

The final section of the article deals with the implications of this approach for theology. Following the understanding of the role of myth in the work of Clifford Geertz, Gillman comprehends that religious myths function in a kind of feedback loop in relation to the communities that produce them: "Great religious myths are both generated by and in turn nurture religious communities."¹⁴ Seen in this way, religious myths are extremely functional; their "truth" resides in their ability to bring meaning and purpose.

Even though religious communities are conservative about their myths, they revise or reinterpret the myth when it no longer explains the world in

which the communities live. In Judaism, this has been the function of *midrash* and traditionally this reinterpretation is not done in a conscious way. The reinterpretation was usually asserted to be the real meaning of the myth whether it is expressed in sacred text, ritual, or liturgy. Today, we are conscious of our use of *midrash*, but this does not make it less meaningful or useful to us. We must then resort to a new kind of spiritual attitude: a second naïveté.

From Myth to Second Naïveté

As mentioned above, in modern theology we are cognizant of the non-literal character of the myth *and* of our reinterpretation of it. However, this recognition does not imply that we must choose between lapsing back into a dishonest literalism or a cynical reductionist rejection of the myth. It also does not mean giving up the power and the meaning that the myth evokes. As Gillman has said:

The alternative is not myth or no myth but rather *which* myth, *which* symbol. This third possibility not only acknowledges the indispensability of symbolization and myth-making but even welcomes the uncanny and elusive powers of these myths and symbols to disclose residues of meaning that lie beneath the surface of our experience. [Italics in original]¹⁵

Here, Gillman references James Fowler's work, *The Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, which postulates that religious faith is a dynamic process which develops in the human psyche in progressive stages.¹⁶ Fowler created these stages from the stages of moral development of Lawrence Kohlberg, and the cognitive work of Erik Erikson and Jean Piaget.¹⁷

There are six stages of faith in Fowler's system. Stage one is a fantasy-filled childhood faith. Stage two is a mythic-literal faith, also found in childhood. Stage three is what he calls a synthetic-conventional faith which is usually found in adolescence and helps to create an identity of meaning often within a religious community. Stage four is the individual-reflective stage which often occurs in late adolescence or adulthood. In this stage, the person critically reflects on their own identity in relation to their religious

community. This critical self-reflection may lead to a rejection of the literal-mythic stories, doctrines, and rituals that the person had believed in during their childhood.

Stage five is called conjunctive faith. In conjunctive faith a person can develop what Fowler calls a “dialogical knowing” in which it is recognized that truth is multi-dimensional. “Religiously, it [Stage 5] knows that the symbols, stories, doctrines and liturgies offered by its own or other traditions are inevitably partial, limited to a particular people’s experience of God and incomplete.”¹⁸

At this point Fowler introduces philosopher Paul Ricoeur’s concept of a “second naïveté” as a way of describing “Conjunctive faith’s postcritical desire to resubmit to the initiative of the symbolic.”¹⁹ “First naïveté” refers to the literal and unconscious acceptance of myths and symbols found in the earlier stages of faith. Then, through study or faith development, a person may create a “critical distance” from these myths and symbols. “Second naïveté” stands for an interpretive position which while informed by the use of critical models, is nonetheless open to the depth of symbolic meaning. Second naïveté is the tension which is maintained between first naïveté and critical distance.

But if we can no longer live in the great symbolisms of the sacred in accordance with the original belief in them, we can, we modern men, aim at a second naïveté in and through criticism. In short, it is by *interpreting* that we can *hear* again.²⁰
[Italics in original]

For Fowler, a mature faith such as conjunctive faith is able to come back to our traditions after a critical analysis. For Gillman’s theology of myth, Ricoeur’s second naïveté is a good description of the way in which we do not have to lose our critical faculties while we continue to be inspired by our sacred texts, rituals, and liturgy.²¹

From Second Naïveté to Critical Realism

There is one other source to Gillman’s theological method, which provides it with its epistemological foundation and ontological presupposition: criti-

cal realism. If, when we talk about myth, we are most concerned with the myth's functional and emotional impact, critical realism centers on how we know what we know about the world and more directly discusses the sources of our truth claims.

There are two kinds of critical realism: philosophical and theological. The philosophical critical realism is a movement which has primarily been derived from the work of Roy Bhaskar. This kind of critical realism asserts that there is an objective, knowable reality, while still understanding that perception and cognition might influence the way that reality is represented.²² Gillman's work reflects the influence of theological critical realism, which seeks to find an epistemology that can create a meaningful dialogue between science and religion. There have been attempts from both schools of critical realism which have tended to remain separate in bringing them together in conversation.²³

Gillman, in his book *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew*, references the work of Ian Barbour, a Protestant theologian and one of the most important proponents of critical realism in theology.²⁴ Influenced by the work of Michael Polanyi, Barbour first examined the relationship between science and religion in 1966, in his class work *Issues in Science and Religion*.²⁵ Barbour begins by giving a historical survey of science and religion from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. He is able to show that the usual perception that science and religion are and were always in conflict is a gross oversimplification; their relationship was complex and deep.²⁶

Barbour then devotes the second part of the book to analyzing the methods and languages of sciences and religion. He concludes that while there are obvious differences in the two endeavors, there are many similarities. In science and religion there is "two-way interaction between experience and interpretation," that "community is essential in both science and religion, and its paradigms govern the presuppositions of its members . . . ," and that "Interconnected networks of concepts are evaluated together, using simultaneous criteria of coherence, comprehensiveness, and adequacy to experience."²⁷ The third part of the book is devoted to theologically responding to modern physics, life and mind, and evolution with a concluding section on God and Nature.

In his analysis of the methods of science, Barbour explains the various ways in which scientific theory can relate to reality. He concludes that most scientists assume a kind of realism in their research, but it is not a naïve realism. It is a *critical realism* which:

. . . acknowledge[s] both the creativity of man's mind, and the existence of patterns in events which are not created by man's mind. . . . It recognizes that no theory is an exact description of the world, *and* that the world is such as to bear interpretation in some ways and not others. It affirms the role of mental construction and imaginative activity in the formation of theories, *and* it asserts that some constructs agree with observations better than others only because events have an objective pattern.²⁸
[italics in original]

In his later work, *Myth, Models and Paradigms*, Barbour sums up critical realism in science as taking models “*seriously but not literally*.” He then asserts that models in religion are similar to those in science as “They are symbolic representations, for particular purposes, of aspects of reality which are not directly accessible to us. They are taken seriously but not literally.”²⁹ In a later work, he says that, “[Models] make tentative truth claims that there are entities in the world something like those postulated in models.”³⁰

Another Christian theologian, John Polkinghorne, who is an Anglican priest and a theoretical physicist, also uses critical realism to link his science and his theology. He has written:

Like most scientists, I believe that the advance of science is concerned not just with our ability to manipulate the physical world, but with our capacity to gain knowledge of its actual nature. In a word, I am a realist. Of course, such knowledge is to a degree partial and corrigible. Our attainment is verisimilitude, not absolute truth. Our method is the creative interpretation of experience, not rigorous deduction from it. Thus, I am a critical realist.³¹

Polkinghorne says that there are six characteristics of critical realism which make it an appropriate foundation for science and religion. First, “total

account” theories of knowledge are not necessary and “piecemeal achievements are to be preferred.” Second, it is impossible to distill the scientific method to find its essence because (following Polanyi) science is an “activity of persons” done within a community. Third, “theory and experiment are inextricably intertwined in scientific thought.” Fourth, “there is no universal epistemology but rather entities are knowable only through ways that conform to their idiosyncratic nature.” Fifth, while “social factors can accelerate or inhibit the growth of scientific knowledge . . . they do not determine the character of that knowledge.” Sixth, “the doctrine of scientific realism has been formulated as the best means of understanding our actual experience of doing science.”³²

Polkinghorne then applies these six characteristics of scientific critical realism to theological critical realism and finds them parallel to: 1) charity of reference, which is the way in which the world’s religions seek to “speak of a shared encounter with spiritual reality”; 2) the personal nature of the way in which knowledge is acquired; 3) the circularity of belief and understanding; 4) the idea that there is no universal way of knowing God; 5) the social and cultural factors which influence religious communities; and 6) the idea that we are able to understand the universe we inhabit: “Theologically, this is to be understood as due to the universe’s being a creation and ourselves as creatures made in the image of the Creator.”³³

Barbour’s and Polkinghorne’s theological programs are very different from Gillman’s. Barbour and Polkinghorne, and other theologians in the science and religion dialogue, are attempting to create a meaningful conversation with scientists or, in the case of Polkinghorne, create a theology that can accommodate his scientific work and his faith.³⁴ They are attempting to counter religious fundamentalists on one side and atheistic scientism on the other. These groups see science and religion constantly locked in conflict. Barbour and the others are trying to find a common ontological and epistemological foundation for both.

Gillman has a different purpose, but uses the same foundation. He is not threatened by those to the theological right, but sees many Jews losing any sense of Jewish piety and spirituality in the face of secularism. By creating a theological method and program which can be founded not only on the best of traditional Jewish sources, but also in dialogue with other disciplines such as science, anthropology, and philosophy, Gillman has created a

theology for the modern, well-educated, sophisticated Jew that will still answer the deep need for meaning and purpose. If there is no choice between myth and no myth, then the myth that is chosen must be an inspiring Jewish one. The spirituality that Gillman's theological program and method produce can also bring a new feeling and depth to traditional Jewish practices, even as they allow for the creation of new rituals and liturgy.

From Critical Realism to the Spiritual Suspension of Disbelief

As part of his effort to “recover theology for the modern Jew,” Gillman spends an entire chapter in *Sacred Fragments* applying his theological method to ritual and prayer.³⁵ Here, too, the insights of critical realism can also be applied. When we pray, we should take the metaphoric language of prayer seriously, but we cannot take it literally. To see the words of the liturgy as literal descriptions of God would also be a form of idolatry. The language of prayer, however, does reveal some truth about God, the world, and ourselves, but not as absolute descriptions. More than that, we can lose ourselves, even if only temporarily, in the words of prayer and still feel their power. Thus there is a spiritual tightrope that we walk when we pray. In order for the written prayer to become our prayer, the one that moves us and brings us into the real presence of God, the text must be translated into the heart through an emotional and psychological process.

A good analogy to this process can be found in the poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge's (1772–1834) concept of the suspension of disbelief, which is an aesthetic counterpart to critical realism. The suspension of disbelief can act as a bridge between the epistemology of critical realism and the emotional experience of praying.

Coleridge first posited the concept of the suspension of disbelief as a theory of the emotional power of poetry. He and poet William Wordsworth (1770–1850) had been planning a joint poetical project eventually published as “Lyrical Ballads” in 1798. Coleridge would try to write poems of a “supernatural” character, and Wordsworth of a natural character, to see if they could evoke the same feelings in the reader. He writes:

In this idea originated the plan of the “Lyrical Ballads”; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to

persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.³⁶

Coleridge's concept of the suspension of disbelief is directly related to his concept of dramatic illusion.³⁷ Illusion in this instance does not mean delusion, but an intermediate mental state between delusion—which is the total belief that what is taking place on stage is real—and the absolute denial of deception. In dramatic illusion, when we watch a play, we are caught up in genuine emotions provoked by the play, while still knowing that it is just a play. Coleridge wrote:

Thus Claude [a French landscape painter] imitates a landscape at sunset, but only as a *picture*; while a forest-scene [in a play] is not presented to the audience as a *picture*, but as a forest: and tho' in the *full* sense of the word we are more *deceived* by the one than by the other, yet are our feelings very differently affected, and the pleasure derived from the one is not composed of the same elements as that afforded by the other, even on the supposition that the *quantum* of both were equal. In the former, it is a *condition* of all genuine delight that we should *not* be deluded . . .

In the latter (inasmuch as its principle end is not in or for itself as in the case of a picture but to be an assistance and means of an end out of itself), its very purpose is to produce as much illusion as its nature permits. These and all other stage presentations are to produce a sort of temporary half-faith, which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part, because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is.³⁸ [Italics in original]

Thus for Coleridge, our “delight” in seeing a picture depends on our not allowing ourselves to be deceived even if the picture is more “real” than a stage set. The success of the stage set, however skillfully rendered to represent a forest, can be achieved only if we allow ourselves to be deceived. This deception or acceptance of illusion extends to the whole experience of the

play. The audience creates in their minds a “temporary half-faith” during the time of the performance in order to create this tension of deception and reality. From this dialectical experience comes the emotional power of the play.³⁹

Psychologist Henry Gleitman has described this process in modern psychological terms.⁴⁰ He notes that theater audiences experience all the normal physiological responses to what is happening in the play as if the events were real: “clenched fists, pounding hearts, and sometimes genuine tears.”⁴¹ It would appear that the emotional response was real. However, if it were completely real then we would not sit there during a performance of *Oedipus Rex* and do nothing as the king blinds himself. We *know* that the blinding is not real.

Actors also go through the same process during their performance. Gleitman points out that, while many schools of acting call upon the actor to try to bring genuine emotional reality to his or her part, actors have asserted that they can never completely divorce themselves from the mundane details of the scene they are playing. Gleitman calls this process in the audience and actor the “as if” experience.

When we watch or perform a play, we experience emotions *as if* the story were real, yet we know it is not. Gleitman says this state requires a delicate balance between belief and disbelief, between too little arousal and too much. If there is too much arousal, then the suspension of disbelief will turn into real belief. Gleitman also points out that there is an optimum physical distance between the audience and the players which will help to maintain this delicate balance between belief and suspension of disbelief.⁴²

These psychological dynamics can apply to liturgical services with one important qualification. When we pray, we are like actors but also like audiences in our experience of the “as if.” Good prayer experience suggests that we be fully caught up emotionally in the service. On the other hand, we *know* that the words are metaphors and we do not believe or experience them literally. There is emotional engagement but also critical distance, as we maintain our intellectual integrity.

Thus the way that critical realism finds its counterpart in spiritual practice is through the second naiveté of Ricoeur, the conjunctive faith of Fowler, the broken myth of Tillich, Gillman’s theological method. This is the spiritual suspension of disbelief: the process by which the myth/symbol/ritual/prayer becomes alive to us.⁴³

This then is my own spiritual and intellectual journey that started with a whack on the shoulder and has brought me to critical realism and the spiritual suspension of disbelief. It is not a smooth, straight path, but the sights are quite amazing if you know how to observe. For my rabbi, teacher, colleague, and dear friend, Neil Gillman, who started me on this road, mere thanks are not sufficient.

NOTES

1. Lawrence Troster, "Fragments of a Faith Remembered," *Conservative Judaism*, 35:2 (Winter 1982), pp. 5–14.

2. I had no idea at the time but Neil was actually quoting Tillich, see *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 45.

3. See for example, Lawrence Troster, "Hans Jonas and the Concept of God after the Holocaust," *Conservative Judaism*, 55:4 (Summer 2003), pp. 16–25; "Hearing the Outcry of Mute Things: Towards a Jewish Creation Theology," in: Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller, eds., *Eco-Spirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

4. My use of the term "critical realism" refers to theological critical realism and not the general philosophical. In a personal communication many years ago, Neil admitted that critical realism was part of his method but he does not use the term explicitly in any of his writings.

5. See for example Gillman's *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), pp. 106–107 where he lists for further study the works of John Herman Randall, Tillich, Ian Barbour [see below], Will Herberg, Bernard W. Anderson, Mircea Eliade, Thomas Kuhn, Henri Frankfort, Joseph Campbell and pp. 244–245 where he adds the works of Emile Durkheim, Victor Turner and Mary Douglas. See below note 15 for the reference to Clifford Geertz.

6. Brad Shipway, "Critical Realism and Theological Critical Realism: Opportunities for Dialogue," *Alethia*, 3.2 (2000) pp. 29–33.

7. *Conservative Judaism*, 37:1 (Fall 1983), pp. 4–22. This article was the seed of his first major theological book, *Sacred Fragments*.

8. "Toward a Theology for Conservative Judaism," p. 6.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

10. "A Conservative Theology for the Twenty-First Century," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly*, Volume 55, 1993, p. 12.

11. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) [1962].

12. “Toward a Theology for Conservative Judaism,” p. 10. Another theologian who has utilized this approach is Judith Plaskow. See her “The Right Question is Theological,” in: Susannah Heschel, *On Being a Jewish Feminist* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), pp. 223–233.

13. Gillman’s article in *Conservative Judaism* came out in the midst of the battle to ordain women at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Without referencing it directly, Gillman’s approach certainly implied that the movement can and should open itself up to a distinctive Conservative approach without worrying about what the Orthodox would think of our ordaining women. Gordon Tucker’s recent *teshuvah* on gays and lesbians (*D’rosh ve-Kabel Sekhar: Halakhic and Metahalakhic Arguments Concerning Judaism and Homosexuality*) using the legal methodologies of Robert Cover also called for the Conservative movement to be true to its theology and thereby create a halakhic response which would take our view of revelation seriously.

14. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). Plaskow also uses Geertz in a similar way. “Toward a Theology for Conservative Judaism,” p. 14.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

16. James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

17. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, pp. 41–88.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 187–8.

20. Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row: 1967), p. 351. For an interesting discussion of the religious context of Ricoeur’s ideas see: Patrick Vandermeersch, *The Failure of Second Naivete; Some Landmarks in the French Psychology of Religion*, in: J.A. Belzen (ed.), *Aspects in Context; Studies in the History of Psychology of Religion* (Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 235–279.

21. Gillman quotes this passage of Ricoeur’s in the final pages of *The Death of Death: Resurrection and Immortality in Jewish Thought* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997), pp. 273–274 where he is grappling with the concept of resurrection and thoughts of his own mortality.

22. Andrew Collier, “Critical Realism,” in: E. Graig (Ed.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge), retrieved March 26, 2008, from <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/R003>.

23. See Shipway, “Critical Realism and Theological Critical Realism,” and Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology, Volume II: Reality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), pp. 195–243.

24. Neil Gillman, *Sacred Fragments*, p. 107.

25. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974 [1958]). Ian Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971 [1966]).

26. For an important historical study of the relationship of science and religion see: John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press: 1991).

27. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion*, p. 267.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

29. Barbour, *Myths, Models*, pp. 38, 69.

30. Barbour, *Science and Religion*, p. 117.

31. Polkinghorne, p. 104.

32. Polkinghorne, pp. 105–109.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 110–122.

34. See for example the work of John Haught especially his *Is Nature Enough? Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

35. Gillman, *Sacred Fragments*, pp. 215–256.

36. From the *Bibliographia Literaria*, Chapter XIV found in: *The Best of Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1945), p. 171.

37. Dorothy Merrill, *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 42, No. 7. (Nov., 1927), pp. 436–444.

38. “Dramatic Illusion” in: *The Best of Coleridge*, pp. 361–4.

39. Will Herberg apparently referred to this experience as the “transjective,” an experience that is neither objective or subjective but somewhere in the middle. Herberg taught this idea in his classes at Drew University and I thank one of his former students, Dr. Shirley Sugerman, for relating this to me.

40. Henry Gleitman, “Some Reflections on Drama and the Dramatic Experience,” in: Irvin Rock, ed. *The Legacy of Solomon Asch: Essays in Cognition and Social Psychology* (Hillside, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1990), pp. 127–141.

41. Gleitman, p. 129.

42. Gleitman, pp. 132–33.

43. I first dealt with this idea in a seminar given at the 1995 Rabbinical Assembly Convention. The precis of that was published as “The Spiritual Suspension of Disbelief: How We Should Really Pray,” *The Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly*, Vol. 57 (1995), pp. 126–128.

Rabbi Lawrence Troster is Director of The Fellowship program and Rabbinic Scholar-in-Residence for Greenfaith, the interfaith environmental coalition in New Jersey. He also co-chairs the Interfaith Partnership for the Environment of The United Nations Environment Program and is a member of the editorial board of Conservative Judaism.