

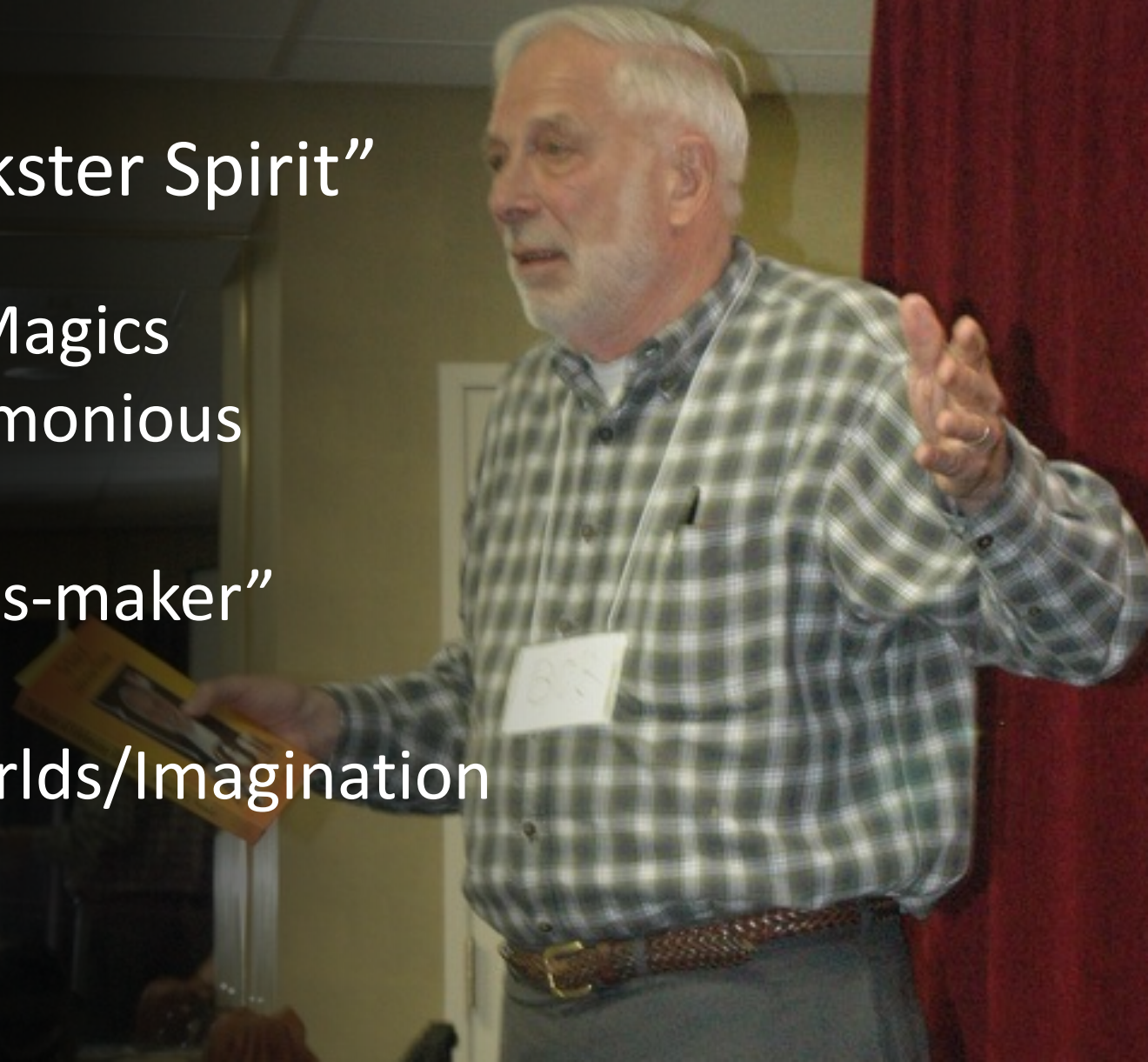
“Through the Trapdoor with Bob Neale”: Nine Session Exploring Thirteen Themes in Selected Works by Robert Neale



Hosted by
Michael Smith and Geoff Grimes

Session 2: “Play” & “The Trickster Spirit”

- 1) Review Chapter 1 – The Life Magics
- 2) *In Praise of Play* – Play as harmonious adventure
- 3) *The Trickster Spirit* – The “mess-maker”
- 4) Open Mic – discussion
- 5) Session 3: Pruyser’s Three Worlds/Imagination



An Essay on Magic

Review of Chapter 1:

- 1) The “Life Magics”
- 2) The “Traditional” and “Modern”
Magics”
- 3) Types of “Stage Magic”



Life Magics

As universal in human experience

Magical thinking – a special use of the imagination

Working to enhance *faith, hope/love*



Traditional Magics

Community/institutional magic
(ceremonial magic, white
magic)

Group/individual magic (black
magic)

Vetter's seven stages of magic



Modern Magics

Daniel O'Keefe's classification:

- 1) Medical
- 2) Black
- 3) Ceremonial
- 4) Religious
- 5) Occult
- 6) Paranormal
- 7) Sectarian (cults and sects)



Modern Magics

Neale's classification:

- 1) Acknowledged
- 2) Unexplored



The Types of Stage Magic

Neale's classification:

- 1) Reduced magics
- 2) Restored magics
- 3) Reflexive magics



Reduced Magics

- 1) Distractive – *one damn trick after another*
- 2) Deceptive – *just to fool people (pornographic!)*



Restored Magics

- 1) Humanistic – *themes of survival and pleasure*
- 2) Existential – *the quest for meaning*



Reflexive Magic

- 1) Magic that *reflects magic*
- 2) Magic that celebrates “real life magic in the daily life of the imagination”



Attitudes about Magic

- 1) Dangerously potent or false
- 2) Evil opposed to good religion
- 3) White and black magics in and outside religions
- 4) Other than the religions we believe or science we know
- 5) Simply false; religion, true
- 6) Magic & religion have no value



How do stage tricks *relate*?

The "Magic Dilemma" –

- 1) *Inconsequential?*
- 2) *Quackery?*

The answer (next slide!)



How do stage tricks *relate*?

Magic is “theater”:

- 1) A theater of “magical imagination”
- 2) A display of the impossible as the working of imagination that fosters *make-believe*



Magic as “mirror”

- 1) The mirror of daily life magic
- 2) “Backstage Magic” – the metamagic that reminds the audience of the magics in their daily lives
- 3) The “reflexive” magician – a trickster whose ‘shenanigans’ teach and preach without pretentious pontifications



Session 2: “Play & the Trickster Spirit”

- 1) An Introduction to Play - Mike
- 2) *In Praise of Play* – “Play as adventure” – Geoff
- 3) *An Essay on Magic* – “Play with mastery” - Mike



Play – An Introduction (Mike)

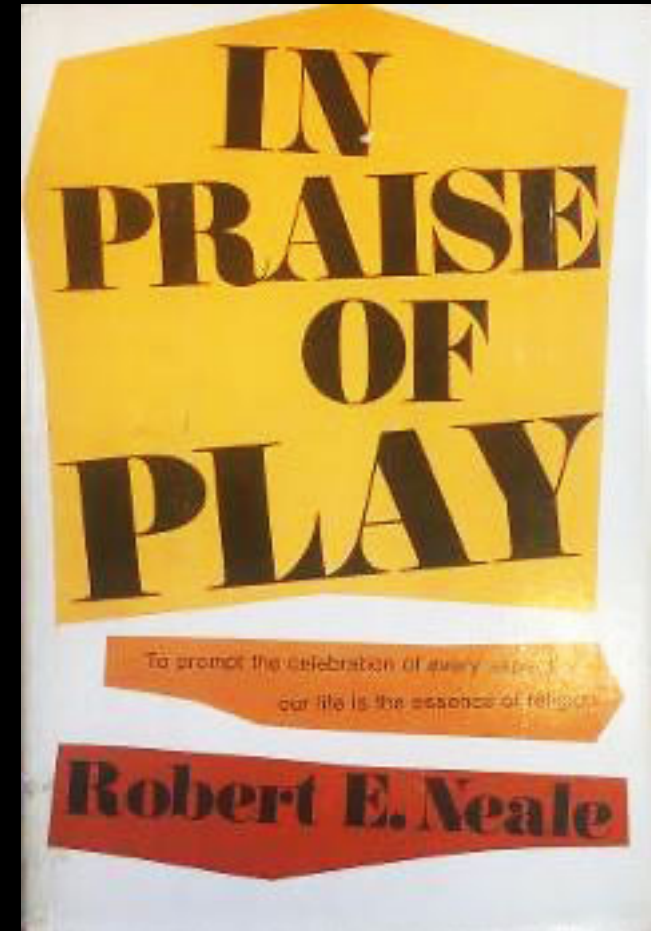


In Praise of Play (from the excerpts)

The Two “Dualities”:

- 1) *Need to discharge energy
(the “work self”)*
- 2) *Need to design experience
(the “play self”)*

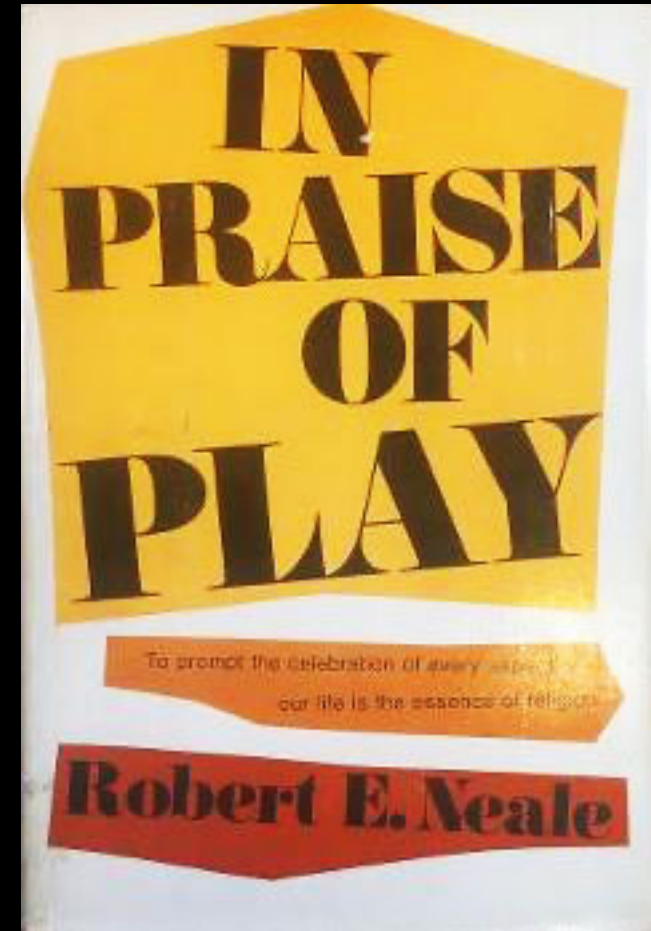
*The source of psychological
discord/the stimulus to find
harmony*



In Praise of Play (from the excerpts)

Play, Religion, and the Sacred

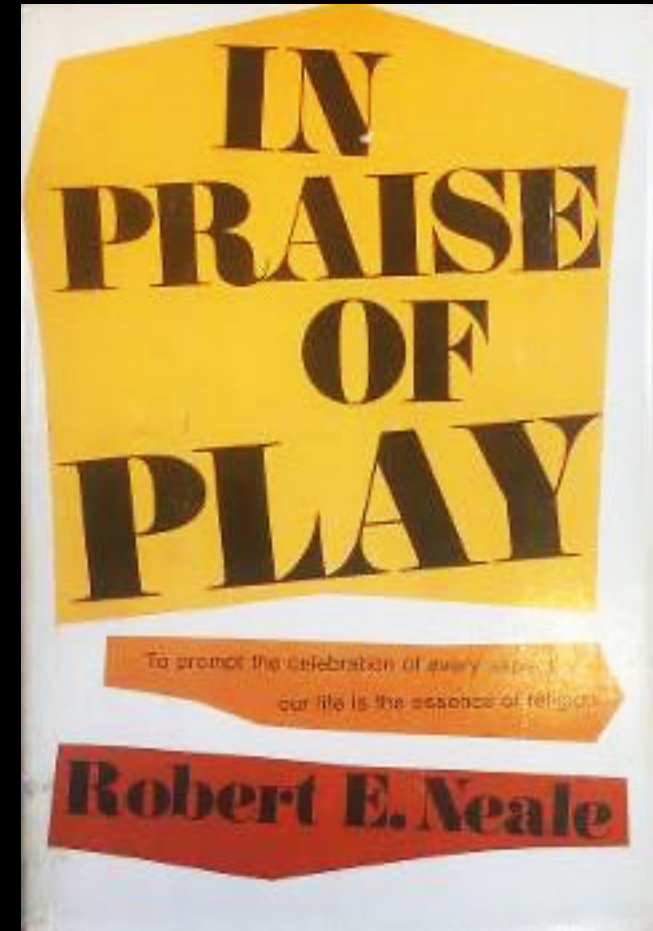
- 1) *Play – peace, freedom, delight, and illusion*
- 2) *Religion – the play response to the Holy*
- 3) *The Sacred (Holy) – the realm of new harmony of discharge and design*



In Praise of Play (from the excerpts)

The Sacred vs the Profane

- 1) *The Sacred – realm of psychic harmony*
- 2) *The Profane – realm of psychic conflict*

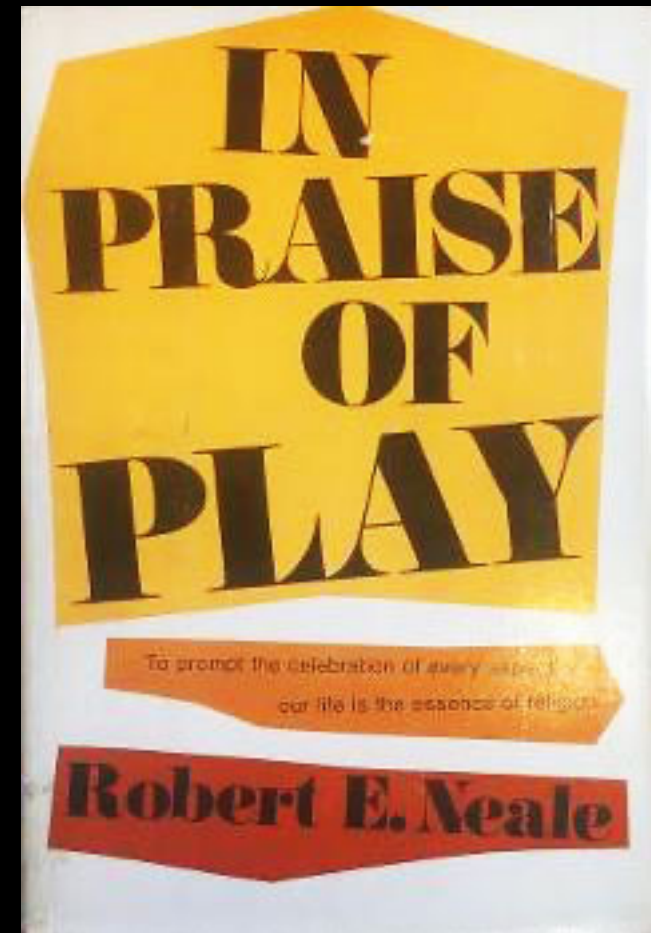


In Praise of Play (from the excerpts)

Secularity, Magic, and Religion –
Defined by the tension created by
the attempt to flee from the
sacred

Three responses:

- 1) Flee into profane “daily work”
- 2) Apply magic to mingle the sacred
and the profane
- 3) Enter fully the sacred through religion



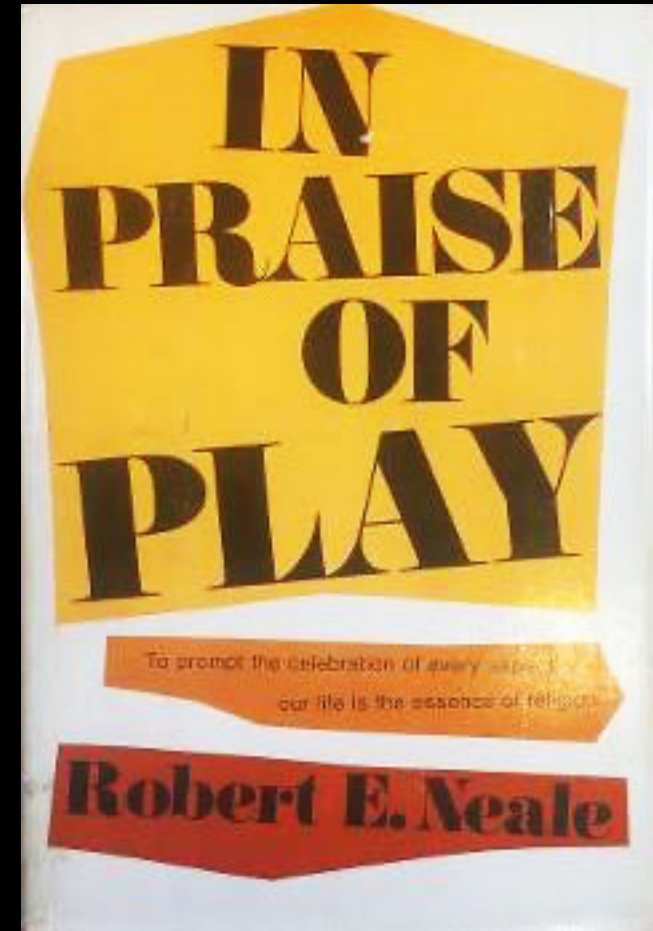
In Praise of Play (from the excerpts)

The Response of the Magician
to the Sacred

Magic – a definition

The attempt to achieve the impossible through the mingling of the sacred and profane (when neither is dominant);

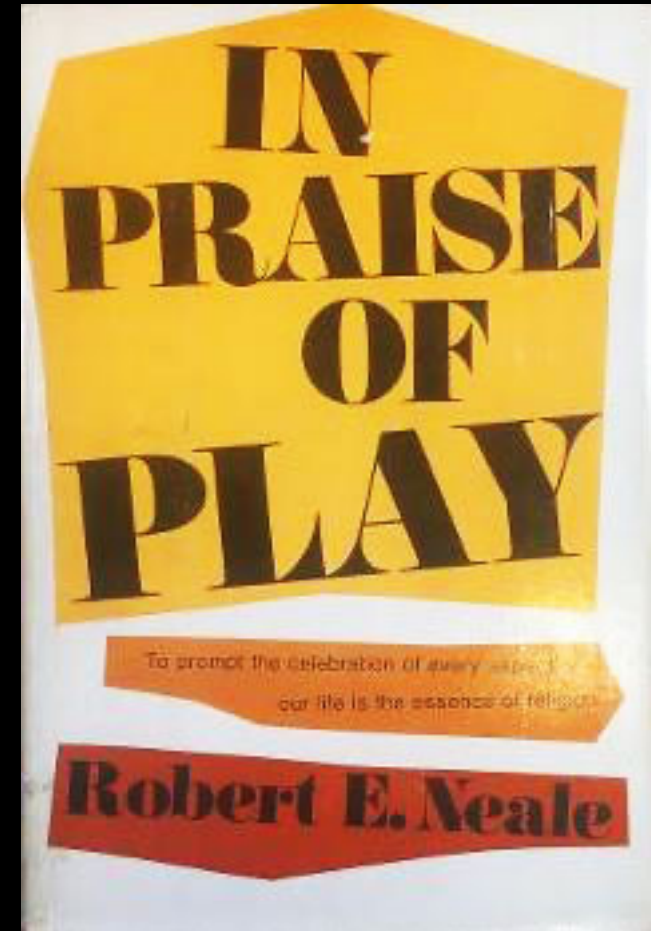
The “antireligious” response to the Sacred (“working” to achieve only personal ends)



In Praise of Play (from the excerpts)

The Application of Magic in modern Christianity – a few examples:

- 1) The “telling of beads”
- 2) Repetition of Bible verses
- 3) Preoccupation with “little sins”
- 4) Attending church to “feel good,” “do the right thing,” “stay on the right side of God”
- 5) Creating rules to make “faith work” (“healing”)

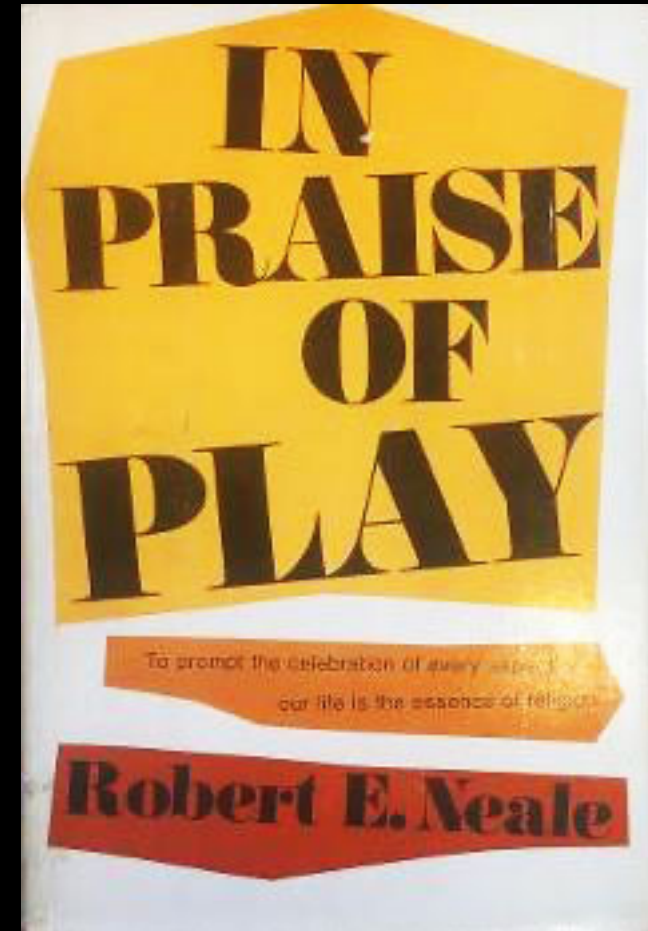


In Praise of Play (from the excerpts)

Three responses to myth:

- 1) The Secular – “disbelief”
- 2) The Magical – “belief”
- 3) The Religious – “make-believe”

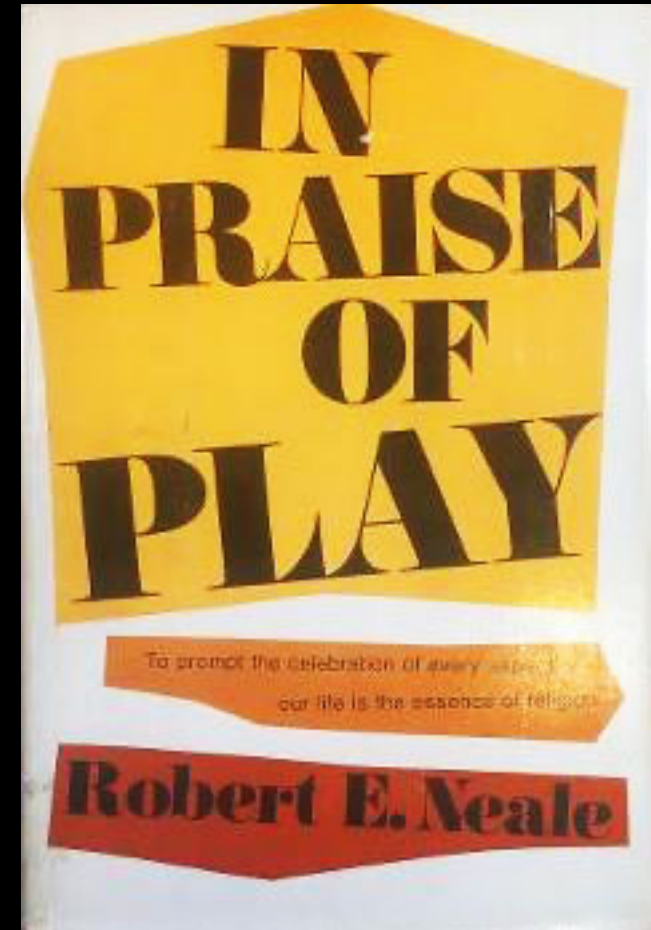
“Make-belief” is full participation in a play space for the celebration of ritual, myth, and rhythmic dance.



In Praise of Play (from the excerpts)

The Music Metaphor:

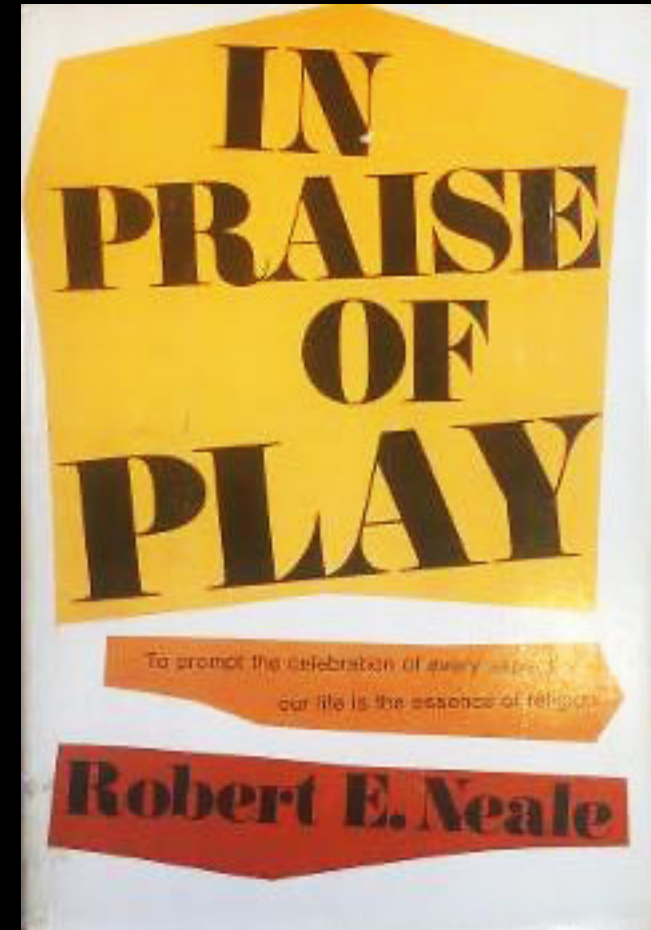
- 1) The Secular – “doesn’t play the tune”
- 2) The Magical – “plays out of tune and misses the beat”
- 3) The Religious – “plays the tune in rhythm, learns the piece by heart, and may even improvise”



In Praise of Play (from the excerpts)

In summary:

- 1) The “Work Self” – attempts only to resolve inner conflict
- 2) The “Play Self” – experiences the harmony between discharge and design in peace, freedom, delight, and illusion in the modes of story and game.



Session 2: “Play & the Trickster Spirit”

- 1) *An Essay on Magic* – Chapter 2
- 2) *The Trickster Spirit* – Play as adventure



An Essay On Magic (Chapter 2: Mastery with Play)

Purpose:

“To illuminate the nature and significance of performing magic by exploring its relationship to the other magics that occur in our daily lives”



An Essay On Magic (Chapter 2: Mastery with Play)

The Preconditions for Magic:

- 1) Desire
- 2) Uncertainty
- 3) Imagination



An Essay On Magic (Chapter 2: Mastery with Play)

The Overall Theme:
When one feels one has to do something (desire), but can't do it (uncertainty), a magic performance occurs (imagination).

Desire and uncertainty prompt magic.



An Essay On Magic (Chapter 2: Mastery with Play)

Magic Play as “Performance”:

“The magical use of the imagination under conditions of desire and uncertainty”

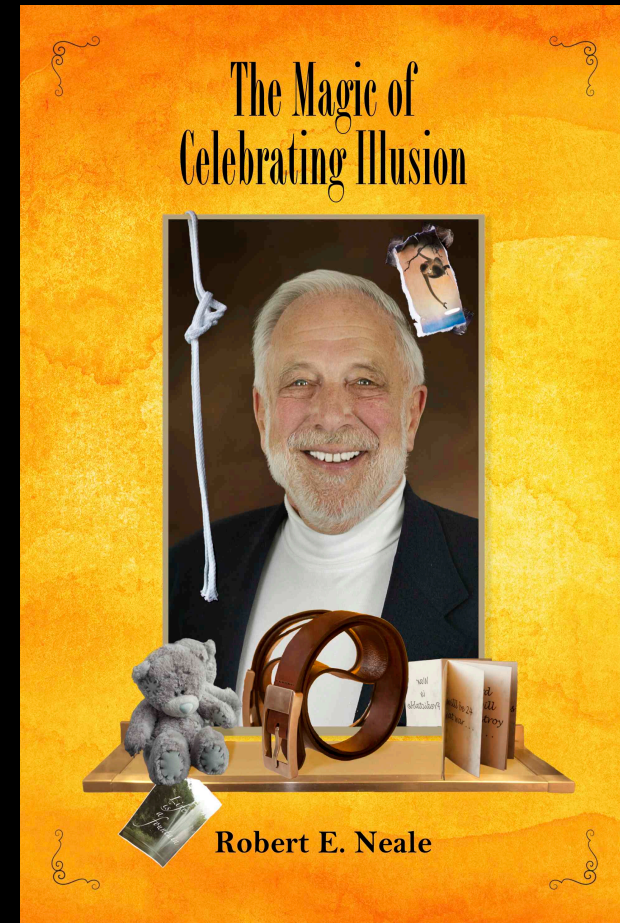
“An embodied activity by imaginative make-belief, the magic perspective is theater.”

“Serious and powerful make-believe, a mature use of magical thinking and implicit perspective of the child.”



The Magic of Celebrating Illusion (looking ahead)

The “Teddy Bear” Illusion –
*An Example of “Serious and Powerful
Make-Belief”*



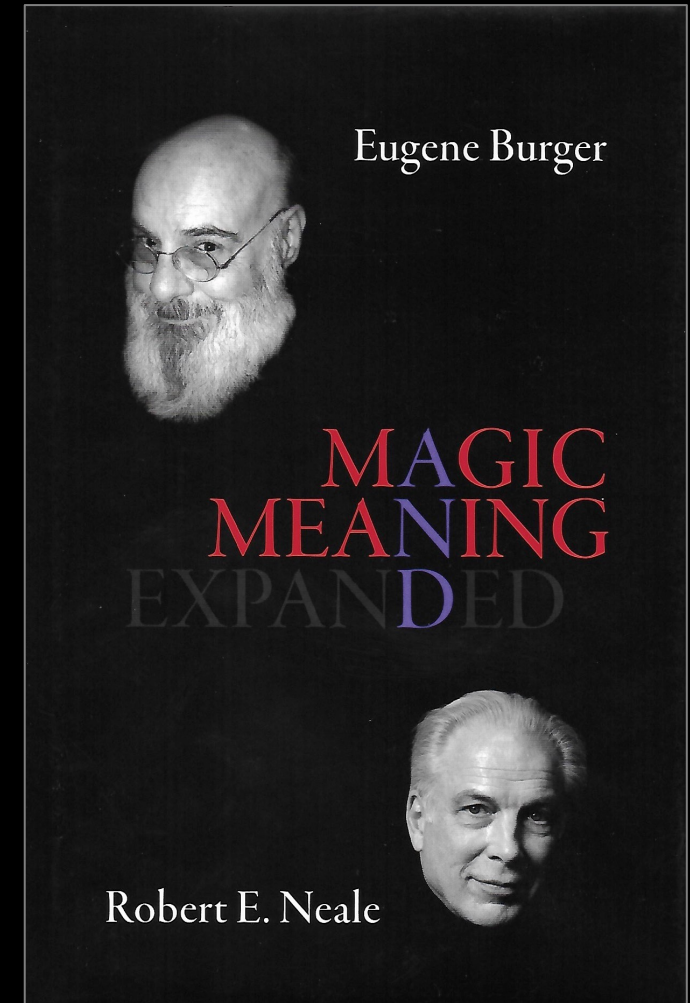
The Trickster Spirit - Mike

Bob Neale would agree with Lewis Hyde, author of *Trickster Makes the World*, who argues that ancient and modern tricksters “keep our world lively and give it flexibility to endure.” Tricksters are the clowns, magicians, and confidence artists in our midst. In other words, they are the “glory and the garbage of the universe.” Bob adds, “This means we are too.”



“The Trickster” in *Magic and Meaning*

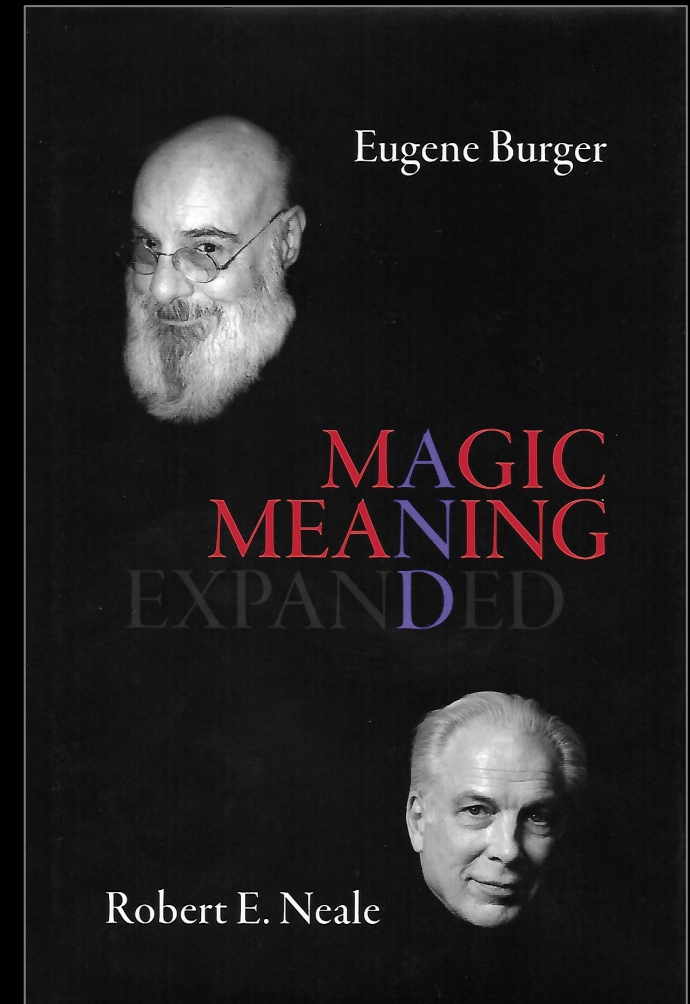
Trickster – *making mischief with meaning*



“The Trickster” in *Magic and Meaning*

The “trickster spirit” is found in all religions.

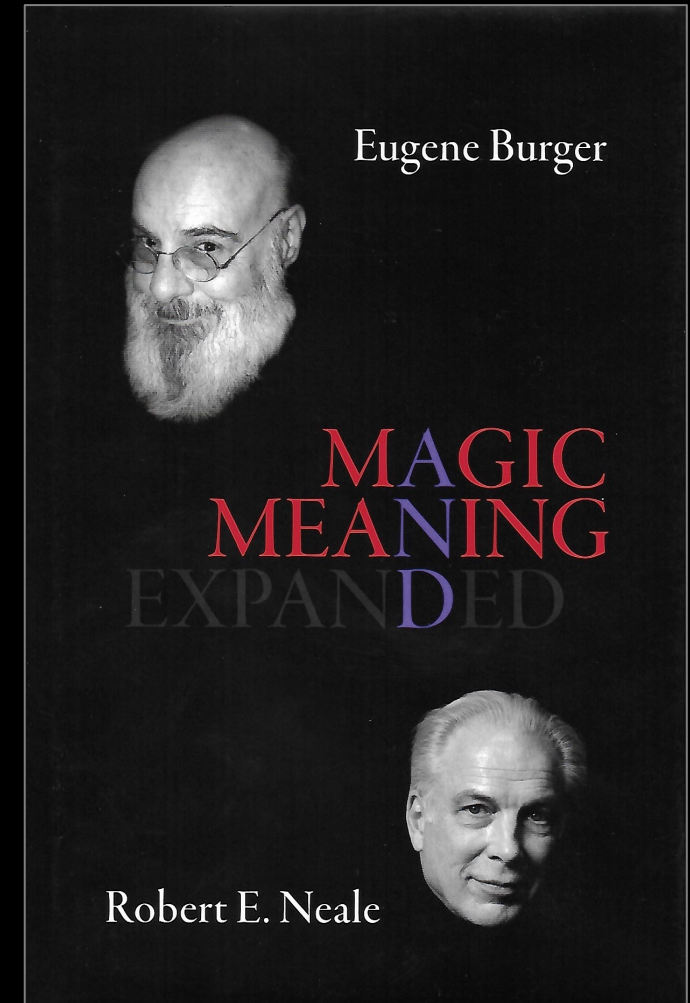
Examples: Jesus’s “parables”



“The Trickster” in *Magic and Meaning*

Trickster Images:

- *The Clown*
- *The Magician*
- *The Confidence Artist*
- *The Creator*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

- 1) *Trickster as the Wanderer*
- 2) *Trickster as the Mess-Maker*
- 3) *Trickster as Spiritual*
 - *Trickster Imagination*
 - *Trickster Jesus*
 - *The Parables*
 - *Jesus*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Framework for the discussion:

Three Trickster Tales

- 1) *Trickster and the levitating blanket*
- 2) *Trickster and the bright, red berries*
- 3) *Trickster and the two good friends*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Framework for the discussion:
“How Come Me?”

- 1) *Tadpoles*
- 2) *Creating with Creases*
- 3) *At Play with Meaning*
- 4) *Crucible: Creativity, Death and Religion – A “Vision”*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

1) *Trickster as the Wanderer*

"It enters, transforms, and exits, any time and place and object."



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

1) *Trickster as the Wanderer is*

- outrageous
- ridiculous
- dumbfounding



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

Definition:

“Trickster is defined as being beyond definition.”

“A ‘surd’ – “something without sense”



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

2) Trickster as Mess-Maker

Functions:

- *As prankster*
- *As transformer*
- *As culture hero*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

2) Trickster as Mess-Maker

Processes:

- *Disordering*
- *Exposes limitations*
- *Disillusioning*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

3) Trickster as Spiritual

“Trickster has been very busy
in our religions.”

“Religion is about creation and
recreation.”

Trickster reminds us that “giving
birth is always messy.”



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

3) Trickster as Spiritual

“Trickster is making mischief with our ultimate meanings.”



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

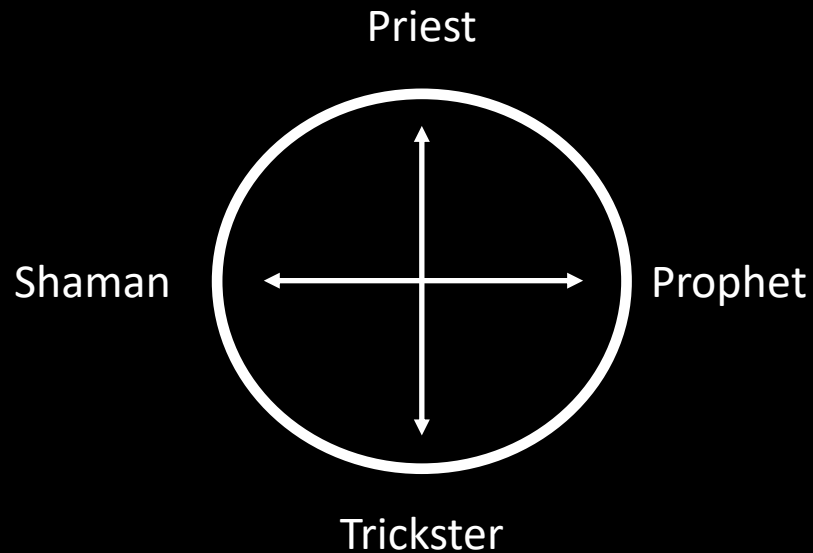
3) Trickster as Spiritual and the “trickster imagination”



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

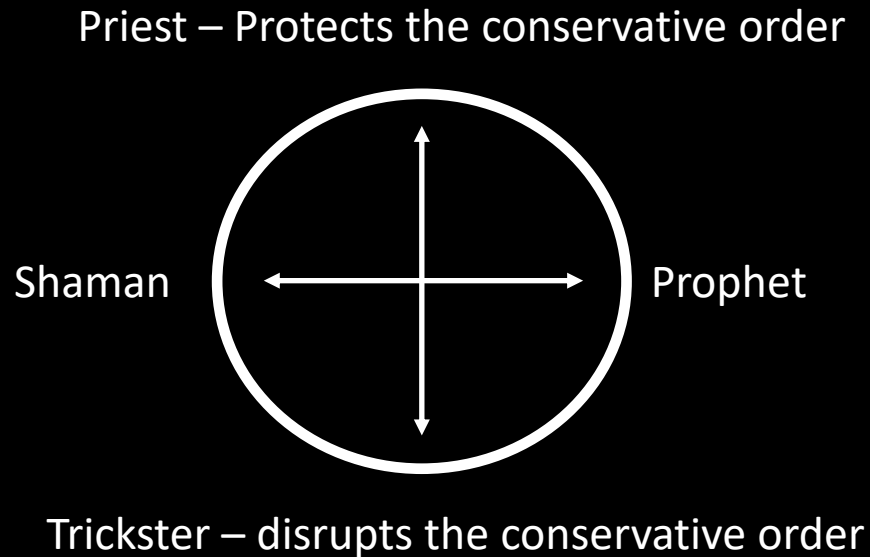
3) Trickster as Spiritual - The Four Kinds of Spirituality



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

3) Trickster as "Spiritual" Threat



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

3) Trickster as “Spiritual” Threat to the Priest’s five mistakes:

- Forgets that religion is created by the imagination
- Belief in only one religious product
- Assumes that the shape of the current religious product is final



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

- 3) Trickster as “Spiritual” Threat to the Priest’s five mistakes:
- The religious product must be protected from presumed attacks
 - Must destroy whatever attacks the religious product



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

3) Trickster as "Spiritual"

- Jesus as Trickster
- A teller of 'parables' (trickster takes)
- A "mess-maker" of the status quo telling "spiritual jokes"
- A speaker of conundrums



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

3) Trickster as "Spiritual" Image-Maker

- The Clown: *reveals a spirituality that is playing, humoring, and chancing*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

3) Trickster as "Spiritual" Image-Maker

- The Magician: *reveals a spirituality that is wondering, illusioning, and deceiving*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

3) Trickster as "Spiritual" Image-Maker

- The Confidence Artist: *reveals a spirituality that is optimistic, self-reliant, and trusting*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

3) Trickster as "Spiritual" Image-Maker

- The Creator: *reveals a spirituality that is healing, sustaining, and developing*



Bob Neale's *The Trickster Spirit*

Manifestations of the Trickster:

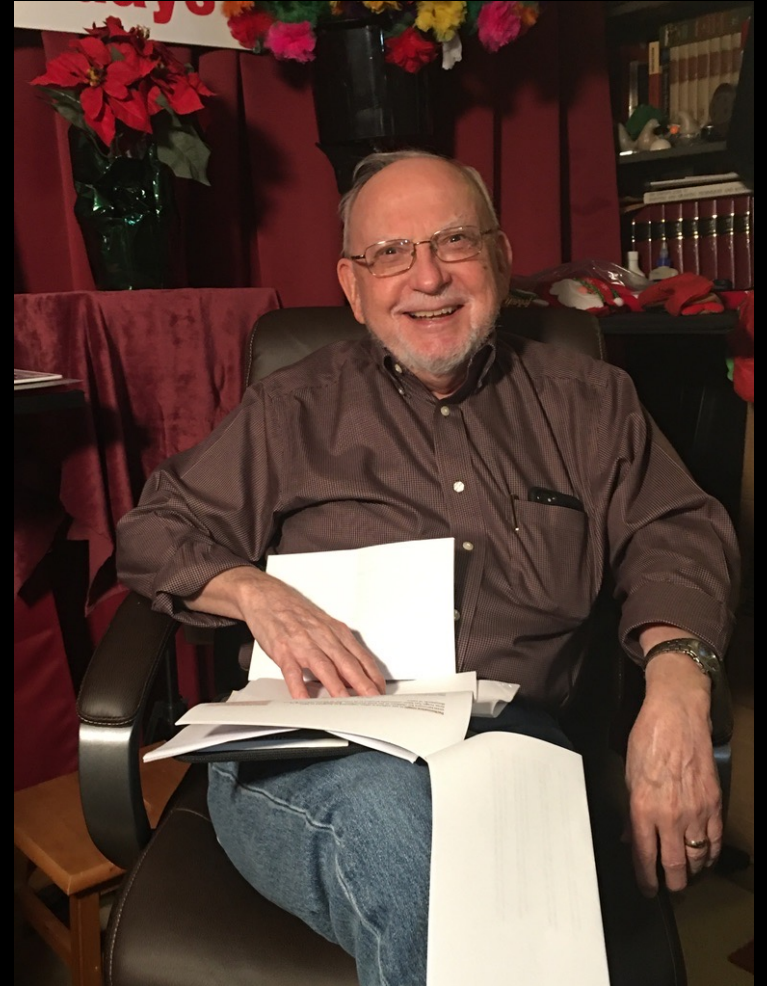
- 4) Creating a new career
- 5) Dance of the Death Clown
- 6) Three Tall Tales



Session 3: Looking ahead . . . (Mike)

Two Prompts and questions for Homework:

“Paul Pruyser’s “Three Worlds” and the Imagination



Session 3: Looking ahead . . . (Mike)

1) Neale cites Paul Pruyser's "Three Worlds" from *The Play of the Imagination*, in four of his own books (see pp. 126-132 in *An Essay on Magic*). Pruyser uses the term "**autistic**" to refer to a pervasive neurodevelopmental condition which interferes with a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. His term "**realistic**" is related to an attitude or practice of accepting a situation as it is and then dealing with it accordingly. "**Illusionistic**" is his term for the use of artistic techniques to create the illusion of reality in a work of art.

Can you see his **eleven illusionistic terms** at play in your performance magic? Which is strongest? Which could be made stronger?

Session 3: Looking ahead . . . (Mike)

2) On pages 108 and 109 of *An Essay on Magic* Neale asserts that “the means for magical mastery is the imagination.” He continues, “Magic mastery has its own unique use of imagination.” He concludes on page 116, “I believe that the magical use of the imagination by adults under conditions of desire and uncertainty is a kind of performance. As embodied activity informed by the imaginative make-believe, the magic perspective is *theater*, a drama played by the individual for himself alone or for the community as well.”

What are your reactions, thoughts, questions, etc.???

Session 3: Looking ahead . . . (Mike)

It might be helpful to think about imagination in the following broad categories from Eva T. H. Brann's *The World of the Imagination: Sum and Substance*, 1991:

Imagination-philosophy

Imagery- psychology

Imagining- literature

Imaging- visual and performing arts

The Next Session:

The Index— Identification of the 13 “themes”

Play

The Trickster Spirit

Paul Pruyser’s Three World Perspective

The Imagination

Wonder

Illusions

Magic

The Magician(s)

Off-Stage/On-Stage Magic

Performance

Psychological Classification of Magic

The Ethical Heart of Spiritual Illusions: “The Four Falls”

Life and Death and . . .

THE 2018 MAGIC & MEANING CONFERENCE

The Robert E. Neale Index

A Resource for the Study of Robert E. Neale’s
Trilogy of Magic

Prepared by Michael Smith and Geoffrey Grimes
9/5/2018

Check us out:

The Website —

“Celebrating Illusions”

A Website Dedicated to the
Magic of Robert E. Neale

www.nealemagic.info



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A very special thanks to

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And the friends of Bob Neale who have contributed to the recording and transmission of Bob’s work over the years.

