

Paul Pruyser's Three Worlds Perspective

Robert Neale, in his writings* about illusions and make belief, draws heavily upon the work of Paul Pruyser, especially his "Three Worlds" perspective. These three worlds are outlined in *The Play of the Imagination: Toward a Psychoanalysis of Culture*, International Universities Press Inc., 1983. Paul W. Pruyser, Ph.D. (1916- 1987), a Presbyterian elder, was as clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst in the Menninger Foundation where he was a Clinical Professor and Director of the interdisciplinary Studies Program. He was influenced by Sigmund Freud, William James, Rudolf Otto, and D. W. Winnicott.

Pruyser's other major publications were *A Dynamic Psychology of Religion* (1968) and *Between Belief and Unbelief* (1974). By far his most popular book was *The Minister as Diagnostician* (1976), which is still easily available. In this book for pastoral and lay caregivers he uses the following major theological themes as psychological and spiritual diagnostic tools: the Holy; Providence; Faith; Grace/Gratitude; Repentance; Communion/Community; and Vocation.

Pruyser's major contributions were in psychological theories of religion and culture, as seen in his exploration of eleven basic characteristics of a person's three worlds: the **Autistic**; the **Illusionistic**; and the **Realistic**. **Autism** is a pervasive neuro-developmental condition which interferes with a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. **Illusionism** is the use of artistic techniques to create the illusion of reality especially in a work of art. **Realism** is the attitude or practice of accepting a situation as it is and then dealing with it accordingly.

Autistic	Illusionistic	Realistic
untutored fantasy	tutored fantasy	sense perception
omnipotent thinking	adventurous thinking	hard undeniable facts
utter whimsicality	orderly imagination	logical connections
free association	inspired connections	logical connections
ineffable images	verbalized images	look-and-see referents
hallucinatory entities	imaginative entities	actual entities
or events	or events	or events
private needs	cultural needs	factual needs
symptoms	symbols	signs, indices
dreaming	playing	working
sterility	creativity	resourcefulness
internal objects	transcendent objects	external objects

*Neale's references to Pruyser's Three Worlds:

The Magic Mirror, with David Parr, (2002, pp. 48- 50)

Magic Matters (2009, pp. 90- 92)

The Magic of Celebration Illusion, (2013, pp. 101- 109)

An Essay on Magic, (2015, pp. 126- 132)