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## Ricoeur's Existential Phenomenology

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### Abstract

The article elaborates Ricoeur's *philosophy of the will*, an earlier stage of which took the form of a phenomenological description of the eidetic structures of the voluntary and the involuntary. It traces the philosophical development of Ricoeur from eidetic phenomenology to phenomenological hermeneutics. Behind Ricoeur's trajectory of the philosophy of the will is his drive to recapture the Cartesian *Cogito* in all its original complexity. The *Cogito* is not self-sufficient, not capable on its own of positing itself in being. Ricoeur asserts that we can recapture the *ego* of the *ego Cogito* in the mirror of its objects, its works, and ultimately its acts. Ricoeur's inquires into the primary symbolisms of evil where he is intently focused on the relation of finiteness and guilt. This enfleshes his conviction that we come to understand ourselves via the stories we tell about ourselves overtime.

**Key words:** Paul Ricoeur, will, Cartesian *Cogito*, guilt, narrative

### Introduction

The primary aim of phenomenology was to elucidate the essential meaning of objects of experience through an investigation of the modes of their appearance. Ricoeur has applied this basic insight of phenomenology to the question of the structure of the will, its meaning and expression. For Ricoeur, "it was phenomenology, however, in the sense that it tried to extract from lived experience the essential meaning and structures of purpose, project, motive, wanting, trying and so on."<sup>1</sup>The

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Ricoeur, "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language," *Philosophy Today* 17:2 (Summer 1973), 89-90.

entire project is carried out within phenomenological brackets as an intentional analysis.

“However, in spite of the extensive use he makes of Husserl, Ricoeur is scrupulously careful to avoid any reduction of the world to the subject.”<sup>2</sup> This is so given that Husserl’s *transcendental ego*’s essential structure is ahistorical and non-relative. In extirpating this Husserlian prejudice, Ricoeur proposes to submit the affective and volitional processes of the will to an independent phenomenological analysis. Ricoeur proposes his own brand of phenomenology whereby what is at issue is ultimately the nature of the human self. The human self is more an agent than a knower. This agent is an existing individual and has a specific identity and is responsible for his or her actions.<sup>3</sup> The human self is always incarnate. As Ricoeur puts it, “I feel capable, as an incarnate being situated in the world, of the action which I intend in general.”<sup>4</sup> Here, one could easily perceive that Ricoeur accepts Marcel’s basic insight of the ultimate unity of subject and object in incarnation.<sup>5</sup> Marcel’s central intuition is one of an ultimate ontological unity of man’s being-in-the-world and so stands in clear contrast to the subject and object dichotomy. But unlike Marcel, Ricoeur

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and Involuntary* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1966), xiv-xv. Henceforth FN.

<sup>3</sup> See David Pellauer, *Ricoeur: Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), 8.

<sup>4</sup> FN 208.

<sup>5</sup> Marcel, who spoke of his philosophy as a Christian existentialism, made classic a distinction between “problem” and “mystery.” A problem is a question that can be resolved, generally by obtaining certain information. The scientific positivists, for instance, quite naturally conclude that philosophy (only speculates) is destined to be displaced by science. Against such notions, Marcel contended that the proper concern of philosophy was with certain intractable “mysteries” which are not subject to present or future resolution. A case in point is the inherently elusive relationship between the “lived body”—i.e., my body as my own, as the living center of my experience—and the same body regarded as a neutral object, which might be objectively analyzed. Ricoeur thus wishes to accomplish more thoroughly than did Marcel himself the Marcellian project of “a second reflection”: i.e., “the recovery of mystery in clear thought, in a rigorous consciousness—in brief, in discourse” (Ricoeur, “L’homme et son mystère” in *Le Mystère* [Paris: Horay, 1960], 20). Husserl sought in his own fashion to lead philosophy out of the wasteland of one-dimensional thought.

finds in phenomenology a methodological tool<sup>6</sup> adequate to the task of elaborating a systematic philosophy of man's being-in-the-world. Ricoeur's approach is clearly stated as, "if it is phenomenology, it was existential phenomenology in the sense that these essential structures implied the recognition of the central problem of embodiment, of *le corps propre*."<sup>7</sup> This phrase implies double commitment, that is, to existential question and rigorous method. The human person, incarnate as he is, is poetic after all. His embodied state awakens in him the desire to be or the power to exist creatively.<sup>8</sup> Reflective philosophy is obviously at work here. This is insofar as reflection is understood by Ricoeur as "the appropriation of our effort to exist and of our desire to be, through the work which bear witness to that effort and desire."<sup>9</sup>

Ricoeur's existential phenomenology takes a twofold development, the first division is structural phenomenology developed primarily in *Freedom and Nature* and continued in the *Fallible Man*. The leading questions concerning the subject in the structural phase remain strictly limited to what Ricoeur calls *fundamental possibilities*. These "structures" of the will are open to rational philosophy without the necessity of symbol or myth. Structural phenomenology brackets out what Ricoeur calls the Fault (*la faute*). We can say that the concept of the fault points to the *pathological* distortion of existence. Thus an eidetic analysis of

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<sup>6</sup> Husserl's emphasis on the importance of method in philosophy was what first attracted Ricoeur to his work, as a way of moving beyond Marcel's less systematic, more impressionistic way of taking up philosophical problems. Ricoeur also recognized that Husserl had been able to modify Descartes' subject-object model in an important way by seeing that it really presupposes three, not just two, terms. Our consciousness is always consciousness *of* something; hence it is necessary to attend to how our consciousness 'intends' its object.

<sup>7</sup> Ricoeur, "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language," 90.

<sup>8</sup> See Leovino Ma. Garcia's essay "Paul Ricoeur: Philosopher of Responsibility and Hope" in *Budhi* (1997), 134. Garcia explains, that by 'poetic,' Ricoeur means more than poetry as a literary genre. For Ricoeur, "Poetry is more than the art of making poems. It is *poesis*, or creation in the largest sense of the word." See also Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretation*, ed. Don Ihde (London: Continuum, 2004), 461. Henceforth CI.

<sup>9</sup> Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (Delhi: Shri Jainendra Press, 2008), 46.

the essential structures of man's being, apart from their existential distortions, is a prerequisite for an understanding of existence.

The second phase of phenomenology is properly hermeneutic, and its major outlines occur in *The Symbolism of Evil* and *Freud and Philosophy*. Here the turn is made from the structure of experience to the concrete expressions in symbol and myth that man makes concerning his experience.<sup>10</sup> Properly speaking, reflective philosophy grounds this possibility. This time, Ricoeur's reflective philosophy operates on two levels: the refusal of the idea that there is immediate knowledge of the self and understanding by way of detour through signs by which the self expresses itself.<sup>11</sup> Reflection must inevitably turn into *interpretation* since these signs deployed by the self in its works are indissolubly linked to the self's act of existing and understanding.

### Structural Phenomenology

In the 1950s Ricoeur had the ambitious aim of completing a monumental three-part *Philosophy of the Will*. In the event, only the first two parts, *The Voluntary and the Involuntary* and *Finitude and Guilt*, were completed (although the latter was itself subdivided into two parts, *Fallible Man* and *The Symbolism of Evil*). These early works form an important precursor to Ricoeur's 'hermeneutic' philosophy.

Ricoeur speaks of the first volume, *Freedom and Nature*, as *eidetics* because its task is a phenomenological description of the essential structures of man.<sup>12</sup> It is particularly referred to as "*eidetics of the will*" whereby meaning (in Husserl's sense) is assumed as "bracketing of the

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<sup>10</sup> Don Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Ricoeur rejects "short-cut" to self-discovery. Self-discovery requires a critical "detour" – in the sense that the *cogito* can be recovered only by the detour of decipherment of the documents of its life (CI 17).

<sup>12</sup> Eidetic phenomenology is a "sober" and "patient" brand of reflection (FN 425). As a "nonreductive yet descriptive thought," it arises from "the commitment to take things as they present themselves" (ibid., 16). It does not only respect the originally given but also displays a radical openness to the broad diverse range of phenomena (Leovino Ma. Garcia, "Meaning of Being Human in Ricoeur's Philosophy of the Will," *Budhi* 3 [1997], 99).

[empirical] fact and elaborating the idea or meaning [of the will]."<sup>13</sup> This core idea establishes that the human will is in all areas involuntary and voluntary at once.

As such, the analysis is abstract in two senses: (1) All existential factors in willing are bracketed to enable the essential to be distinguished from the accidental. (2) Considerations of *transcendence* and *fault* are suspended to avoid distortion of the fundamental reading of choice by triumphant as well as by pathological conditions.<sup>14</sup> Ricoeur's thesis is that there is a basic human nature, but the essential structure of man is neither *transcendent* nor *fallen*. As a way of procedure, Ricoeur performs phenomenological suspension of both *transcendence* and *fault*. It is necessary to bracket the *fault* because it is "*ir-rational*" since it is already a distortion of the human being's essential structures. It is likewise necessary to bracket *transcendence* because it is *meta-rational*.<sup>15</sup> The approach is distinctly phenomenological and methodic which aims to show that man is constituted with fundamental possibilities. While Ricoeur accepts "eidetic reduction," he rejects the famous and obscure transcendental reduction, which is an obstacle to the genuine understanding of personal body.<sup>16</sup> This

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<sup>13</sup> FN 3-4. Such an idea is not observable in the empirical world but rather part of each self's human mode of being-in-the-world. In this regard, phenomenology represents a return to naïveté. Ricoeur begins by "bracketing" certain aspects in order to concentrate on others.

<sup>14</sup> *Transcendence* and *fault* are closely linked. Briefly, *transcendence* is the vision of innocence, of complete liberation, of salvation, while *fault* is the basic intuition of a world out of kilter, troubled or ruptured (Verner Smiththeram, "Man, Mediation and Conflict in Ricoeur's Fallible Man," *Philosophy Today* [Winter 1991], 359). Ricoeur will leave the question of evil, in the sense of misuse of our freedom, for a projected second volume of his project. Similarly, *transcendence* has to be left for a proposed third volume, but this volume was never written.

<sup>15</sup> Garcia, "Paul Ricoeur: Philosopher of Responsibility and Hope," 177.

<sup>16</sup> FN 4. Husserl himself took it as a transcendental subject, something like a point source from which intentional consciousness radiates, leading him to characterize his phenomenology as a form of transcendental idealism. Ricoeur was unwilling to accept this interpretation of phenomenology given his commitment to understanding human existence as embodied existence in the world. For Ricoeur, Husserl does not really *understand* the passions (the involuntary), because he does not grasp that there is a *reciprocal* relation between mind and body—Husserl *describes* through the mind alone.

is one of the points of departure for these early Ricoeurian concerns, a critique of the logistic prejudice of transcendental phenomenology. It shows that Husserl tends to collapse the multifarious modes in which consciousness constitutes its objects into a single theory of representation. Ricoeur modified this by grounding the human person to corporeality. While Ricoeur absorbed Husserl's insistence that consciousness cannot be separated from its object, he was not prepared simply to bracket out consciousness in itself. This is due to the emphasis he placed on the embodied nature of consciousness.<sup>17</sup> This is done by way of centering on the theme of the reciprocity of voluntary and involuntary. It is dealt with a method that goes from pure description to active participation.<sup>18</sup>

In his own proposed systematic project, Ricoeur begins by applying descriptive phenomenological approach to human action rather than to perception, Husserl's major concern. Ricoeur's conceives of life as 'dialectic': on the one hand, I am master of myself and choose and will courses of action, while on the other hand, I am subjected to the necessity of being in the world. There are things beyond my control, I have a certain character along with an unconscious mind that defies my will.<sup>19</sup> How we negotiate our lives between the freedom accorded us as human beings and

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<sup>17</sup> See FN , 209.

<sup>18</sup> Ricoeur incorporates Marcelian concept of *situation* to complement Husserlian phenomenological description. It is said that the subject implied in the "reduction" is *disinterested spectator*, while the subject implied in the "situation" is an incarnate being, an *involved participant*. "It is the reality *within which* we are constantly included, with which we are constantly involved." (Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley [New York: Fordham University Press, 1986], XII; henceforth FM) This involvement of the subject in the situation accounts for the intimate connection between drama and philosophy in Marcel's thought. Husserl's thought, however, excludes drama from philosophy insofar as it is preoccupied with providing a foundation to the sciences. The ideal of Marcel is philosophy as a profound wisdom, a philosophy that does not only teach us how to live but live well. Ricoeur's tenaciously holds on both these two ideals in philosophy – justification of human existence and foundation of science. Ricoeur conjugates his two sources of inspiration – Marcel and Husserl – in such a way as to cross out their limitations and bring out their advantages in a distinctive method, at once rigorous and respectful of depth of existence (Leovino Ma. Garcia, "Philosophical Exploration of Ricoeur," *Budhi* 2 [1997], 166-167).

<sup>19</sup> Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 11.

the constraints that are imposed upon us by the fact of our being humans living in the world is, then, the departure point for Ricoeur's philosophy.

In the reciprocal investigation of the voluntary and the involuntary, Ricoeur distinguishes three primary articulations of the will. The expression "I will" may be analyzed into the following components: (a1) 'I decide', (b1) 'I move my body', and (c1) 'I consent'. Moreover, in virtue of the phenomenological doctrine of intentionality, these three components may be approached through noematic analysis of their intentional objects:<sup>20</sup> (a2) the decision or project, (b2) the action or motion, (c2) the acquiescence or consent. Finally, in accordance with the principle of the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary, these three objects may be correlated with the following realms of the involuntary: (a3) needs, motives, values, (b3) skills, emotions, habits, (c3) character, unconscious, life. By unfolding the practical mediations which obtain between the intentional objects and those aspects of the involuntary which correspond to them, Ricoeur seeks to transcend the traditional dualisms which have plagued the philosophy of the will.<sup>21</sup>

Ricoeur's exploration of the will, through its components of *decision*, *action* and *consent*, concludes that we have freedom. However, this freedom is "only human" and reaches a complete understanding of itself only with respect to some limit concepts. When I *decide*, the object of my willing is "the project I form, it contains the direction of an action to be done by me in accord with my abilities."<sup>22</sup> When I *move my body*, an action is carried out.

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<sup>20</sup> Phenomenologically, we designate the activity of consciousness as *noesis* and the object of this activity as *noema*, we may call the approach of Ricoeur as *noetic-noematic* method. This method maintains that the *noetic* pole is known through noematic pole; the *experiencing* consciousness reveals itself in the experienced object. Phenomenology shows that there is no apprehension of the self except through the detour of its objective expressions in the world. In short, the *noesis* can only be deciphered in the *noema* (Garcia, "Meaning of Being Human in Ricoeur's Philosophy of the Will," 99).

<sup>21</sup> John B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 42.

<sup>22</sup> FN 7. Decision, like an act of intellection, has an intentional correlate. Unlike a wish, a decision intends its object as something *to be done by me*, and unlike a command, as something which depends on me, *is within my power*. At the same time

When I *consent*, I acquiesce to necessity. The necessity that things are as they are, that one is alive in a biological body which has its limitations. The three dimensions of willing correspondingly involve the will's opposite, the involuntary.

First, when I make a decision, it “stands in an original relation not only to the project which is its specific object, but also the motives which justify it.”<sup>23</sup> One does not just do things for no reason. The reasons I have in making a decision are a form of the involuntary – Ricoeur calls them ‘motivation’.<sup>24</sup> “The reasons which motivate my decision, the body which I am, even the personal and historical conditions of my being are not simply external limitations imposed upon me, but rather the organ in and through which I am actual.”<sup>25</sup>

Second, in *moving my body*, I must recognize that my body is as much governed by involuntary motions as by willing. This does not just mean things like breathing, but also when I do things by habit. Habit, like emotion, is taken as an organ rather than a motive of willing. Habit is deemed means rather than ends—the means of effective action. Habit as an organ heightens the efficacy of willing and frees the will from preoccupation with means, enabling it to focus on ends. Thus, the core of the study of man as the unity of the voluntary and the involuntary, as incarnate Cogito, lies in the ways the will uses the involuntary as an organ and the ways the involuntary lends itself to such use.<sup>26</sup> Action is viewed as an extension or an incarnation of a will. Thus it shares the will's intentionality, and its intentional object is the change it effects in the world. In contrast to Cartesian dualism, the body is seen as an organ of our acting through the unity of the voluntary and involuntary more than it is its object. “The body is a component of the will because it is not merely a tool

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decision has a reflexive dimension: I define myself in its object, commit myself, bind myself (FN, xvii).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> There are no decisions without motives. It means I decide not only to . . . but also because. . . Apart from motives there are no decisions, only happenings. To be sure, a motive is not a cause; however, it cannot be understood apart from the decision *of which* it is the motive. Still, the centrality of motives in a decision gives that decision continuity with the involuntary.

<sup>25</sup> FN xv.

<sup>26</sup> See FN xx-xxi.

or instrument of the self, but part of the self's intentionality: its mode of being itself in the world."<sup>27</sup> Ricoeur in this way has succeeded in reintroducing the body into the *cogito* as the fundamental certitude of being incarnate or in a corporeal situation.

And third, when I *consent*, I give myself over to something other than me over which I have no control, a form of necessity. The *will* does not only bespeak a relative involuntary with its purposes, but it also grapples with the absolute involuntary of a character type, of an unconscious, and ultimately of sheer biological life, birth, and death. I am not only incarnate in the sense of being myself *through* limited mental and physical organs, but also in the sense of what Heidegger called *Geworfenheit*, a state of being stuck in the particularity of my situation.<sup>28</sup> This ultimate act of the will is not simply a passive acknowledgment of necessity but its active adoption in the decision to accept it as mine and in the strange effort of patience that realizes this decision. Thus, as Ricoeur observes, what is at stake in consent is "the ultimate reconciliation of freedom and nature."<sup>29</sup> In the last instance, consent implies a value judgment: "freedom can consent to necessity because the universe is a possible home of freedom."<sup>30</sup> Freedom is seen as something positive since it is a response to the 'no' of necessity with the 'no' of refusal. There are thus three modes of the involuntary standing in relation to the three modes of the voluntary act: the decision is tempered by motivation, the movement of the body is tempered by involuntary motion, and consent is tempered by necessity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> John Wall, *Moral Creativity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28.

<sup>28</sup> FN xxiii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>31</sup> Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, 11–12. Ricoeur's acknowledgement of the will's being tempered by necessity, which is really an acknowledgement of the influence of the body on any mental act (including the act of performing the *cogito*), is a way of bringing the reality of the outside world into the mental world of the Cartesian and the phenomenologist. As Ricoeur puts it, "the Ego must more radically renounce the covert claim of all consciousness, must abandon its wish to posit itself, so that it can receive the nourishing and inspiring spontaneity which breaks the sterile circle of the self's constant return to itself" (FN 14).

Ricoeur concisely states: "The involuntary is *for* the will and will is *by reason* of the involuntary."<sup>32</sup>

This reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary leaves no doubt even about the direction in which we must read their relations. Not only does the involuntary have no meaning of its own, but understanding proceeds from the top down, and not from the bottom up. Far from the voluntary being derivable from the involuntary, it is, on the contrary, the understanding of the voluntary which comes first in man. I understand myself in the first place as he who says, "I will." The involuntary refers to the will as that which gives it its motives and capacities, its foundations, and even its limits.<sup>33</sup>

Ricoeur has achieved to see the unity of the objective with the subjective under the single heading of 'existence'. Existence is what subjects have who have the capacity for acknowledging that they have bodies in the material world. Achieving this state of existence, says Ricoeur, "requires that I participate actively in *my incarnation as a mystery*"<sup>34</sup> To 'participate actively in my incarnation' means, on the one hand, to think of myself through the thought of my having a body, and on the other hand, to decide, to move and to consent. All of which in some sense involve my body controlling me. But why 'as a mystery'? 'What to do with the body' has always been a problem for philosophers in the Cartesian tradition, such as Husserl. Ricoeur wants to claim that my having a body is not a philosophical *problem*, but a *mystery*. The distinction is one originally made by the French Christian philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973): a problem is something to be solved, but a mystery is something that does not require an answer, does not need solving.<sup>35</sup> Mystery can only be acknowledged and marveled at.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>35</sup> Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, 13–14. The mystery is a condition of being able to posit the *cogito* in the first place. The *cogito* is an act of positing myself, but in order to do this I must participate in the condition that makes the *cogito* possible in the first place, namely my having a body. Ricoeur's aim is to restore 'the original

Ricoeur's philosophy, however, is not only a 'philosophy of mystery', but also a 'philosophy of paradox'. The 'paradox' is that without the necessity of my having a body and being in the world, I could not have free will. But this free will is tempered by necessities. Ricoeur identifies three modes of freedom, corresponding to the three modes of the will: freedom of choice, freedom of movement and freedom of consent. Each of these freedoms is 'paradoxical' in the sense of requiring some sort of negotiation between one way of thinking and its opposite. Freedom of choice is tempered by need, but a need can be rejected as the motive for an action. This leads to an experience of sacrifice: for example, "man is capable of choosing between his hunger *and* something else."<sup>36</sup> I have a *human* need for food because I can will to sacrifice it. Something analogous is true of freedom of movement, which is tempered by emotion and habit. Freedom of consent's paradoxical nature, for instance, is seen in this formula: consenting is the voluntary act of surrendering freedom.

All of these paradoxical formulations describe modes of specifically *human* freedom. And human freedom is limited by negative concepts – need, emotion, habit and necessity – which determine it by the possibility of the will's rejecting them: they are what Ricoeur calls 'limit concepts.'<sup>37</sup> 'These limit concepts,' says Ricoeur, "have no other function here than to help us understand, by contrast, the condition of a will which is reciprocal with an involuntary."<sup>38</sup> Freedom is only recovered in experiences of negation and lack. The experience of the threat to our

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concord of vague consciousness with its body and its world' (FN 18). The mystery is to be understood as reconciliation between Cartesian consciousness (self-consciousness) and objectivity.

<sup>36</sup> FN 93.

<sup>37</sup> 'Limit concept' is a notion borrowed from Karl Jaspers' 'limited situation'. Ricoeur's contribution is focused on Jasper's concept of limit situations: death, suffering, war and evil and on the role of symbolic language in describing the experience of transcendence. Jaspers had identified these limit experiences as experiences which point beyond the subject-object model to that which transcends them: experiences that reveal the limits of the model but are not adequate to describe what happens beyond it. At the end of *Freedom and Nature*, Ricoeur wrote: "A genuine Transcendence is more than a limit concept: it is a *presence* which brings about a true revolution in the theory of subjectivity" (FN 130). It introduces into it a radically new dimension, the *poetic* dimension.

<sup>38</sup> FN 486.

existence underscores an intense passion for existence. The passion to exist is more original than the dread and anguish of existence. It is the root of the regulative idea that being is primordially good and that evil is not co-original with ourselves. Accordingly, the human being is a power of affirmation; “Man is the joy of ‘Yes’ in the sadness of the finite.”<sup>39</sup> Human being attests to this passion only in negation.

### Phenomenology of the Will: Fallibility

In 1960, the second stage of the project *Philosophy of the Will* appeared in two parts under the collective title, *Finitude et Culpabilité*. “The problem was the question how is it possible to introduce within the framework of a philosophy of the will some fundamental experiences such as guilt, bondage, alienation, or, to speak in religious terms, sin.”<sup>40</sup> The first part of this volume, *Fallible Man*, comes from the side of possibility, which is not the same thing as either necessity or reality. It deals with the question of *fallibility* or the *possibility* of the fault.<sup>41</sup> The second part, *Symbolism of Evil*, comes to grip with the experience of the fault. It begins with how people in fact do talk about fault as already existing. With the recognition that human freedom is finite one, we reach the limit of *Eidetics* of the will. Man is now examined furthermore not only as *essentially* incarnate freedom, but also as actual freedom under actual and disruptive conditions of existence. Hence, there is a need to explore the actual existence of fault made available only by way of “empirical” reflection. This is in keeping with Ricoeur’s general philosophical proclivity for beginning with the structural (“eidetics”) and proceeding to the more concrete (“empirics”). “The *Empirics*<sup>42</sup>—acknowledging the event of the fault—reflects on the concrete

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<sup>39</sup> FM 40.

<sup>40</sup> Ricoeur, “From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language,” 88.

<sup>41</sup> *Fallible Man* is still a descriptive phenomenology, though now a descriptive phenomenology of existence as it is reflected in consciousness. Thus it deals still with possibility, albeit existential rather than essential possibility—the possibility of evil.

<sup>42</sup> Empirics is meant here, not in the sense of a positivistic objective description (to which the will is obviously not reducible), but in the phenomenological sense of the self’s concrete experience of its own will. This experience appears first, for Ricoeur, in the self’s experience of evil, where the will becomes reflexively aware of itself through its own breakdown. This strategy of

existence of a faulted human being.”<sup>43</sup> Here, the task is to elaborate *Empirics* of the will, that is, to distinguish finitude from guilt, to show their difference and connection.<sup>44</sup> Ricoeur's concern is not about the actuality of evil, but the ontology which makes evil a possibility. There is a difference between humanity's ontological condition - vulnerable but sinless - and humanity's experience of the reality of sin. In short, “finitude is not to be identified with guilt.”<sup>45</sup> Ricoeur explains,

My problem was to distinguish between finitude and guilt. I had the impression, or even the conviction, that these two terms tended to be identified in classical existentialism<sup>46</sup> at the cost of both experiences, guilt becoming a particular case of finitude and for that reason beyond cure and forgiveness, and finitude on the other hand, being affected by a kind of diffused sense of sadness and despair through guilt.<sup>47</sup>

In the first book, *The Fallible Man*, Ricoeur investigates the dimension of human fallibility that lurked in the background of *Freedom and Nature*. Fallibility is the constitutional weakness in human beings which create the possibility of evil; it can be conceived as a fault,<sup>48</sup> as an

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describing the will through its cracks and distortions anticipates Ricoeur's subsequent interest in Freud.

<sup>43</sup> Garcia, “Meaning of Being Human in Ricoeur's Philosophy of the Will,” 83.

<sup>44</sup> Garcia, “The Philosophical Exploration of Ricoeur,” 177.

<sup>45</sup> FM xxv.

<sup>46</sup> The identification of finitude with guilt finds its origin in Kierkegaard. From Kierkegaard on, guilt loses its moral character and assumes an ontological significance in the philosophies of existence, more specifically, those of Heidegger and Jaspers.

<sup>47</sup> Ricoeur, “From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language,” 88.

<sup>48</sup> The word “fault,” at least in *Fallible Man*, should be taken in the geological sense: a break, a rift, a tearing. In geology, a fault lies between two different strata of rock (by analogy, the willing soul and the involuntary passions), which when rubbed together produce disharmonious effects. This fracturing, in man as in geology, is a weakness; in man it is the weakness that is inherent in the constitution of man himself: without it, man would not be man. Ricoeur frequently uses the words *faillie* (break, breach, fault), which is akin to *faillibilité*, as well as *écart*

interruption or distortion of the essential structures of the will. The fallible nature of this existence is what allows the possibility of moral evil: “the possibility of moral evil is inherent in man’s constitution.”<sup>49</sup> Fallibility is the possibility of fault, of the aberration between the soul and the passions, which really means the possibility of succumbing to temptations which the passions present.

If we hold Ricoeur’s first ‘working hypothesis’ regarding the anthropological understanding of human condition, that ‘the possibility of evil appears inscribed in the innermost structure of human reality,’ then it becomes necessary to hold his second hypothesis, that man is not identical with himself.<sup>50</sup> The second hypothesis gets expressed in terms of what Ricoeur calls the *pathétique of misery*. *Pathétique of misery* is “a certain chronic disproportion, a restless internal dissonance by virtue of which one never succeeds in coinciding with oneself.”<sup>51</sup> The fact of the presence of the self to itself is irremediably indirect; the ineradicable non-coincidence of the self is nothing other than an expression of the inscrutable presence of evil in our lives.<sup>52</sup> The most basic experiences show us that we are prone to err, that there is a ‘non-coincidence’ of the person with himself. I trip up, I make mistakes, I know that what I am is not what I am intended to be. My first

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(gap, di-gression), *fêlure* (rift), *déchirement* (a tearing, torn) to describe man’s existential condition (FM xxiii). Ricoeur’s concept of the fault [*la faute*] is broad, and neither French nor English provides a term which would do it full justice. It expresses the basic awareness that all is not right with the world, that existence as I live it is always a flawed existence.

<sup>49</sup> FM 133.

<sup>50</sup> Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, 16. This non-coincidence of the self to self is not subject to the principle of mutual intelligibility which governs the voluntary and the involuntary. But it places this principle within a wider dialectic. “Ricoeur claims that this disproportion of the self to itself remains unavailable to a strictly Husserlian eidetics because the pure phenomenological reduction only captures the will in its ideality” (Wall, *Moral Creativity*, 30). The disproportion of the human being indicates the origin of evil. We can think only of evil as evil only “starting from” the primordial condition of innocence which shows “through” the fallen and reveals it as fallen. A human being can only be evil in accordance with his fundamental condition (Garcia, “Meaning of Being Human in Ricoeur’s Philosophy of the Will,” 103).

<sup>51</sup> FM xvii.

<sup>52</sup> Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 527.

experience of this aspect of myself comes not in the form of rational thought, but in pathos, a feeling of searching, perplexity, and misery.<sup>53</sup>

Ricoeur conducts this reflective exercise on distinct levels. The first and most abstract of these is the transcendental plane. The disproportion within being is rooted in the distinction between sensibility and understanding. "This will be done by means of a reflection of a "transcendental" style, i.e., a reflection that starts not with myself but with the object before me, and from there traces back to its conditions of possibility."<sup>54</sup> In this exploration, which Ricoeur labeled the "transcendental synthesis," he attempted to give an account of how consciousness can know its object. At this level of investigation, consciousness is represented by the pure imagination that mediates between the bodily perception and the infinite possibilities of signification, between our particularity and our ability to transcend our particular point of view. "Transcendental imagination, a blind point of knowledge, transcends itself intentionally in its correlate, the thing."<sup>55</sup> However, pure imagination is so far only consciousness in general and not yet self-consciousness, "not yet the unity of a person in itself and for itself."<sup>56</sup>

Ricoeur begins with man's knowledge of being in the world perceived through his body. Man is able both to perceive the world and to perceive his separation from it, although his experience is limited to the experience of the body. The body also demonstrates its lack or incompleteness through the sensations of need and desire. The body's perceptions are limited to a single viewpoint; it can only take one perspective at a time. Paradoxically, it is this last limitation which opens up the possibility of infinity, the transcendent pole of the dialectic of the body. As we reflect on the limitation of the single perspective, we recognize the possibility of other viewpoints.

By opening up such possibilities we become capable of willing or intending future action, of moving beyond the limitations of the here and

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<sup>53</sup> Rebecca K. Huskey, *Paul Ricoeur on Hope* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2009), 44.

<sup>54</sup> FM 5.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

now.<sup>57</sup> Hence, “there remains the possibility that progress and order might develop in the course of a series of viewpoints or approaches that would in each case be a viewpoint on and approach to the totality.”<sup>58</sup> This entails a need for transition from the transcendental level to the practical and affective planes.

On the practical plane, the finitude of being is designated by the concept of character. Character brings into consideration the affective aspect of perspective, something that motivates our practical disposition to act. It is a concept that expresses a perspectival orientation towards a field of motivation which, taken as a whole, forms the pole of infinitude. Ricoeur indeed describes it as “the finite openness of my existence taken as a whole.”<sup>59</sup> If character is taken up as finite perspective, what is infinite in terms of meaning falls under the heading of happiness. Happiness is not the fulfillment of personal desire, but the horizon toward which all motivation works. “Just as the thing of the world is the horizon of the thing, happiness is the horizon from every point of view.”<sup>60</sup> Character is the limited openness of each person on the world; happiness is the infinitude aggregate of human aims, the termination of destiny of human beings as a whole.<sup>61</sup> The disproportion of character and happiness is one of finitude and infinitude, of origin point and destination. The tension between character and happiness is mediated by respect. Respect entails conceiving of a person not as corporeal thing but as a self. The self is, in Ricoeur’s words, a presence in which another can enter.<sup>62</sup> This self is the person that we represent to ourselves as a project to be realized. Recognizing the idea of us as persons worthy of respect leads to self-esteem. But self-esteem when combined with desire can overreach itself and destroy the synthesis of character and happiness. In this case, the practical synthesis of character and happiness that comes via respect is yet another point of fragility.

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<sup>57</sup> Amanda Christine Ford, *The Self in the Mirror of Scriptures: The Hermeneutics and Ethics of Paul Ricoeur* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 2012), 29.

<sup>58</sup> FM 4.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

Ricoeur calls respect a 'moral feeling', and this leads to a discussion of what constitutes *feelings* for man. It is the third moment at which man reveals himself to be fragile. By no means is human nature limited to our thinking and acting; we also have emotions affecting both our thoughts and actions. Ricoeur sees feeling as divided between two aspects: the *intentional* and the *affective*. Feelings, then, are directed outwards towards this other something, but they are also directed inwards towards me – they *affect* me (which is why they are called 'affects').<sup>63</sup> Whereas knowledge sets up a cleavage between the knowing subject and the known object, feeling "restores our complicity with the world, our inherence in and belonging to it, something more profound than all polarity and duality."<sup>64</sup> Knowing and feeling are interdependent in that knowing allows us to sort out degrees of feelings, and feeling points our powers of knowing in particular direction. But there could be disproportionate relationship between feeling and knowing. Feeling may point to inner conflict within ourselves, confusing pleasure with happiness. Pleasure is always finite, whereas the perfection of happiness is infinite because it is meant to be all encompassing. By mistaking pleasure for happiness, it can lead to the possibility of a bad choice and through it to evil.

Fragility is not merely the "locus," the point of insertion of evil, nor even the "origin" starting from which man falls; it is the "capacity" for evil. Fragility or fallibility indicates the possibility of evil as something constitutive of human condition. It is not that human beings are finite and hence limited in some ways; the real problem is that they do not coincide with themselves. Yet we need to acknowledge that we can say yes to existence as make a hash of it. For according to Ricoeur, "Man is the Joy of Yes in the sadness of the finite."<sup>65</sup>

### Phenomenological Hermeneutics: Symbolism of Evil

*The Fallible Man* contends that fault does not necessarily follow from its possibility. However, no one would deny that there is a concrete existence of a faulted human being. "We not only have the potential to do

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<sup>63</sup> Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>65</sup> FM 40.

bad things, we do 'do' bad things."<sup>66</sup> As a result, fault is articulated in the language of avowal. The transition from the possibility of evil to the actuality of fault is the task of *The Symbolism of Evil*, which is the second book of *Finitude and Guilt*. In this book, Ricoeur removes completely the brackets that contained his previous analyses within the bounds of essential possibility. In doing this, Ricoeur performs a methodological shift from structural approach to hermeneutics.<sup>67</sup> Ricoeur states, "I could speak of purposive action without symbolic language, but I could not speak of 'Bad Will' or of evil without a hermeneutic."<sup>68</sup> "The fact is that we have a direct language to say purpose, motive, and 'I can,' but we speak of evil by means of metaphors such as estrangement, errance, burden, and bondage."<sup>69</sup> Ricoeur sees in symbolic language an indirect approach to the problem of evil. He explores an existential reality through a "sympathetic re-enactment in imagination" of the language of fault, which is the language of confession.<sup>70</sup>

The imaginative re-enactment does not claim to be a genuine religious experience of which it is an expression. It belongs neither to the field of speculative philosophy of which it forms the basis. Ricoeur maintains that self-confession or avowal of the fault must not be ignored for "every utterance can and must be taken up into the element of philosophic discourse."<sup>71</sup> The primitive language of avowal in which the

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<sup>66</sup> Huskey, *Paul Ricoeur on Hope*, 141.

<sup>67</sup> Here, Ricoeur tries to limit the definition of hermeneutics to the specific problem of the interpretation of symbolic language. Ricoeur defines hermeneutics as "the art of deciphering indirect meaning" (see Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, tr. Eileen Brennan [New York: Routledge, 2006], x; and his "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language," 91). Ricoeur here does not in any way attempt to replace phenomenology but instead elevates it to a new level where it can symbolize human meaning amid its actual lack of meaning. Due to the disproportion in man, the change of method is called for to compensate and to feed anew a further path of inquiry.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 309.

<sup>69</sup> Ricoeur, "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language," 90.

<sup>70</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1969), 3. Henceforth SE.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

experience of evil is expressed is a thoroughly symbolic language, not in the sense of formal logic but in the phenomenological sense of double intentionality.<sup>72</sup> It is this 'double intentionality' that provides criteria for distinguishing the symbol from sign. While every sign aims at something beyond itself, it is only in symbols that "the first, literal, patent meaning analogically intends a second meaning."<sup>73</sup> In other words, symbols reveal a literal meaning (for example, stain), which is a conventional sign<sup>74</sup> within a language. This literal meaning points to a second meaning *like* the first (man as "spiritually" impure or "morally" defiled). The second meaning is *not given otherwise* than through the first: this is the opacity.<sup>75</sup> The second meaning is "given": there is a "donative" movement to the second through, and only through, the first.<sup>76</sup>

The double intentionality manifests itself within three distinguishable domains: the cosmic, the oneiric and the poetic. The first, the cosmic dimension, is expressed in *hierophanies*—the manifestation of the

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<sup>72</sup>Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics*, 44.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "The hermeneutics of symbols and philosophical reflection: i," (CI 287). Ricoeur has endeavored to identify hermeneutics with the interpretation of symbols, by which he understood those basic cultural expressions which contain a double meaning, such as the various cosmic elements – fire, water, earth and so on – or, more particularly in his case, those double-sense expressions such as stain, fall, deviation, wandering and captivity. The purpose of hermeneutics, as he then has conceived of it, is to interpret, to explicate, to lay out the nonliteral, symbolic (or sacred) meaning in these double-sense expressions. Ricoeur defines "symbol as any structure of signification in which direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first" (CI 287.) Ricoeur insists on the necessity of the continued presence of both literal and secondary meaning, that the secondary intention only takes on its distinctive character through the continued presence of the first, and cannot be translated into meta-language.

<sup>74</sup>Symbol is a sign in this, that like every sign it stands for this something. But not every sign is a symbol. It implies the triumph of the conventional sign over the natural sign.

<sup>75</sup>On the semantic level, Ricoeur calls this opacity surplus, polysemy or intended ambiguity. Because of the ambiguity, the symbol is open to more than one interpretation. "It is the *raison d'être* of symbolism to disclose the multiplicity of meaning out of the ambiguity of being" (CI 66).

<sup>76</sup>See SE 15-18.

sacred in the cosmos—described by the phenomenology of religion. The second, the oneiric dimension, is expressed in the dream productions described by Freudian and Jungian analysis.<sup>77</sup> The third, the poetic dimension, is expressed in the creative images of poetry.<sup>78</sup> The three primary symbols that Ricoeur analyzes in depth are defilement, sin and guilt. In the case of each of these symbols, evil is first read upon some aspects of the world or cosmos, for example upon the earth or the sun. This cosmic aspect is then experienced subjectively in a psychic or oneiric response, for instance in the feeling of dread or fear. Finally, these two dimensions are unified in a poetic image, which gives the symbol its form and marks its emergence into language. Moreover, not only are these symbols articulated within themselves, but also they are related to one another in a dynamic movement of progressive interiorization.<sup>79</sup>

The first of the primary symbols is defilement. Defilement as first primary symbol should never be literally considered as stain, for “impurity was never literally filthiness, dirtiness.”<sup>80</sup> Dread is the “deeply penetrating fear of the loss of the core of one’s being.”<sup>81</sup> Rebecca K. Huskey describes hyperbolically this dread like some bedeviled, werewolf-like creature. “We are doomed to being ruled by our darkest, foulest, most malicious tendencies, for all our acts are infected with something which we cannot understand.”<sup>82</sup> Conversely, the same dread allows us to see the possibility of hope even in its extreme negative sense. Dread is not merely a physical

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<sup>77</sup>Ricoeur remarks that Freud sees dream language as symbolic, as an *oneirotic* representation. As such, dream language must not be interpreted literally, but symbolically. It is symbolic because what appears in the dream reveals a deeper meaning than its literal presentation. “Dreams attest that we constantly mean something other than what we say; in dreams the manifest meaning endlessly refers to a hidden meaning” (*Freud and Philosophy*, 15).

<sup>78</sup>Leovino Garcia, “Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Reflection on the Human Being’s Avowal of Fault,” *Budhi* 2 (1997), 159.

<sup>79</sup>Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics*, 45.

<sup>80</sup>SE 35.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 41. Leovino Garcia interprets this “fear of the loss of the core of one’s being” as not simply fear of suffering and death but of the loss of one’s personal worth (“Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Reflection on the Human Being’s Avowal of Fault,” 165).

<sup>82</sup>Huskey, *Paul Ricoeur on Hope*, 146

reaction; it reveals an ethical demand. I fear punishment because I know persons have a demand for just punishment.<sup>83</sup> Thus, dread of the impure is not a physical fear of getting dirty. It is reckoned symbolically as dread of the impure and contamination due to fault. "If a man is punished because of his sins, he ought to be punished as he sins."<sup>84</sup> The demand for a just punishment serves a purpose—the restoration of order and happiness. I want the person who wronged me to be punished, not out of spite, so that she will learn not to do so again. Once punishment is meted out, penance has been done, and order has been restored, there is no longer anymore need to fear.<sup>85</sup> Meaning, man is capable of an emotional "sublimation". In other words, man, amid the objective trait of defilement, is subjectively capable of transposition.

The second of the primary symbol is sin. If the counterpart of defilement is justice, the counterpart of sin is redemption. The symbolics of sin conveys the idea of breaking a rule or law and doing so 'before God'. Evil is the expression of a broken relationship, a failure to keep the commandments. Sin is understood in the context of alliance or covenant between God and his people. Ricoeur draws on the definition of sin as "violation of a covenant."<sup>86</sup> "If stain were a 'thing', sin would be the absence of God."<sup>87</sup> "Thus sin is a religious dimension before being an ethical; it is not the transgression of an abstract rule – of a value – but the violation of a personal bond."<sup>88</sup> It is already the personal relation to a god that distinguishes sin from defilement. The penitent becomes conscious of his sin as a dimension of his existence before god whom he has offended.<sup>89</sup> The prophets have shown the state of transgression in proclaiming the indignation of Yahweh over his people.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 147

<sup>84</sup> SE 42.

<sup>85</sup> Huskey, *Paul Ricoeur on Hope*, 147

<sup>86</sup> SE 51

<sup>87</sup> "The Symbolisms of Evil: Paul Ricoeur's Affirmation Of The Subject," 11, <http://sphinxrhuzzhz.webs.com/OPUS/THE%20SYMBOLISMS%20OF%20EVIL%20RICOEUR'S%20AFFIRMATION%20OF%20THE%20SUBJECT.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> SE 52.

<sup>89</sup> Garcia, "Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Reflection on the Human Being's Avowal of Fault," 166.

The prophetic moment in the consciousness of evil is the revelation in an infinite measure of the demand that God addresses to man. It is this infinite demand that creates an unfathomable distance and distress between God and man.<sup>90</sup>

The tension between attempting to obey a finite commandments and an infinite demand intensifies the consciousness of sin. What the law teaches is how one is a sinner, not that he or she is already one. Sin is therefore in an important sense positive because it is experienced as something real. This is why it is something people can repent.<sup>91</sup> Reminding us that in each narrative where the covenant is broken, the person still remains in relationship with God. If I perceive God as being distant, or God is not listening, this does not indicate that God is altogether absent. The narratives and the prophecies teach that one should continue to seek God, with the expectation of eventually sensing God's presence once again.<sup>92</sup> It brings one not only into a heightened self-awareness but also to a demand to know oneself better.

This brings us to the third level, which is *guilty conscience*. It can be said, in very general terms, that guilt designates the subjective moment in fault, as sin is its *ontological* moment.<sup>93</sup> "Guiltiness is never anything else than the anticipated chastisement itself, internalized and already weighing upon consciousness."<sup>94</sup> Guilt is understood through a double movement: a movement of rupture by which it breaks away from defilement and sin, and a movement of resumption by which it takes up again their primordial symbolism in order to express the paradoxical concept of a man who is responsible and captive – the concept of 'servile will'.<sup>95</sup> As shown in the symbols of defilement and sin, freedom enslaves itself and affects itself by its own choice. Guilt is the ultimate expression of the free will that becomes unfree by binding itself to a bad choice. "That is why the

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<sup>90</sup> SE 55.

<sup>91</sup> Pellauer, *Ricoeur: Guide to the Perplexed*, 37.

<sup>92</sup> Huskey, *Paul Ricoeur on Hope*, 150.

<sup>93</sup> SE 101.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 101

<sup>95</sup> Garcia, "Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Reflection on the Human Being's Avowal of Fault," 166; SE 100–101.

consciousness of guilt constitutes a veritable revolution in the experience of evil: that which is primary is no longer the reality of defilement, the objective violation of the Interdict, or the Vengeance let loose by that violation, but the evil use of liberty, felt as an internal diminution of the value of the self."<sup>96</sup> The wrongdoer realizes that what she did was wrong and her wrongness penetrates her being. "Once this has been grasped, the next inevitable stage is to confess guilt—guilt is *truly* confessional in ways in which defilement and sin are not, in that in defilement I accuse another, in sin I am accused, but in guilt I accuse myself."<sup>97</sup> However, guilt can only be arrived at by the preceding two stages of defilement and sin. "Guilt cannot, in fact, express itself except in indirect language of "captivity" and "infection," inherited from the two prior stages."<sup>98</sup>

Ricoeur has been establishing how symbols of fault are connected to experience. He moves further by emphasizing that this experience could be approached 'through the mediation of the second-order symbols supplied by the myths of evil'.<sup>99</sup> Ricoeur regards the myth as a particular type of symbol, elaborated in the form of a narrative and articulated within an artificial time and space.<sup>100</sup> Myths distinguish themselves from being representations precisely in being timeless. Myths seek to account for the "crisis" in the bond between man and the sacred, developed in the form of narrations and articulated in a time and space. A myth "opens up and discloses a dimension of experience that, without it, would remain closed

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<sup>96</sup> SE 102.

<sup>97</sup> Simms, *Paul Ricoeur*, 23.

<sup>98</sup> SE 152.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Myth as Ricoeur understands it is not simply to be defined as a false story nor it is an explanation in the sense of modern science. There is simply no empirical proof to support such claim. It has a function of traditional narrative as regards the psychic at work at a given symbol. Neither every myth is in question but only those that deal with the existence of evil and something like the experience of the confession of sin. Ricoeur acknowledges that he must confined himself to the cultural experiences that arises out of the Greek and Hebrew worlds, since he lack competence beyond these limits (Pellauer, *Ricoeur: Guide to the Perplexed*, 35).

and hidden.”<sup>101</sup> “Myth makes the experience of fault the center of a whole, the center of a world: the world of fault.”<sup>102</sup>

Ricoeur’s typology of myth speaks of the origin and end of evil. Ricoeur divides Western myths into four basic types: (1) the *drama of creation*, the origin of evil is identical with the origin of all things;<sup>103</sup> (2) the *tragic myths*, whose paradigm are found in Greek tragedy;<sup>104</sup> (3) the “philosophical myth” of the exiled soul, a myth which creates the only dualism of body and soul;<sup>105</sup> and (4) the *Adamic Myth of the Fall*, which is deemed as a central myth.<sup>106</sup> For some of these myths, just like the *drama of creation* and the *tragic myth*, point the genesis of evil to something anterior to human beings. While all the myths bespeak of a fault, only Adamic myth

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<sup>101</sup> SE 165. Myths are how humans utilize language to discourse on symbols. They are analogical but not allegorical. Allegories are immediately significant, hence they already presuppose an interpretation.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>103</sup> The human being is not the origin of evil. He finds evil already there and continues it (Garcia, “Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Reflection on the Human Being’s Avowal of Fault,” 181). In which case, evil is primordial, and hence there is no fall. The drama of creation commences with no characters, “before recounting the genesis of the world, it recounts the genesis of the divine; the birth of the present world order and the appearance of man” (SE 175-176). It has its paradigm in the Babylonian mythology. It narrates how God who struggles with chaos that precedes creation, deemed a form of salvation. In this case, man is not the origin of evil.

<sup>104</sup> The myth identifies fault with the existence itself of the tragic hero. *Prometheus Bound*, the central character, regarded as primordial man rather than as a god equal to Zeus, is a guilty-innocent. The theft of fire is a gift to man, the same act is both crime and benefit. Prometheus is the humanity of man, suffering for loving humans too much (see SE 223).

<sup>105</sup> Myths of the exiled soul tell us that we are imprisoned in the clutches of our bodies. Before the imprisonment took place, the soul is “divine in its origin” (SE 280). Earthly existence is a great misfortune. The soul, having strayed from its rightful abode, is considered as a perpetually unhappy exiled in the body. The drama moves first toward a “fall” into the earthly, then toward the process of recovery through education. The deliverance is through knowledge (see SE 300).

<sup>106</sup> Idhe, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology*, 115. The fall of Adam marks the entry of evil in the state of perfect creation. It situates the origin of evil not prior to man but in the bad use of freedom by man (ibid., 120).

takes a different framework, good is primordial. The possibility exists that Adam could have chosen good instead of evil. This mean evil do not pre-exist humankind and it does not permeate our being. We are evil adjectively when we yield to the evil one.<sup>107</sup> Ricoeur's inquires into symbolism and myths remain intently focused on the relation of finiteness and guilt.

The avowal of evil is at first depicted as a communal understanding. This goes on until that communal understanding becomes personal and thus has a unique impact on the subject. The hermeneutics operative here is marked by his "enchanted" aphorism, "The symbol that give rise to thought."<sup>108</sup> Reflection is never accomplished in solipsistic isolation. Reflection is the effort to recomprehend the *ego* of the *ego Cogito* in the mirror of its objects, its works, and ultimately its acts. As Ricoeur states: "I call it *concrete reflection*, that is the *cogito* mediated by the entire universe of signs."<sup>109</sup> Man is capable of expressing himself in a dynamic movement of progressive interiorization. It is inherent in man the power for creative interpretation especially as regards symbols and myths. Human beings are not doomed; we are not destined to evil. Through myths and symbols, we are able to stand outside ourselves. Myths assist us not only in understanding ourselves but also in imagining new possibilities for ourselves. Ricoeur calls this "logic of superabundance," which rests on the precedence of the future, of history to come, over the present. It is referred to as the *poetics of the will*.

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<sup>107</sup> Huskey, *Paul Ricoeur on Hope*, 166.

<sup>108</sup> SE 248.

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