If the Jewish triangle is God, Torah and Israel, let me propose that western civilization’s triad has been God, self and world. Over time, within both arenas, the emphasis has gradually shifted from element one to two to three. And yet, nothing is ever completely lost, and we keep knitting things together with new stitches.

Reason and imagination, science and religion, philosophy and poetry, data and intuition, analysis and synthesis—these and other pairings split experience while also challenging us to heal the split. For twenty-first century Jews from modern Orthodox to secular, the first element in each pair probably comes most naturally. And yet, we cover our challot so they won’t be embarrassed when we recite kiddush before motzei.

Into this broadly sketched context comes the Winter 2012 symposium issue of the CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly. Taking as its topic the pairing of Judaism and Science, this important collection of articles includes a broad range of perspectives. Guest editors Philip Cohen and Hava Tirosh-Samuelson’s introductory article begins by explaining that when Israel Jacobson “became the founder of Reform Judaism by creating the first Reform temple in 1810, he did so because he sought to view his ancestral faith through principles of enlightenment and reason.” Later, they explain that undergirding Jewish “public behavior was a commitment to the rationalizing and universalizing thinking that, very roughly speaking, began permeating the intellectual atmosphere of the Jews of western Europe in the early decades of the nineteenth century.” It seems to me that it is against that background—of the enlightened, rational, and universal—that the Jewish drama has been enacted for the past two hundred years, and still counting.

In addition to this issue’s symposium articles, it also contains responses to prior issues and clustered reviews of four poetry volumes, with an introduction by Adam Fisher. As if participating in the Judaism and Science symposium, Adam writes: “Poetry makes an important contribution to our spiritual lives by inviting us to experience the spiritual moment, through the yearning and
struggles of the poet. This is very different from theology, which is rational and left-brain. . . . Science can describe how fog forms, but Sandburg tells us how we can experience fog when he says that it comes in ‘on little cat feet.’"

May our lives, understanding, and teaching be enlarged by science and by poetry—both of which manifest God’s creative energies, and our own.

Susan Laemmle, Editor