A. The Philosophical “Repetition” of Avowal

At the beginning of The Symbolism of Evil, Ricoeur raises the question: How do we effectuate the passage from fallibility to fault, from the possibility of evil to its reality in us? It is by repeating “in imagination and sympathy” the avowal (aveu) made by our religious consciousness.\(^1\) Although this repetition does not yet constitute a philosophy, it pertains nonetheless to the latter’s domain. For this avowal spoken by the human being is a word (parole) which can be reintegrated into philosophical discourse.

Where do we look for this avowal? It is a mistake to start with the most rationalized expressions. The concept of original sin, for instance, is already far removed from the lived experience of the fault. Instead, we must move in a regressive manner from the “speculative” expressions to the “spontaneous” ones. Now, speculation refers back to myth which is taken here with its explorative function of unveiling the bond between the human being and the sacred.\(^2\) Do we then begin by inter-


\(^2\)In no way does Ricoeur aim to furnish us with a global theory of myths. In strictly limiting himself to myths of evil and even more specifically to the myths of the origin and the end of evil, he hopes to attain a more intensive rather than extensive understanding of myth. For a survey of the different conceptions of myth, see Georges Van Riet, “Mythe et vérité,” Revue philosophique de Louvain 58 (February 1960), pp. 15-87 (Ricoeur, pp. 68-77). See also Joseph J. Kockelmans, “On Myth and Its Relationship to Hermeneutics,” Cultural Hermeneutics 1 (April 1973), No. 41, pp. 47-86 (Ricoeur, pp. 63-66, 78-81).
preting the myths of the origin and end of evil? We are cautioned to wait. If the speculation on original sin refers back to the myth of the fall, this myth in turn refers back to the avowal of the fault. But is it possible to repeat this pre-mythical, pre-speculative experience? Certainly, since it is articulated in the language of avowal. This language of avowal sheds light on the opaque, equivocal, and scandalous character of the lived experience of the fault. This experience is opaque since it is embedded in emotion. It then needs language to illumine it. Furthermore, this experience is equivocal insofar as it is composed of several layers of meaning: "Guilt" as the feeling of one's unworthiness points to "sin" as the experience of the human being's real situation before God which, in its turn, points to "defilement" as the image of stain that infects from the outside. With its diverse meanings, this experience requires language to clarify it. Finally, this language is scandalous insofar as it is an alienation from one's self. It therefore demands language to express its perplexed condition.

Here, we note that the language of avowal is essentially symbolic. Defilement is spoken of as a material stain, sin as a deviation in space, guilt as a burden. Only later does this experience articulate itself in an abstract language. We also note that the "repetition" always occurs in

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3SM, 14-15; SE, 7-8. Ricoeur's decision to start from the avowal of the fault is in keeping with his basic phenomenological strategy. To begin with the fullness of language is to begin from the top downward. This is rightly pointed out by Don Ihde when he writes: "The use of symbols and myths as the primitives of language places Ricoeur's approach to language in extreme contrast to much of the contemporary philosophy of language. In the dominant traditions of the Anglo-American philosophy of language, the first movement is usually one which seeks the simplest unit of the language and works from the bottom upward. In this respect the concerns with formalization, with the 'logic' of simple statements, and even, in ordinary language philosophy, with the complexities of ordinary utterances, stand at the opposite pole of the language continuum. The choice of the already complex and, moreover, opaque and equivocal expression as 'primitives' of hermeneutics is a radically different choice." See Ihde, Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, pp. 89-90, also pp. 162-163 (Ihde's emphases).

4According to one of Ricoeur's critics, what first strikes the reader of The Symbolism of Evil is the realization of Ricoeur being a "passionate philosopher": "Beneath the elegant prose of serious scholarship, we are aware that this is a man concerned. His religious concern with the phenomena of sin, guilt, and defilement are only the most obvious examples." See Robert C. Solomon, "Paul Ricoeur on Passion and Emotion" (1979), in Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, p. 2.
the realm of language as we revert from speculation to myths, and from myths to primary symbols. This reversion enables us from hereon to take the myths as secondary symbols and speculation as tertiary symbols. Consequently, we must understand the elementary language of avowal, the more developed language of myths, and the evolved language of speculation as a unified whole.

A philosophy which attempts to reintegrate the avowal of the fault has to determine the structure of the symbol. What then are the dimensions of the symbol? In every authentic symbol, we find three dimensions: the cosmic, the oneiric, and the poetic. First, the cosmic dimension is expressed in the hierophanies—the manifestations of the sacred in the cosmos—described by the phenomenology of religion. Second, the oneiric dimension is expressed in the dream productions described by Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis. Third, the poetic dimension is expressed in the creative images of poetry "when it puts language in a state of emergence." These three dimensions bear profound affinities to one another. The structure of poetic images is also the structure of dreams and the structure of hierophanies.

In delineating the essence of a symbol, Ricoeur’s method of approximation consists in showing how a symbol differs from a sign, an allegory, and a myth.

*Distinction between symbol and sign.* The symbol is a sign insofar as it aims at something beyond itself. But not every sign is a symbol. For the symbol holds a double intentionality. Let us take the symbol of "de-filement." This significant expression presents a first literal intentionality—material "stain"—which does not resemble the thing signified. Attached to this first intentionality is a second intentionality which points to a certain situation of the human being in the sacred—that of being "impure." The literal meaning therefore points beyond itself to

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7One can say that Ricoeur delves into the cosmic dimension in *The Symbolism of Evil*, the oneiric dimension in *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, and the poetic dimension in *The Rule of Metaphor*. Viewed in this way, Ricoeur’s later writings still fall within the global project of his Philosophy of the Will.

something that is like a stain. Unlike transparent technical signs (which only say what they signify), symbolic signs are opaque because “the first literal, patent meaning analogically intends a second meaning which is not given otherwise than in the first.” One cannot objectify the analogical bond between the literal meaning and the symbolic meaning. It is by participating in the first meaning that one is led by it beyond itself.

**Distinction between symbol and allegory.** In the allegory, the literal meaning is contingent and the symbolic meaning itself is external enough to be directly given. Between the two meanings, there is a relation of translation. Once this translation is done, the allegory becomes superfluous. In the symbol, the hidden meaning is only given in the manifest meaning. The symbol “suggests” (in the sense of the Greek άνιττεσθαι (ainitthai) from which “enigma” is derived) in the opaque transparency of an enigma.

**Distinction between symbol and myth.** It is difficult to distinguish clearly between symbol and myth. Symbols, whose analogical meanings are spontaneously formed and immediately significant, are more radical than myths. Myths are a species of symbols “developed in the form of narration and articulated in a time and space that cannot be co-ordinated with the time and space of history and geography according to the critical method.”

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11It goes without saying that the symbol in question here has nothing in common with that of symbolic logic. In symbolic logic, the formalized signs are characters in the Leibnizian sense—elements of a calculus. In the symbol we deal with, the language is essentially bound to the content.

Having made these distinctions, Ricoeur undertakes a “propaedeutic” which stays on the level of a purely neutral, phenomenological, and comparative description. First of all, the analysis is neutral since it prescinds from the question of the nature of Transcendence and from the attitudes of the believer. It is phenomenological since it aims to comprehend the different types of symbols and their interconnections. Finally, the analysis is comparative since it understands a symbol in the light of other symbols. This phenomenological analysis, however, falls short of a philosophical reflection. The question still remains: How do we integrate the repetition in imagination and sympathy into reflection? According to Ricoeur, this can only be answered in the third part of *Finitude and Culpability*. However, a solution is outlined in the programmatic last chapter “Le symbole donne à penser” of *The Symbolism of Evil*.

By starting with symbols, aren’t we undermining philosophical discourse with a radical contingency? Isn’t the investigation limited since it is oriented by the historical, geographical, and cultural origin of the philosophical question itself? As a Western philosopher, Ricoeur cannot but speak from a cultural tradition wherein arises the originally Greek question: τι πο οὐ (tito on)? In this regard, one has relations of “proximity” with the Greek and Jewish cultures and relations of “distance” with Eastern cultures like those of India and China. One should not be scandalized by the radical contingency of our philosophical discourse. For contingency does not only mark the relation between philosophy and its sources but also the history of philosophy itself. The emergence of thinkers and their works is unpredictable. If one wishes to escape this contingency and to speak from an unsituated “objectivity,” he would “at the most know everything, but would understand nothing.”

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14 It is this awareness of being situated on the Athens-Jerusalem axis that prompts Ricoeur to pose these questions to Heidegger in a very recent text: “Doesn’t the task of rethinking the Christian tradition by a ‘step backwards’ demand that one acknowledges the radically Jewish dimension of Christianity which is first of all rooted in Judaism and only afterwards in the Greek tradition? Why reflect on Hölderlin and not on the Psalms, on Jeremiah?” See “Note introductive,” in *Heidegger et la question de Dieu*, recueil préparé sous la direction de Richard Kearney et Joseph Steven O’Leary, Figures (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1980), p. 17 (translation mine).
15 SM, 30; SE, 24.
B. The Primary Symbols of Defilement, Sin, and Guilt

1. DEFILEMENT

A. THE IMPURE

Behind all our feelings and actions regarding fault, we have the dread of the impure and the rites of purification.\(^{16}\) What can philosophy teach us about them? Perhaps, nothing. It would seem that the archaic symbol of defilement, which is embedded in a specific dread and bound to a ritual action, belongs to a way of thinking that we can no longer "repeat" even in imagination and sympathy. The idea of defilement as "a quasi-material something that infects as a sort of filth" resists reflection.\(^{17}\) The nature of defilement then only allows for an oblique approach. In a first stage, Ricoeur uses ethnology without concerning himself to appropriate its content. Here, defilement shows itself as an experience that has been surpassed. In a second stage, he brings out the symbolic richness of defilement. Here, defilement manifests itself as a moment in the consciousness of fault that has been surpassed in two ways—from an objective viewpoint and from a subjective viewpoint. Let us take the objective viewpoint. The inventory of defilement presents variations in its scope. For instance, we are astonished to see involuntary human actions, animal behavior, material events labeled as defilements. This is the first non-coincidence between the physical and the ethical. Furthermore, the inventory of defilements presents variations in intensity. For instance, we are surprised to see acts which the Semitic codes and Greek legislation have taught us as evil (like theft, lying, murder) not considered as defilements. The bond between evil and misfortune (suffering, illness, death, failure) has not been dissociated.

\(^{16}\) De Waelhens tells us that the relation between defilement and obsession could open an avenue of research which is left unexplored by Ricoeur. It is a well-known fact that behind every obsession lurks the anguish before death. At a first glance, obsessional rites of purification may appear as ways of defending oneself against sexual pollution. Ultimately, these acts represent an effort to shield oneself from the decay of death. See Alphonse De Waelhens, "Pensée mythique et philosophie du mal," Revue philosophique de Louvain 59 (May 1961), p. 328.

\(^{17}\) SM, 31-32; SE, 25.
B. ETHICAL DREAD

Let us now take the subjective viewpoint. Defilement is experienced subjectively in a specific feeling of dread. Again, this dread seems to have been abandoned. Yet, it contains in germ all the later moments for it is already ethical dread and not merely physical fear. The origin of this primitive dread is to be found in the invincible connection of vengeance with defilement which is anterior to any justification. Vengeance causes suffering. By means of the intermediary of retribution, the evil of suffering becomes synthetically linked to the evil of fault. Suffering evil (mal-pâtir) clings to doing evil (mal-agîr) in the same way as vengeance proceeds inevitably from defilement. This is the second non-coincidence between the physical and the ethical. For a long time, this bond between defilement and vengeance provided a first scheme of rationalization for the evil of suffering. If a human being suffers, it is because he or she has sinned. It required the crisis of which Job was victim to dissociate the ethical world of sin from the physical world of suffering.¹⁸ Suffering had to become absurd in order for sin to acquire its strictly spiritual significance.

Looking back, the confusion of suffering and vengeance explains certain characteristics of the interdiction. Although the interdiction precedes the retribution, the latter is anticipated in the former. An interdiction is not only a “thou shalt not” but also an “if not, thou shalt die.” The shadow of vengeance hovers over the experience of the sacred. From the viewpoint of vengeance and suffering anticipated in the interdiction, the sacred reveals itself as incompatible with sinful human being. No one can violate the sacred without being annihilated.

C. THE SYMBOLISM OF STAIN

We have just seen the two archaic traits of defilement which have been left behind. However, they are not simply surpassed but also retained and transposed.¹⁹ How could the representation of defilement

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¹⁹In Greece, the world of defilement not only survives but furnishes the imaginative model upon which the ideas of philosophical purification are based. In Israel,
have survived if it had not had the power of a symbol? The representation of defilement displays an ambiguity insofar as it is a quasi-ethical infection that points to quasi-ethical unworthiness. This ambiguity is not expressed conceptually but experienced intentionally in the half-physical, half-ethical dread of the impure. One can grasp then the symbolic structure of defilement in the rites of purification and go from these acts which suppress to the object suppressed. The rite displays the symbolism of defilement. Just as the rite suppresses symbolically, defilement infects symbolically. Ablution, for instance, is never a simple washing but already symbolic washing. Defilement, insofar as it is the "object" of the ritual suppression, is a symbol of evil. Defilement is not a stain but like a stain.

But more importantly, defilement enters the universe of human beings through the word (parole).20 The word is an instrument by which the pure and the impure are defined. The feeling of the impure is formed by the language which legislates it. Thus, it is not only the rite which is symbolic but the representations of the pure and the impure create for themselves a symbolic language. We are indebted to the orators, historians, and dramatists of classical Greece for the literary expression of defilement.21 Above all, the Greek reading of defilement constitutes one of the non-philosophical sources of philosophy. Greek philosophy was elaborated in proximity to myths which interpreted rites of defilement. Through those myths contested by Greek philosophy, our own philosophy is in relation with defilement. The bond between defilement, purification, and philosophy obliges us to appreciate the symbolic richness of the theme of defilement.

D. THE SUBLIMATION OF DREAD

Just as the "objective" trait of defilement is susceptible of a transposition which makes it an abiding symbol of evil, so also its "subjective"

not only ritual legislation but the experience of sin itself preserve the belief in defilement. See Isaiah 6:5-7; Psalm 51.

20 In his review essay of The Symbolism of Evil, George J. Stack dwells on this point—the emergence of the importance of language in Ricoeur’s analysis. See Stack, “Man and the Symbols of Evil,” Man and World 1 (November 1968), No. 4, p. 627.

aspect of dread is capable of an emotional "sublimation." If defilement is like a stain, dread of the impure is like a fear. It is not simply a fear of suffering or death but of the loss of one's personal worth. Here, again, the word is an instrument by which the defiled self becomes conscious of itself. In this way, dread is elucidated. It is by being expressed in words that dread reveals an ethical rather than a physical intention.

Ricoeur distinguishes three successive degrees in this intention. First of all, dread is not a simple passive fear but already a demand for a just punishment: "If a man is punished because he sins, he ought to be punished as he sins." 22 Secondly, the demand for a just punishment implies the expectation that the punishment serves a purpose—the restoration of order and happiness. 23 Thirdly, if the demand for a just punishment implies the expectation of a punishment whose end is to restore order, this expectation in turn implies the hope of the extenuation of fear, resulting from its sublimation. 24

2. SIN

It is important for us to grasp correctly the divergence in meaning between defilement and sin. 25 From the point of view of phenomenological types, the most striking transition from defilement to sin is found in the Babylonian confession of sins: "Deliver me from the spell that is

22SM, 47; SE, 42 (Ricoeur's emphases).
23Plato is well-known for this theme of true punishment resulting in happiness. One remembers the paradoxes in the Gorgias: "The unjust man is not happy" (471 d) and "To escape punishment is worse than to suffer it" (474 b).
24It must be added that this total abolition of fear remains the horizon of all ethical endeavor. As educator, Ricoeur esteems that it is difficult and even harmful to have a form of education—familial, scholastic, civic—which would dispense with punishment and fear. See SM, 49; SE, 45. On the interest of Ricoeur's philosophy in the field of education; see Loretta Dornisch, "A Theological Interpretation of the Meaning of Symbol in the Theory of Paul Ricoeur and Possible Implications for Contemporary Education," Ph.D. dissertation, Marquette University, 1973, III-272 p. "Thesis Abstract," in Dissertation Abstracts International 35 (August 1974), No. 2, p. 1211-A.
25For the Greeks, the transition from the first symbol to the second symbol is observed in the kinship of meaning formed between καθαρός (pure) on one side, and ὁγιός (chaste), Ἰων (holy), and ὅτιος (pious, pleasing to the gods) on the other side. The reference to the gods, essential to the idea of piety, insinuates itself without interruption into the world of defilement.
upon me . . . for an evil spell and an impure disease and transgression and iniquity and sin are in my body, and a wicked spectre is attached to me."26 Here, the symbol of defilement is dominated by the image of possession to which have been added the notions of transgression and iniquity.

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 the god whom he has offended. Cultures that were most advanced in meditation upon sin as a religious dimension "before God"—above all, the Hebrew culture—never broke with the representation of defilement.

A. THE CATEGORY OF "BEFORE GOD": THE COVENANT

The category of "before God" dominates the notion of sin. It is misleading to restrict the scope of "before God" to "before the Wholly Other," in the sense given by Hegel in his analysis of the unhappy consciousness. The initial situation is not the nothingness of human being before God but the Covenant, the Bērit of the Jews. What is crucial for the consciousness of sin is the primordial constitution of the bond of the Covenant. Sin is precisely a violation of the Covenant.

Just as defilement is related to philosophical discourse through the word (parole)—the word of rite and the word of avowal—the Covenant is also introduced to philosophical reflection through the word. The ruah (Spirit) of Yahweh in the Old Testament is also davar, the Hebrew word which is approximated by the Greek word λόγος (logos). The rendition of the Hebrew davar by the Greek λόγος attests to the fact that the initial situation of Covenant can be taken up in discourse because it is itself analyzable into a word (dire) of God and a word of the human being, into the reciprocity of a vocation and an invocation. From this dialogical situation, sin breaks forth.

It is also misleading to limit the scope of "before God" to a moral Law-Giver and Judge. The initial situation is that of presence. Sin is a religious dimension before being moral. It is not the transgression of an abstract law but the violation of a personal bond. To deepen the sense

26The texts cited by Ricoeur come from S. Langdon, Babylonian Penitential Psalms (Oxford: 1927).
of sin is at the same time to deepen the meaning of this primordial alli-
ance.

This alliance is reflected in the "codes"—the documents explored in
the history of religions and taken into account by Ricoeur's phenom-
enology. For the Hebrew experience of sin, we must not only look into
these codes but into those documents they dynamically point to:
"chronicles" that tell stories of sin and death; "hymns" that voice out
anguish, confession, and entreaty; "oracles" in which the prophet ac-
cuses, warns, and threatens; "sayings" in which the imperative of the
code, the lament of the psalm, the anger of the prophet are reflected in
wisdom. The word of the Covenant is vaster than the imperative of
the code and philosophical speculation. For the prophet who expresses
this word does not "reflect" on sin but "prophesies" against it.

B. THE INFINITE DEMAND
AND THE FINITE COMMAND

What is strikingly novel is not the form of prophecy but its content. For
a meditation on sin, prophecy presents two traits: as a dreadful
threat and as an ethical accusation. The prophet proclaims the indig-
nation of Yahweh over his people. As in the study of defilement,
Ricoeur's approach here goes from the "objective" to the "subjective"
pole. In a first stage, he identifies the ethical moment in sin; in a sec-
ond stage, he shows the specific dread connected with sin; in a third
stage, he delineates the symbolism of sin.

What is the "ethical" moment of prophecy? It is the revelation of
the infinite demand addressed by God to the human being. But since
this infinite demand is not made in a void but in the context of the old
Semitic "codes," it inaugurates a tension marking all Hebrew ethics—
the tension between infinite demand and finite commandment. Our

27Ricoeur published a penetrating study on this "biblical polyphony" from the
viewpoint of a theory of text. See "Nommer Dieu," Etudes théologiques et religieuses
(Dieu) 52 (1977), No. 4, pp. 489-508.

28The classic reference for Ricoeur is A. Néher, L'essence du prophétisme (Paris:
1955). Ricoeur wrote a review of this book when it first came out. See "Aux frontières
de la philosophie: Philosophie et prophétisme," Esprit 23 (December 1955), pp. 1928-
1939.
task is to understand this dialectic unity of unlimited indignation and
detailed prescription.\textsuperscript{29}

To understand the Hebrew conception of sin, we have to understand
the basic ethical structure of the Covenant as the dialectic of the un-
limited demand and the limited command. Prophetism brings out the
tension between the infinitude of the demand and the finitude of the
command. This tension is reflected in the consciousness of sin: on the
one hand, it sums up infractions in a radical evil in the “heart”; on the
other hand, it scatters itself into enumerable infractions of particular
commandments. Thus, prophetism moves up from infractions to sin
while legalism goes down from sin to infractions. Prophetism and le-
galism, however, form an indivisible whole. There is a rhythmic unity
of prophetism and legalism which is essential to the Hebrew concep-
tion of sin. For one cannot just sin in general. The code helps the sin-
ner to determine his particular sin. Furthermore, how could the prophet
articulate his indignation if not in definite reproaches like exploitation
of the poor, insolence of luxury, etc.? To recapitulate, there is a dialec-
tic essential to the Covenant: on one side, an absolute indeterminate
demand that locates the root of evil in the “heart”; on the other side, a
finite determinate law that breaks up sin into enumerable infractions.

\textbf{C. THE “WRATH OF GOD”}

If the objective pole of sin is the unlimited demand in tension with
the finite command, the subjective pole is the dread that always accom-
panies the indignation of Hebrew prophecy. In moving from the con-
sciousness of defilement to the consciousness of sin, dread assumes a
new quality. We can understand this new form of dread if we relate it
to the two previous characteristics of sin: the category of “before God”
and the infinite demand.

\textsuperscript{29}Along the line of unlimited indignation, we have Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Amos
discovers the dimension of sin as the “iniquity” of the “heart.” In this way, he reveals
the God of righteousness and justice Who makes an unlimited demand. See Amos 5,
7; 5, 21; 6, 12. Hosea exposes the dimension of sin as adultery and discloses the God
of fidelity—the God of the betrayed conjugal bond—Who also demands infinitely.
Isaiah uncovers the dimension of sin as arrogance and shows the God of holiness Who
How does this new form of dread manifest itself? All the relations of the human being with God are stamped with this dread. Before God, sinful man experiences dread—the dread of the “Wrath of God.” This “Wrath” has nothing to do with wickedness. It is simply the aspect in which the holiness of God reveals itself to sinful man.\textsuperscript{30} We must consider the “Wrath of God” against the horizon of the Covenant. The bond of the Covenant is not broken but strained, and in this way, broadened and deepened. Its scope is broadened. Yahweh no longer appears as the tribal god who guarantees victory for his people but as the Lord of all history. Its meaning is likewise deepened. Yahweh no longer appears as the vindictive god of taboos but as the Wrath of Holiness. His Wrath is only the Sorrow of Love.

The calamity of the Wrath of God or the Day of Yahweh does not consist in the occurrence of defeat but in the meaning of this occurrence. The Day of Yahweh is not in history but an interpretation of history. Its occurrence then can be foretold as irrevocable and its meaning as revocable. Prophecy is not merely the prediction of a destruction but also of a salvation. This dialectic of destruction and salvation even admits a certain respite in which the inexorable appeals to human choice: “I have set life and death before you; choose life and you shall live” (Deut. 30:19). But the choice does not annex the Wrath of God. Thus, the anguish does not annul the Covenant.\textsuperscript{31}

D. THE SYMBOLISM OF SIN

(1) SIN AS "NOTHINGNESS"

It is time to look at the linguistic expressions of the experience of sin. Ricoeur takes as a starting point the symbol of defilement as a posi-

\textsuperscript{30}The symbol of the Wrath of God or the Day of Yahweh, as having a direct bearing on the political destiny of the people of Israel, will be of capital importance in the distinction between sin and guilt. As the internalization and individualization of the consciousness of sin, guilt will meet the resistance of the historical and communal interpretation of sin found in the symbol of the Wrath of God.

\textsuperscript{31}One sees the rhythm of distance and nearness in the Psalms where the sinner discovers that his separation from God is still a relation. In the invocation of the Psalm, the sinner becomes the author of sin; at the same time, the God of destruction becomes the God of salvation. See Psalms 51, 130.
tive power. Now, sin is the rupture of a relation. As such, it breaks with
the symbol of defilement. But sin is also the experience of a power that
enslaves the human. In this sense, the symbol of sin takes up again the
symbol of defilement. Sin is a “something,” a “reality.” We have then to
understand how the symbol of sin breaks with the symbol of defilement
and prolongs it on a new level. This twofold movement even becomes
more striking when the symbol of sin is complemented by the symbol
of redemption. Just as it is not possible to speak of defilement without
purification, so also it is not possible to talk of sin without redemption.

The Hebrew Bible does not use abstract words but concrete images
to express sin: missing the target (chattat), crooked path (awon), rebel-
lion (pesha), straying from the path (shagah). All these images express
a first conceptualization of sin radically different from that of defile-
ment—they do not signify a contaminating substance but a violated
relation. Instead of relations of contact evoked by defilement, there are
relations of orientation. The symbol passes over from space to time.

In the symbolism of sin as a broken relation, there is a symbolism
of negativity. We speak of the sinner as having “gone away from God,”
“forgotten God.” We speak of him as being “foolish,” “without under-
standing.” There are more striking images of this negativity that can be
classed with the vanity of the “breath of air” that passes away, or with
the “idol” that deceives because it is Nothing. These two images blend
their meanings—the vanity of breath becomes the vanity of the idol.

The symbolism of sin shows a new facet when seen retrospectively
from the viewpoint of “pardon.” As will be pointed out, the full mean-
ing of sin only emerges in this view. Let us consider then the pair “par-
don-return,” starting with the divine pole of “pardon.” This “pardon”
often takes the imaginative form of a “repentance of God” (Ex. 32:14).
This imagined change is significant in that it points to God as taking
the initiative. The biblical writers read this repentance of God into his-
tory itself. Pardon appears then as the postponement of a punishment.
Punishment becomes the instrument of awareness of one’s true situ-
tion. Thus “pardon” leads to the human pole of “return.” “Return” is a
turning point from the evil way and a renewal of the primitive bond.
At the level of images, this pair of “pardon-return” puts us into the midst

32See for instance Psalm 144, 4: “Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing
shadow.” See also Psalms 62, 10; 96, 5.
of a paradox. The prophet exhorts the people to “return” as if it wholly depended on them and to implore the “return” as if it wholly depended on God.

(2) **SIN AS “POSITION”**

Sin is a positive power. It has realistic traits which link it up with the symbol of defilement. This “realism” of sin will only be fully understood in the third moment of “guilt” where the consciousness of sin becomes the measure of fault. To this “subjectivity” of the consciousness of guilt, we must contrast the “reality” of sin—its ontological dimension.

First, sin is the “real” situation of the human being within the Covenant. This realism of sin enables the penitent to repent of forgotten sins. This trait assures the continuity between the system of defilement and that of sin. Second, sin cannot be reduced to its subjective and individual dimension. Sin is at once personal and communal. Third, my sin is under the absolute Eye (regard) of God. This does not mean that God reduces me to the level of an object but that He constitutes the objective truth of my situation. The absolute view of God helps me to know myself as I am known. The three traits above attest that sin, unlike defilement that infects from without, is interior to existence but nevertheless objective. This first cycle of characteristics assures the phenomenological continuity between defilement and sin.

A second cycle of characteristics strengthens the essential continuity between defilement and sin—the experience of alienation. This consciousness was first fixed in the representation of a contaminating substance, later in the representation of quasi-personal forces that take possession of the sinner and bind him. At this stage, sin and misfortune have not been dissociated so that pardon becomes interpreted as a healing, an unbinding, a deliverance. It is striking that the Biblical writers retain this experience of the power of sin that binds the sinner. At the core of sin, they discern a fascinating and binding force.

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33Ricoeur does not deny that the personal imputation of fault is a progress over the scandalous collective responsibility whereby someone other than the guilty person can be punished. But the price of this progress is the loss of the unity of mankind gathered “before God.” See SM, 85; SE, 84.
This second cycle of symbols, which insures the inclusion of the symbolism of defilement into that of sin, is prolonged in a symbolism of redemption which completes the symbolism of pardon and which then assures the inclusion of the symbolism of "purification" into that of "pardon." The symbolism of "pardon-return" refers us to the idea of sin as a rupture of the bond of the Covenant; that of redemption or "buying back" partly owes its force to being joined with that of "going out" — the Exodus from Egypt which stands for all deliverance. The two symbols of "buying back" and "going out" re-enforce each other. The sinner is "in" sin as the Hebrew was "in" Egypt. Sin is thus an evil "in" which the human being is caught. This meditation on the second cycle of symbols of liberation prepares us to understand how the symbolism of defilement and purification are reaffirmed in the symbolism of sin as possession and in the symbolism of pardon.

3. Guilt

One can examine the notion of guilt in three directions: an ethico-juridical reflection (in the Greek manner on the relation of penalty to responsibility, an ethico-religious reflection (in the Jewish manner) on the scrupulous conscience, and a psycho-theological reflection (in the Pauline manner) on the misery of the condemned conscience. To appreciate the intimate connection of these reflections, guilt must be related to the two previous moments of the fault — defilement and sin. Guilt then 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 the servile will (serf-arbitre).

A. THE BIRTH OF A NEW STAGE

Generally speaking, guilt constitutes the subjective moment of fault whereas sin constitutes its ontological moment. Sin designates the real situation of the sinner before God (whether he is conscious of it or not). Guilt is the consciousness of this real situation. We may speak then of defilement as the "pour soi" of fault and of guilt as its "pour soi." Guilt is already present in defilement as the consciousness of being "burdened" by the weight of anticipated punishment. This consciousness of sin
brings about a decisive revolution in the experience of evil. For it no longer underscores the vengeance engendered by the objective violation but the evil use of freedom experienced as the internal diminution of the worth of the self.

As the consciousness of the burden of sin, guilt is the internalization of sin which results from the deepening of the demand addressed to man. In passing from the ritual to the ethical, this demand raises up a responsible subject who is not only the author of his acts but also of his most radical possibilities. The confession of sins emphasizes the "it is I who..." instead of the "against thee, thee only have I sinned."  

The new stage of guilt represents a twofold progress. First, the idea of individual imputation breaks with the "we" of the confession of sins. In the schema of sin, evil is a situation "in which" mankind is caught as a single whole while in the schema of guilt, evil is an act that each individual "begins." Second, guilt admits of degrees: "While a human being is entirely and radically a sinner, he is more or less guilty." Guilt then opposes to the equalitarian experience of sin the graduated experience of guilt.

B. THE RELATION OF GUilt AND PENAL IMPUTATION

In a first direction, the consciousness of guilt leads to our ethico-juridical experience. The metaphor of tribunal pervades the consciousness of guilt. But before being a metaphor of moral conscience, the tribunal is a juridical institution of the πόλις (polis). For this reason, Ricoeur considers the juridico-penal experience of classical Greece insofar as it is revelatory of the "beginnings" of moral conscience. Greek penal praxis not only keeps in contact with the philosophical reflection of the Sophists, Plato, and Aristotle but also with tragedy. For the Greeks, it is the ethics of the πόλις that constitutes the focus of a reasonable indictment. For the Jews, it is a Covenant—an interpersonal relation between God and the human being—that raises the counterpole of an accused subjectivity. In classical Greece, the determination of guilt and punishment was carried out less with regard to public offenses with a sacral character (treason and sacrilege) but more

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34Psalm 51: 6.
35SM, 106; SE, 108.
with regard to private offenses against individuals. These provided an opportunity for the πόλις to define the objective wrong suffered and the penalty commensurate to it.

C. THE SCRUPULOUS CONSCIENCE

In the second direction, the consciousness of guilt leads to scrupulousness which attained its extreme form in Pharisaism. To understand then the scrupulous conscience, one cannot ignore the movement represented by the Pharisees. First of all, the Pharisees were essentially men of the Torah (Greek translation, Ὄμος) which meant to them “instruction from God addressed to man” before meaning “law.” For the Pharisees, the whole problem summed itself up in the question: How does one do the will of God (mitzvah)? Confronted with the failure of the great Prophets to convert the people to the way of Yahweh, the Pharisees set out to observe the Torah in all sectors of life.

The scrupulous conscience may be described as a voluntary heteronomy which goes all the way to the end. Herein lies its greatness. The scrupulous conscience obeys the divine instruction in all things which means to say

... without reservation of any sector of existence; inspite of everything—that is to say, without taking into account adverse situations, ... in every detail—that is to say, giving as much importance to little things as to great ones.

The scrupulous conscience finds happiness in being obedient to the instruction of God. But what is the unique contribution of the scrupulous conscience to the consciousness of guilt? Scrupulousness raises to the highest degree these two traits: the personal imputation of guilt, and the polarity of the just person and the wicked person. There is an intrinsic difference between the person who is pleasing to God and the person who is not. This aspect of being pleasing to God adds a “merit”

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37 Psalms 19 and 119 are some of the most beautiful expressions of this joyful submission of the will to the Law.
38 SM, 124; SE, 128.
to the human being. To have merit is to merit a "reward." The explicit contribution of the consciousness of guilt is the opposite of merit. If merit is an increase in worth, guilt is a decrease in worth. Underlying this ethical vision of the world is the idea of an entirely responsible freedom which is always available. A "return" to God is always possible.

The limitations of the scrupulous conscience are found in its very greatness. First, it leads to the juridicization of the relation between God and the human being by restricting it to a relation of instruction—"a relation of a will that commands to a will that obeys."\(^{39}\) Second, it leads to the ritualization of morality when it forgets the intention of the law in the letter of the law. Third, it leads to the sedimentation of commandments for it unceasingly accumulates obligations. Fourth, it leads to the separation of the observant ("Pharisee" means "separated") from the non-observant. The specific shortcoming of the scrupulous conscience is "hypocrisy" which in Ricoeur's terse expression is "the grimace of scrupulousness."\(^{40}\) The dilemma is as follows: Does this "hypocrisy" reveal nothing essential about the structure of scrupulousness? Does the image of the false Pharisee leave intact that of the true Pharisee? To answer these questions, we have to look at the Pauline theme of the "curse of the law."

D. THE "CURSE OF THE LAW"

The impasse of guilt wherein the scrupulous conscience finds itself is resolved in the Pauline theme of the "curse of the law" (Galatians 3-4; Romans 7:1-13). Ricoeur sketches this theme to clarify the impasse of scrupulousness. According to St. Paul, a human being will never be justified by the law since he or she is incapable of fulfilling all the demands of the law. Furthermore, the law itself becomes a source of sin in that it makes sin manifest. If the law is meant to give life, how does it become a "minister of death"? In answering this question, St. Paul uncovers a new dimension of sin. Sin is no longer the "transgression" of a commandment but self-justification—the will to save oneself by fulfilling all the demands of the law. St. Paul also reveals a new sense of

\(^{39}\) SM, 129; SE, 133.
\(^{40}\) SM, 133; SE, 138.
sin—death is no longer a punishment for sin but the result, the "fruit" of the sin of self-justification.

This Pauline experience of the "curse of the law" renders intelligible the foregoing analysis of guilt. Guilt, understood as the promotion of an acute sense of individual responsibility, is also the emergence of self-justification and the curse attached to it. The experience of scrupulousness also receives a new radical meaning. The very attempt to reduce sin by the observance of the Law becomes sin. This is the "curse of the law." This curse is twofold: it affects the structure of the accusation and that of the accused conscience.

From sin to guilt, the accusation changes in many ways. First, the law becomes indefinitely atomized in a multitude of commandments. Second, the law becomes completely juridicized. The sense of sin as being "before God" gives way to the Kafkaesque feeling of guilt as "an accusation without an accuser, a tribunal without a judge, and a verdict without an author."41 The accused conscience also undergoes a change. In place of the global confession of sin, there is a detailed examination of the purity of intentions. In the light of the Pauline experience of the curse of the law, scrupulousness becomes the "evil infinite" that is the counterpart of the "evil infinite" of the indefinite atomization of conscience. The guilty conscience also isolates itself in shouldering the whole burden of guilt. This isolated conscience can fall into the sin of sins which is finally the desire for death—despair.

To escape from this despair, one must be declared "just" by an Other. According to St. Paul, justification is something that comes to a human being "from the future to the present, from the outward to the inward, from the transcendent to the immanent."42 Although justification comes from the outside, it already dwells in the person who believes. The person of faith already experiences a "new freedom" which is not the power to choose, to act, good will, or responsibility but "being at home with oneself, in the whole, in the recapitulation of Christ."43 Seen retrospectively from the viewpoint of justification by faith, the "curse of the law" is not only the supreme sin but the supreme pedagogy for freedom—a pedagogy of excess which draws the superabundance of

41SM, 139; SE, 144.
42SM, 142; SE, 147.
43SM, 142; SE, 148.
grace from the abundance of sin: “The law entered, that the offense might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). This paradox can only be read after the event. For it would be the most Satanic form of self-justification to sin abundantly in order that grace may superabound.

The horizon toward which the primary symbols tend may be called the concept of the servile will (serf-arbitre). This concept cannot be directly grasped because it coalesces two incompatible notions—the notion of will which signifies an always available freedom and the notion of servitude which is the unavailability of freedom to itself. The concept of the servile will draws all its meaning from the series of primary symbols and raises them to the level of speculation.

There is a circular relation among all the primary symbols. The last one brings out the meaning of the preceding ones but these, in turn, give to the last their power of symbolization. One can show this by going through the series of symbols in the opposite direction. Guilt can only express itself in the indirect language of “captivity” and “infection” borrowed from the stages of sin and defilement. Both symbols are transposed “inward” to express a will that freely enslaves and infects itself. In turn, the symbolism of the captivity of sin and the infection of defilement become clarified in designating a dimension of freedom.

But why this recourse to the prior symbolism? It is because the paradox of a servile will is opaque to thought: “That freedom must be delivered and that this deliverance is deliverance from self-enslavement cannot be said directly; yet it is the central theme of ‘salvation.’”44 To explicate further this theme, the primary symbols have to be incorporated into the myths of the beginning and the end of evil. For these myths cast a new light on the human experience of evil.

C. THE MYTHS OF THE BEGINNING AND THE END

The “repetition” in imagination and sympathy of the experience of fault, which is expressed in the primary symbols of defilement, sin, and guilt, occurred only by abstracting them from their milieu—the world of myths.45 These myths cause embarrassment to modern man who

44SM, 146; SE, 152.
lives the "crisis" of the separation between myth and history. On the one hand, this "crisis" can signify the loss of the mythical dimension. Unable to coordinate mythical time with the events of history and mythical space with the places of geography (as these have been constituted by the critical method), we may give in to a radical demythization of all our thinking.46 But on the other hand, this very demythization can lead to the rediscovery of myth as myth—its power to reveal—and thus, the conquest of the mythical dimension.47

Limiting himself "voluntarily and systematically" to the myths of evil, Ricoeur sets down the working hypothesis governing his entire analysis. This working hypothesis, which is to be verified in the course of analysis, concerns the triple function of the myths of evil.48 The first function of these myths is to manifest the universality of human experience through a concrete example. Their second function is to confer a temporal orientation in human experience. In narrating the origin and the end of evil, these myths bring out the drama of the perdition and the salvation of humanity. Their third function is to undertake an exploration of the discordance between the human being's ontological status as a being created good, and his historical condition as an existence found defiled, sinful, and guilty.

Myth must be differentiated from allegory. An allegory is always reducible to a translation that replaces it while the myth, with its power of revealing things, is irreducible to any translation. Myth must also be dissociated from gnosis which is an etiological or causal explanation. What then is myth? To answer this question, we must recall that the function of the symbol is to disclose a dimension of experience that, without it, would remain hidden. This function of disclosure also belongs to the myth. The myth, however, adds "a new stage of meaning" to that of the primary symbols by its narrative form.49 How can this narration disclose reality in a symbolic way? In replying to this question, Ricoeur takes recourse in the interpretation of mythical conscious-

47SM, 13, 328; SE, 5, 350.
48SM, 154-155, 161, 224; SE, 162-163, 170, 239. See also "Le symbole et le mythe" (1963), p. 48.
49SM, 57; SE, 166.
ness propounded by phenomenologists of religion like G. Van der Leeuw, M. Leenhardt, and Mircea Eliade. But while these phenomenologists go back from narration to the pre-narrative consciousness, Ricoeur moves from the latter to the former.

According to the phenomenology of religion, the mythical narration is only the verbal repetition of a form of lived experience which expresses itself in an inclusive mode of behavior with regard to the totality of things. This behavior is most fully brought out in ritual actions. Mythical narrations and ritual actions are only the fragmentary expressions of a living participation in an indivisible plenitude which is anterior to the supernatural, the natural, and the human. This indivisible plenitude is not given but aimed at. In a sense, it is because this plenitude has been lost that we aim at it in an infinite diversity of myths and rites. To return to the question: Why does myth take the form of narration? It is because the indivisible plenitude bears the aspect of a primordial drama. To recount this primordial drama, the myth must assume the irreplaceable form of narration.

But how shall we find our way through the indefinite diversity of myths? In Ricoeur’s view, it is possible to work out a “typology” of the myths of the beginning and the end of evil. These “types” have to be both a priori, capable of orienting us in the diversity of the myths of evil, and a posteriori, subject to constant revision through contact with experience. In this work, Ricoeur examines four mythical “types” of representation concerning the origin and the end of evil: the cosmic myth of creation, the tragic myth of the wicked God, the Adamic myth of the fall, and the Orphic myth of the “exiled soul.”

1. The cosmic myth of creation

The first “type” of myth is exemplified by the Sumero-Akkadian theogonies which narrate the final triumph of order over chaos. To illustrate this type, Ricoeur takes the drama of creation called Enuma elish. Two traits are worth noting in the creation myth. First, it recounts the genesis of the divine before the genesis of the world. Second, it recounts that chaos, χάος, is anterior to order. The origin of evil is the origin of things.

What must be interpreted here is the “epic” way of thinking according to which order comes at the end and not at the beginning. What
does this signify in relation to evil? It signifies that the human is not the origin of evil. The human being finds evil already there and continues it. It also signifies that evil is primordial and that it was overcome by a struggle. The principle of evil is then twice designated: as the chaos anterior to order, and as the struggle by which chaos is overcome. It is by violence that chaos is overcome. Thus, the creative act which established order is inseparable from the violent act which banishes disorder.

In Ricoeur’s view, the absence of a genuine myth of the fall in the Sumero-Akkadian theogonies may be explained by the fact that the problem of evil is already resolved. Evil is primordial—it is anterior to the creation of man, to the creation of the world, and even anterior to the birth of the god who establishes order. In this type of myth, salvation is not distinct from the drama of creation.

The cosmic drama enters the history of humanity through the “cultural-ritual” repetition of the primordial struggle by which chaos is overcome. At the New Year’s Festival in Babylon, the king is first humiliated and then reinstalled. The king represents the god, Marduk, who conquers chaos. By being humiliated first, he is reminded of the instability of order. Through the figure of the king, the drama of creation becomes significant for the whole of humanity, especially in the political sphere. In this way of thinking, the enemy becomes represented as the reappearance of the ancient chaos that has been overcome. It is but fitting then that the enemy be punished.

2. The tragic myth of the wicked god

The second “type” of myth is exemplified by Greek tragedy. But why do we have to start with Greek tragedy? First of all, the essence of the tragic is fully manifested in Greek tragedy. It is therefore by understanding the Greek experience of the tragic that we can understand all tragedy. Furthermore, Greek tragedy brings out the scandalous theology of the “blinding” of man by the wicked god. Lastly, Greek tragedy shows us that the tragic vision of the world is linked to a tragic spectacle and not to speculation.

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50 See “Recherches d’anthropologie chrétienne sur le terrain philosophique” (1957), pp. 17, 21, 24-25.
The tragic as such emerges as soon as the theme of predestination to evil encounters the theme of heroic grandeur. The truly tragic emotion, φοβος, arises as we witness the confrontation of the “wicked god” (κοκκος δοξιμων) and the great “hero.” What is tragic is the dialectic between an inevitable destiny that unfolds itself through the unforeseeable history of human action. In the Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus, for instance, Zeus represents the aggression of a hostile transcendence while Prometheus stands for the defiance of the human against the wrath of the gods.

In the tragic vision of existence, the only deliverance possible is tragic “pity” which is “an impotent emotion of participation in the misfortunes of the hero, a sort of weeping with him and purifying the tears by the beauty of the song.”51 Aeschylus seems to propose a different way in the Oresteia. At the end of this trilogy, it is declared that the chain of vengeance can be broken because God is merciful and just. But even here, the end of the tragic is not a real deliverance for the hero. In the end, salvation is not outside but within the tragic itself.52 It is by participating in the tragic spectacle through terror and pity that one attains deliverance.

3. The Adamic myth of the fall

The “Adamic” myth is the only properly anthropological myth in that it displays these three characteristics. First, it traces the origin of evil to an ancestor of humanity whose condition is homogeneous with ours. Second, it dissociates a radical origin of evil from the more primordial origin of the goodness of things in narrating the passage from innocence to sin. Third, it gives the primacy to the figure of the primordial human being to which other figures are subordinated.

A. THE PENITENTIAL MOTIVATION OF THE ADAMIC MYTH

To “understand” the Adamic myth is to fully accept it as myth. It is to discover its symbolic function—that it has more meaning than a true

51SM, 213; SE, 227.
52See “Culpabilité tragique et culpabilité biblique” (1953), p. 288.
history. But what is this meaning? This meaning consists in its power to evoke speculation on the freedom of the human being to defect, to undo himself. This power, however, is only discerned if we see the myth as a taking over of the primary symbols of defilement, sin, and guilt.

The Adamic myth presupposes the penitential experience of the Jewish people. This Jewish penitential experience doubly prepares the way for the emergence of the Adamic myth. Negatively, it entails the dissolution of the bases of the theogonic and tragic myths. For here, creation is no longer a conflict with chaos but "word"; the "jealousy" of Yahweh is no longer the wrath of the wicked god. Positively, it works out a truly "anthropological" myth of the origin of evil by discovering the personal as well as communal dimension of sin: "the evil 'heart' of each is also the evil 'heart' of all; a specific we, namely, 'we sinners,' unifies all of humanity in an undivided guilt."53 The Jewish confession of sin renders possible the "Adamic" myth. In naming "Adam," the myth brings out the concrete universality of human evil. The myth also extends to all mankind the tension between condemnation and mercy that the prophetic teachings has revealed in the experience of Israel. Finally, the myth prepares the way for speculation by positing a "beginning" of evil distinct from the "beginning" of creation. In this way, the Adamic myth satisfies "the twofold confession of the Jewish believer, who acknowledges, on the one hand, the absolute perfection of God and, on the other hand, the radical wickedness of man."54

B. THE "INSTANT" OF THE FALL

The structure of the Adamic myth obeys a twofold rhythm. On the one hand, it concentrates all the evil of history in a unique event—in the "instant" of the fall. On the other hand, it spreads out the event into several episodes involving several characters—in the "drama" of temptation. Let us try to understand this dialectic between the "instant" of the fall and the "drama" of the temptation.

In this first schema, there is "one" man—Adam—who is each human being, all human beings. The figure of Adam provides the focal point at the beginning of history for the human being's unity in multi-

53SM, 226; SE, 241.
54SM, 228; SE, 243.
plicity. Adam is summed up in "one" act—he ate the forbidden fruit. It is this single act which ends a time of innocence and begins a time of malediction. From hereon, every dimension of the human condition—language, work, sexuality, culture—becomes stamped with the two-fold mark of being created good and become evil.

What is the meaning of the state of innocence that the myth projects as a "before"? The projection of this state of innocence attests that sin does not constitute our primordial nature. In recounting the fall as an event, the myth proclaims the "historical" character of radical evil. Evil arises in a creation which is primordially good. Through the myth, anthropology gathers all the sins of the world into a trans-historical unity symbolized by Adam, then puts the stamp of contingency on this radical evil, and thereby preserves the goodness of created humanity in superimposition with the wickedness of historical humanity.55

C. THE "DRAM A" OF TEMPTATION

The Adamic myth not only recounts the "instant" but also the "drama" of the fall. It spreads out the event among several characters (Adam, Eve, the serpent) and several episodes (the temptation by the serpent, the seduction of the woman, and the fall of the man). In this second schema, we find intermediary figures like the serpent. What is the significance of the serpent? Its significance lies in what it does. By raising a question which makes the commandment insupportable, the serpent perverts the meaning of human finitude. It arouses in man the "evil infinite" of desire.

By means of the serpent, the only cthonic animal which survives from the theogonic myths, an important aspect of the experience of temptation is dramatized—its quasi-externality. The serpent represents the projection of our own desire in the seductive object. More than this, it represents the tradition of evil already there. The human being finds evil already there and continues it while beginning it. Finally, the serpent represents a cosmic aspect of evil—what Gabriel Marcel calls the "invitation to betray" which seems inherent in the structure of our uni-

55According to Ricoeur, this is what both Kant and Rousseau admirably saw when they obstinately professed the human being's natural goodness and his historical perversity. See SM, 236; SE, 252. See also HF, 161; FM, 222-223.
verse. As for the significance of Eve, she would represent the frailty of being human—the point of least resistance to the seduction of the “evil infinite.” Here, we must remind ourselves that Eve does not stand for woman in the sense of the “second sex.” To quote Ricoeur: “Every woman and every man are Adam; every man and every woman are Eve; every woman sins ‘in’ Adam, every man is seduced ‘in’ Eve.”

D. JUSTIFICATION AND ESCHATOLOGICAL SYMBOLS

The Adamic symbol is a retrospective symbol which is closely linked with a whole historical experience turned towards the future. The problem here is: What corresponds in the Adamic myth to the “cultural-ritual” repetition in the creation myth and to the spectacle of terror and pity in the tragic myth? Ricoeur answers this question within the limits of a phenomenology of symbols.

There are two prominent symbols of eschatology: the “Son of Man” (a Hebrew idiom meaning the human being par excellence) and the “Second Adam.” However, these two symbols appeared late in Judaism. One must not begin with them but with figures that answer from the level of the Adamic myth. Such a figure is Abraham whose calling reveals a movement from “promise” to “fulfillment.” This historical schema, laden with meaning, underwent a whole series of transpositions, culminating in the eschatological figure of the Messiah.

The figure of the “Second Adam,” dear to St. Paul, adds the decisive trait to the series of eschatological symbols. St. Paul’s comparison between the “First Adam” and the “Second Adam” not only establishes a similitude (“As the fault of one brought condemnation upon all men, so also the justice of one procures for all a justification that gives life,” Romans 5:18) but a progression (“For if by the fault of one many died, how much more the grace of God and the gift conferred by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, have abounded unto many,” Romans 5:15). Salvation here is not the simple restoration of an anterior order but the irradiation of a new creation. Finally, this progression expresses a divine pedagogy (“God has shut up all in unbelief in order that he may have mercy on all,” Romans 11:32).

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56SM, 239; SE, 255.
4. The Orphic myth of the exiled soul

The Orphic myth distinguishes itself from all the other myths in that it divides man into "soul" and "body." This myth recounts how the "soul," of divine origin, becomes imprisoned in a foreign body from which he strives to be released: "Divine as to his soul, earthly as to his body, man is the forgetting of the difference, and the myth tells how that happened."57

Here, the situation is embarrassing because we do not possess the λόγος of archaic Orphism. On the basis of the testimony of classical authors, it is nevertheless possible to distinguish a myth of situation which reveals "soul" and "body" as separate entities. In this myth of situation, the body is not the origin of evil. The soul brings with it an anterior evil which it expiates in the body. In becoming the place of punishment, the body becomes a place of exile. More than this, the body is also the place of contamination. Punishment as incarnation is the opposite of a purification.

Where is salvation to be found in this type of myth? While the tragic myth finds deliverance in the tragic spectacle, the myth of the exiled soul is par excellence the promise of knowledge. The act by which man purifies himself is knowledge. It is the act by which he makes himself the same as his soul and other than his body.

D. THE CYCLE OF THE MYTHS

Although all these myths still address themselves to us, we cannot remain indifferent with regard to all of them. For Ricoeur, the place where one can best understand all the myths together is the place which declares the pre-eminence of the Adamic myth. He justifies this position in a three-fold way. First of all, the Christian believer is not interested primarily in sin but in the forgiveness of sins. As Christian, I do not say "I believe in sin" but "I believe in the remission of sins." Ricoeur insists that the dogma of original sin is not on the same level as the justification by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. Secondly, the Christian believer is not obliged to choose between myth or revelation. He is asked to practice the discernment of myths which calls for a

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57SM, 262; SE, 280.
hermeneutics capable of bringing out the symbolic function of the
myth. This hermeneutics demands the revealing power of the symbol
be put to the test of self-understanding. Thirdly, to declare the pre-emi-
nence of the Adamic myth is not to abolish the other myths. Rather,
the Adamic myth gives new life to the other myths and reaffirms in varying
degrees their essential truth. In viewing the other myths from the
point of view of the Adamic myth, one moves from the statics to the
dynamics of myth.

Although it is anti-tragic in its affirmation of the holiness of God
and the sinfulness of the human being, the Adamic myth nevertheless
reaffirms something of the tragic human being and even of the tragic
god. The figure of Adam "thematizes a mystery of iniquity which is not
reducible to the clear consciousness of actual evil."58 Evil is already there
in the very instant I posit it. The figure of Adam also shows us the "in-
eluctable" evil implied in the exercise of freedom. To become oneself is
to fail to realize the fullness of existence. The Adamic myth does not
only reaffirm a tragic anthropology but also a tragic theology, particu-
larly in the book of Job. The ethical vision of the world can not answer
the demand for a justification of the suffering of the innocent Job. It is
the tragic god that Job discovers. According to Ricoeur, it is perhaps
necessary that the tragic god be not abolished altogether "so that bibli-
cal theology may be protected from the platitudes of ethical monothe-
ism, with its Legislator and its Judge, confronting a moral subject who
is endowed with complete and unfettered freedom, still intact after ev-
ery act."59

The polarity of the Adamic myth and the tragic myth signifies that
the human vision of evil is dichotomous. On the one hand, Adam is
the figure of evil freely committed; on the other hand, Job is the figure
of evil suffered. Both figures are transcended in the figure of the "Suff-
fering Servant" which reverses the relation between guilt and suffering.

The cosmic myth is also reaffirmed by the Adamic myth. Although
the naive theogony of Babylonia and ancient Greece is dead, it survives
in such currents of thought like that of Heraclitus, the German mystics
of the fourteenth century, and German idealism. In this learned
theogony, evil is assigned to the origin of history and treated as a mo-

58SM, 289; SE, 311.
59SM, 299; SE, 322.
ment of being. According to Ricoeur, the only thing that can integrate this tragiology of Being is a Christology. According to this Christology, suffering is a moment of God. With the “Suffering Servant,” tragedy is fulfilled for the evil is in God: “Do you not know that the Son of Man must be delivered up?” However, the meaning of this “must,” which exalts fate in the divine life, can only be fully understood in the light of the gift: “No one takes my life from me, but I give it of myself.” In Christ’s death, tragedy is suppressed for absolute fate becomes absolute gift.

The Orphic myth, with its soul-body dualism, distances itself from the Adamic myth. Yet there is a contamination of Christianity by Platonism. The drift from the theme of exteriority of evil symbolized by the serpent to the exteriority of evil symbolized by the body is foreshadowed by the symbol of captivity and deliverance from Egypt.

At the end of this reading of the myths of chaos, divine blinding, and exile from the vantage point of the Adamic myth, we realize the limitations of the ethical vision of the world. Evil can not be fully explained in terms of human freedom. The Adamic myth needs the three other myths for the latter safeguard God as Deus absconditus and makes us aware that guilty human being is both deserving of pity and wrath.