AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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In the early part of his philosophical career, Paul Ricoeur worked out a general theory of symbols which he illustrated with the symbols of evil. He subsequently explained this theory in several essays (his final major statement on symbols can be found in *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* [1976]. After 1976, he did not return to the subject again). Ricoeur's principle work on symbols, which appears in *The Symbolism of Evil* (1960), was the result of a larger work on the will, in which he explained his philosophy of the voluntary and the involuntary, fallilbility, and, finally, fault, expressed "symbolically." Ricoeur's interest in the will and in fault is philosophical (rather than theological). This paper presents a summary of the larger issues raised by the critics about Ricoeur's theory of symbols and work on the symbols of evil, then closely analyzes the symbols defilement, sin, and guilt (the symbols of evil in *The Symbolism of Evil*), questioning their structures, their contents, and ultimately their validity and relevance to philosophy, and claiming that, by elaborating on the rather simple metaphors of stain, errancy, and burden, Ricoeur creates a new symbolism of fault rather than elucidates an existing one.

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The Problems [of Paul Ricoeur's Symbols] of Evil

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Karen E. Ritenour

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APPROVED:

Redacted for Privacy

Major Professor, representing English

Redacted for Privacy

Chair of Department of English

Redacted for Privacy

Dean of Graduate School

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Karen E. Ritenour, Author

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To my children, Amy and Michael Ritenour

The Problems [of Paul Ricoeur's Symbols] of Evil

I. Introduction

> Who says we're *civilized*?
>
> --Kurt Vonnegut
>
> (Televised conversation with Ted Koppel, responding to the question, 'Is civilization regressing?' The initial question was prompted by the 'barbaric' practices shown on 'reality' television).

Paul Ricoeur's work on symbols falls into two broad categories: 1) a general theory of symbols[1] and 2) a description of the symbols of evil--defilement, sin, guilt--in *The Symbolism of Evil* (SE). These two categories are more convenient than actual. Ricoeur never developed a theory of symbols that didn't depend almost entirely for its illustration on the symbols of evil and he never discussed in depth any other kind of symbol.[2] The categories aren't even all that convenient because Ricoeur also never developed a theory of symbols that did not rely on his theories of metaphor nor any theory of myth that didn't depend on his theory of symbols. We cannot advance into all these fields. The principle focus here will be on Ricoeur's theory of symbols and on his descriptions of the symbols of evil in SE.[3] After providing a brief history of Ricoeur's place in philosophical anthropology, as well as giving some background on SE and summarizing the major criticism already established on that work, I analyze the symbols of evil in SE. Some of the questions I bring to the examination are, In what ways are the *experiences* of defilement, sin, and guilt "symbols"? Are the symbols "symbols" or are they elaborated metaphors? What does Ricoeur

attempt to say about the symbols, exactly; not just *What are they?* but *What does Ricoeur attempt to say these symbols say* (about defilement, sin, guilt)*?* What are the structures of the symbols of evil? Are the structures consistent? Do the structures have to be consistent? Are the "symbols" new symbolizations? How are the symbols transposed? How is the question of evil answered by the symbols? What particular contribution to philosophy do the symbols of evil make? Analyzing the structures and contents of Ricoeur's symbols, it becomes apparent that while elucidating an existing symbolism of evil Ricoeur creates a new symbolism--one which contributes to the confusion of ethics and suffering and emphasizes individual defilement. This new symbolism does little for our understanding of symbols in anthropology or for our understanding of evil in philosophy, or rather, does much to renew archaic notions of evil.

1. Ricoeur's Place in Philosophical Anthropology

In the past one hundred years, there have been three significant movements in regard to the study of symbol in philosophical anthropology: the philosophy of symbolic forms (Ernst Cassirer), philosophical hermeneutics (Paul Ricouer), and phenomenology (Philip Wheelwright).[4] The importance of symbolism is new in the field of philosophical anthropology. In the early days of anthropology, Edward Tyler and James Frazer among others largely conceived of the religion of man based on

evolutionary models which did not include concepts of the symbolic universe: religious man was first animistic, then polytheistic, and finally monotheistic. A brief summary of the significant movements in philosophical anthropology helps to put Ricoeur's place in the relatively recent "tradition" in context.

Developing the philosophy of symbolic forms, Ernst Cassirer made significant advances on early evolutionary religious models. Cassirer argued that man is distinct from animals not so much because he is rational but because he "lives in a symbolic universe" composed of language (both conceptual or scientific language and imaginative or emotional language), myth, art, and religion (qtd. in Morgan 69). According to Cassirer, the symbolic universe is whole, *pro toto*, which means that each of these aspects (language, myth, art, and religion) together make up man; one cannot speak of an aspect in this symbolic universe using only conceptual or rational language and expect to get a whole picture or expect to have defined man, for although man may be a rational animal, "[r]eason is a very inadequate ter[m] with which to comprehend the forms of man's cultural life" (qtd. in Morgan 70). According to Cassirer, man is not *animal rationale* but *animal symbolicum*. The defining character of modern man is "that [he] has developed the capacity for *abstraction through symbolization*" (Morgan 71). The ability to comprehend the symbolic universe *pro toto* provides a "new dimension of reality" (qtd. in Morgan 69). For instance, if we look at myths from simply a conceptual or rational perspective, we miss the true dimension of the myth. We should perceive myth both conceptually *and* perceptually rather than

simply conceptually (as the nineteenth century anthropologists conceived it), for myth "has a . . . double face" (qtd. in Morgan 71) which must be read through both reason *and* emotion: "the conceptual aspect of myth comes under the scrutiny of reasonable man [*animal rationale*]" and "the perceptual aspect [of myth] comes under the emotions of symbolic man, or symbolizing man [*animal symbolicum*]" (Morgan 71).

Ricoeur's contribution to philosophical anthropology lies in his hermeneutics of symbols or philosophical hermeneutics. According to Ricoeur, not only must modern anthropologists look at man's myths and symbols with this double view of *animal rationale* and *animal symbolicum*, they must, through the process of philosophical hermeneutics, reveal and restore the meaning of what they see. Ricoeur suggests that we should remythologize symbols in order to revitalize consciousness and philosophy, i. e., to "allow for the possibility of once again establishing wholeness in the shattered age of over-rationalization." (In "The Demythization of Accusation," Ricoeur defines *demythization* as a category within which we demystify and demythologize. *Demystification* is the process whereby we "recognize myth as myth . . . with the purpose of denouncing it" and *demythologization* is the process whereby we recognize "myth as myth . . . with the purpose of freeing its symbolic basis" [335]. *Double-demythization* is "the renunciation of the fable and the reconquest of the symbol" [336]. I use these definitions in this paper). Where Cassirer looks at the two faces of myth with the two eyes of conception and perception, Ricoeur looks, too, but he insists that we

cannot stop there; we must put the features together and create a human form.

In Philip Wheelwright's philosophical anthropology, phenomenology, the question of truth or falsity of myth must be bracketed while we look at myth "from the believer's perspective." The believer's "cares of life," which myths express, must be taken into consideration. Wheelwright is very much in accord with Ricoeur. Both agree that the factual truth or falsity of a myth or symbol is not the main concern of anthropology; the main concern is to elucidate or "activate human meaning in existence." Wheelwright's theory of the "tensive symbol," which is quite similar to Ricoeur's theory of tension in the symbol developed ten years or so after SE, consists in the notion that a symbol has "a multiplicity of associations . . . joined in the past, so that there is stored up a potential of semantic energy and significance which the symbol, when adroitly used, can tap." According to Wheelwright, the mythmaker or the poet accesses this semantic energy in various ways: through his use of a symbol as the "presiding image of a particular poem," as an image that recurs in the poet's work, as an image that is passed from poet to poet, as an image that a culture shares, or as an archetypal image which recurs throughout history. (In *Interpretation Theory* 64-65, Ricoeur borrows from Wheelwright's organization of images to substantiate a hierarchy of symbols and metaphors).

Besides these three major contributions to the study of symbol in anthropology, according to Morgan, there are two related schools of thought in the field. One school argues that primitive and modern man

have similar thinking processes: there are no "essential difference[s] in the processes of thinking between the primitive and modern man." The other school argues that primitive thought is very different from modern thought. In this latter view, which retains the "evolutionary" concepts of man and his myths and symbols inherited from the anthropologists of the nineteenth century, in that it seeks "origins" and believes that the primitive comes "up-from-the-dark," primitive thinking is not logical but "pre-logical." Ricoeur doesn't belong neatly in either of these schools, but he belongs more in the second than the first.

2. *Summary Description of* The Symbolism of Evil

While working out his concepts of the "innocence" of man and the responsibility of the individual in his philosophical work on the will in *Freedom and Nature*, Ricoeur "bracketed," or put off the question of, man's fault, which he defined in the geological sense as a divide or rift (separation), suspending consideration of it until his work in *Fallible Man*, which was conceived as the first volume in a three volume work, titled *Finitude and Guilt*. *Fallible Man* was not the actual working out of man's fault, "one of the greatest difficulties of philosophy," but was an *approach* to it.[5] In *Fallible Man*, Ricoeur "posed the problem of man as a being of the mean" in order to locate man's inclination toward evil. While working on *Finitude and Guilt*, Ricoeur, coming to believe that evil could only be expressed symbolically,[6] began his study of symbolism and presented his findings in the second volume of *Finitude and Guilt*, SE. (The third volume

of *Finitude and Guilt* was to be a *Poetics of the Will*, a description of the will in contradistinction to fault. The *Poetics* was never produced. The entire corpus of these writings, including *Freedom and Nature*, are commonly referred to, by both Ricoeur and his critics or disciples, as *The Philosophy of the Will*).

Just prior to the publication of SE (*La symbolique du mal* French 1960), Ricoeur's first work on symbols appeared in an article titled "The Symbol . . . Food for Thought," published in French in 1959. In the article, Ricoeur claims to be working on a theory of symbols, of which the symbols of evil are said to be just one possible kind among many: "I should like to develop an example [the symbolism of evil] which, as will be evident, remains on the fringe of the philosophy of symbol" (205). Again in 1961 (French), in "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: I," which appeared shortly after the French publication of SE, Ricoeur claimed that his purpose in studying symbols was to approach "a general theory of symbol by investigating one precise symbol, or rather a determined complex of symbols [the symbols of evil]" (36).

SE (divided into two sections) is Ricoeur's only *specific* work on symbols. In the first section of SE, Ricoeur analyzes what he calls Western Civilization's three primary symbols of evil--defilement, sin, guilt. In the second section, he analyzes what he calls Western Civilization's secondary symbols, the myths of "the beginnings and ends of evil" (creation, tragic, Orphic, and Adamic myths). On the most basic level, SE is a description of these primary and secondary symbols of evil.

There is no easy way to define what Ricoeur means by a symbol or by primary and secondary symbols. This study in fact is more an effort to *approach* what it is that Ricoeur means by "primary symbol" than it is to make some definitive statement about what it is he means. Although it is difficult to define what Ricoeur means, it is not difficult to say what Ricoeur *says* he means. A primary symbol, he says in SE, is "a sign with both a literal and analogical meaning" or "a primary and latent meaning" (15-16). Ricoeur claims that the language of fault, "the most primitive and least mythical language, is already a symbolic language":

> defilement is spoken of under the symbol of a stain or blemish, sin under the symbol of missing the mark, or a tortuous road, of trespass, etc. [T]he language of fault appears to be indirect and based on imagery. . . the consciousness of self seems to constitute itself at its lowest level by means of symbolism and to work out an abstract language only subsequently, by means of a spontaneous hermeneutics of its primary symbols. . . . sympathetic imagination always moves in the element of language as reflection reverts from gnosis to myth and from myth to the primary symbolic expressions brought into play in the confession of fault. This reversion to the primary symbols permits us henceforth to consider myths and gnosis as secondary and tertiary symbols, the interpretation of which rests on the interpretation of the primary symbols. (SE 9)

In the simplest terms possible, the primary symbol, to Ricoeur, is that which is extracted, as most essential, from the language of fault in the myths of evil. Any definition of the symbols of evil as the "*eidos*" of the myths of evil

would be inadequate at this point, however. Speaking about Ricoeur's contribution to the study of myth, Joseph Kockelman says, "I doubt whether there is an essential and necessary link between myth and symbol. Obviously, any time one deals with a myth which is inherently religious in character, the *symbolic* language constitutes an essential part of the *story* in which the myth is expressed. For man cannot speak about the Sacred except with the help of symbol and cipher. But it is true, also, that there are a great mumber of myths which do not make use of symbolic language" (66).

After quite careful and extensive study of Ricoeur's statements on symbol, I am not ready at all to concede that what Ricoeur *says* he means by primary symbol is what he *really* means, nor that what he says the primary symbol *is* is *actually* what it is. Furthermore, like Kockelman, I doubt that there is any link between the symbols and myths.

As Ricoeur sees it, SE is a study of fault from its beginnings in primordial man to its expression in the Adamic myth. The ultimate aim of his project, as he says in *Fallible Man*, is to demonstrate how it is that man goes astray and how it is that he may be united within himself: "[E]thics, taken in the broadest sense of the word, which takes in the whole realm of normativity, always presupposes man as having already missed the synthesis of the object, the synthesis of humanity in itself, and its own synthesis of finitude and infinitude; that is why ethics would fain 'educate him' by means of a scientific methodology, a moral pedagogy, a culture of taste: 'to educate him,' that is, to draw him out of the sphere where the essential has already been missed" (142). Ricouer's analysis in SE

ultimately attempts to demonstrate why the Adamic myth, which holds the keys to the will, is the "preeminent" myth. His particular purpose in the whole of SE, however, is to elucidate "the transition from the possibility of evil in man to its reality" (SE 3).

3. *The Problems of* The Symbolism of Evil *According to the Critics*

The following overview of the criticism of Ricoeur's theory of symbols and the symbols of evil is presented in topological order. The majority of criticism about the symbols focusses on method, theoretical approach, and ethical vision. The problems with SE, according to the critics, fall into four broad categories: the vision of evil or ethics, the narrow number and type of symbols and myths studied, Ricoeur's theory of language as concerns the symbol, and his theory of interpretation (as it concerns the symbol). Ricoeur is especially criticized for his limited views of symbols. Critics question his emphasis on the symbols of evil and myths of evil and wonder why he doesn't discuss other kinds of symbols or myths. They also question his old school assumption that the symbols express merely or only a primitive, "up-from-the-dark," pre-logical thinking. All the problems or potential problems cited about his work are rooted in these limits and assumptions.

The criticism of Ricoeur's work involving other religious viewpoints is quite extensive, for one of Ricoeur's main objectives in SE, apart from those stated above, is to double-demythize the notion of original sin and to provide some answer to the problem of evil. The critics who concern themselves with these or other questions of evil and ethics in the work

have it seems to me been concerned with how it is we reconcile Ricoeur's idea of necessary or bound evil with man's goodness: "How . . . in the light of [the] tension between [man's] propensity for radical evil and 'destination' (*Bestimmung*) for goodness might Ricoeur's perspective on freedom and grace be reconstructed?" (Anderson, *Ricoeur and Kant* 93). The same kind of questions are raised by Theodore Marius Van Leeuwen (although he seems to have an answer for them [145]).

Another concern of the ethicists is Ricoeur's claim that evil is always a matter of choice. Concerning this aspect of Ricoeur's ethical vision, one ethicist says it "has considerable limitations. Is evil only choice? Is it not also that which cannot be imputed or explained? Did not the symbols show how, apart from deviation, evil is something into which man is born and captivated. . . . Thus 'the presumption of the conscience that has laden itself with the entire weight of evil' (CI 309; fr. 305) is questionable. The failure of the ethical vision is even more apparent when evil as it is suffered is examined" (Van Leeuwen 164-65).

One final concern of these critics is Ricoeur's focus on man rather than on God. William Placher is particularly representative here: "To be sure, the biblical narratives tell us something about our existence, and they invite us to imagine the possibility of living in conformity with a pattern of human existence they describe, and thereby in conformity with who we really are. But what they tell us about ourselves is dependent on what they tell us about God. . . . Perhaps we too should look for the one lost sheep even with ninety-nine in the fold, for instance, but the first point of the story is that this is how God is" (44).

Points more frequently made in the criticism of SE concern the limits in the number and type of symbols and myths analyzed and the "primitive," "pre-linguistic" status Ricoeur assigns them. (Actually, several problems are involved here: the limited number, kind, and status of the symbols *and* the structures of the symbols, with their double-intentions and possibilities in meaning. The latter problems have more to do with Ricoeur's language and interpretation theories, and are dicussed in those categories below). E. J. Piscitelli asks, "What about the mythic paradigms or types that are not included in the cycle of the myths of evil as recounted by Ricoeur? Are these four mythic types [creation, tragic, Orphic, and Adamic] exhaustive of the symbolic possibilities? Have some mythic types been overlooked? If his list is *de facto* historically complete, can new possibilities emerge in history? How will new mythic-symbolic types be related to the Adamic myth? Ricoeur has not seriously raised any of these questions, nor to our knowledge does he have a convincing answer to any of them. Yet they are crucial to his whole enterprise of a philosophical appropriation of the symbolic world of religious myth" (302-03). These are questions that, as Piscitelli says, "go to the heart of Ricoeur's methodological inadequacies" concerning both myths and symbols (302). However, Piscitelli's solution--to recategorize the myths of evil under an isomorphic rubric of Divine Transcendence (304-05)--hardly seems to clear up the inadequacies, and his statement that the symbols of evil are to be thought of as "major themes and not images" (291) has to be one of the strangest critical oversights I have seen in the course of this study. Or perhaps Piscitelli has

accidentally stumbled onto a pure truth about Ricoeur's symbols of evil: that they are not symbols. But let's suspend this possibility.

Joseph Kockelman, who provides a comprehensive history of myth and places Ricoeur at the tail end of the history, also says, "Ricoeur begins by stating that he is interested in religious myths only. Although he leaves room for myths which are not inherently religious in character, most of the time, however, he seems to suggest that only religious myths are genuine myths. . . .I think it is impossible to describe the essence of myth by limiting oneself to the realm of religious myths only. [The same could be said about the symbols]. I agree with Cohen, Kirk, Levi-Strauss and many others that myths differ enormously in their morphology and function, and that characteristics found in one type of myth cannot be extrapolated to all other types of myths" (63-66).

The limited number and kind of symbols and myths studied by Ricoeur in SE are also issues for Ludek Broz. In comments made by him in "Symbols, Culture and Mythopoetic Thought," he gingerly criticizes Ricoeur for reducing "the whole contemporary philosophical and theological discussion concentrated around the broad themes of demythologizing, the philosophy of language, existentialism, structuralism, psychoanalysis and the anthropology of cultures . . . to a hermeneutic problem" and tentatively calls these reductions a possible "weak point of the philosophy of this highly sympathetic Protestant thinker" (192). Broz is one of the few critics within this corpus to suggest or rather insist that *modern* man is a symbolizing and mythologizing creature. He points out that to this day, in "at least three large realms," modern man experiences

or uses symbols *directly*, *without* resorting to "second naiveté," i.e., through the fully participatory "first naiveté," in the realm of religion, in the social realm--family, school, and a "variety of economic and political structures," and in the realm of art. "The manner of thinking mythically," too, he says, "is not a prehistoric phenomenon, but *by right belongs to the present*" (193-99). Broz' extensive look at these kinds of symbols is an indirect criticism of Ricoeur's descriptions of the symbols of evil, for Ricoeur generally places symbols in the "primitive" past (and later, in *Freud and Philosophy*, links this primitive or primordial realm to the unconscious realm).

Two final categories of the criticism of SE remain to be reviewed: the criticism of Ricoeur's philosophies of language and theories of interpretation as these concern the symbols of evil. These two categories often converge so they are presented together in one discussion.

Anyone familiar with Ricoeur's interpretation theory or theory of metaphor should be quite comfortable at this point, for Ricoeur's theory of symbol or hermeneutics of symbols and myths does not depart significantly from his theories of metaphor and interpretation, as we have just seen Broz point out in his statement to the effect that Ricoeur reduces all major disciplines to "a hermeneutic problem." Ricoeur maintains that "[e]very sign is directed to something beyond itself and stands for this something. But not every sign is a symbol. [T]he symbol has hidden within its purpose a double intentionality. . . .There is a first or literal intentionality which, like any signifying intentionality, implies the triumph of the conventional over the natural sign. . . .The first obvious literal meaning

itself looks analogically toward a second meaning which is found only in the first meaning. . . .The symbolic meaning is constituted in and by the literal meaning, which brings off the analogy by providing the analogue . . . the correspondence is not between signifying word and signified thing, but between first meaning and second meaning" ("Symbol . . . Food" 199-200).

Later Ricoeur more directly applied his semantic definition to the symbol: "There are two ways of accounting for symbolism: by means of what constitutes it and by means of what it attempts to say" (*Conflict of Interpretations* 77). At the same time as he directly applied his concept of semantics to the symbol, he claimed that all language does what the symbol does: "[T]here is no mystery in language," there is only "a mystery *of* language" (*Conflict of Interpretations* 77). For Ricoeur, this mystery *of* language is in the meaning of the symbol or any polysemic utterance, i.e., in what it attempts to say. And in "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language" (originally published in *Criterion* in 1971), Ricoeur applied the hermeneutics of symbols to the hermeneutics of language: "I had been compelled . . . to inquire into the structure of symbolism and myth [in SE], and this . . . led . . . to the more general problem of hermeneutics. [In SE] I tried to limit the definition of hermeneutics to the specific problem of the interpretation of symbolic language . . . defin[ing] symbolism and hermeneutics in terms of each other. . . .Today [ten years after SE] I would be less inclined to limit hermeneutics to the discovery of hidden meanings in symbolic language and would prefer to link hermeneutics to the more general problem of written language and texts" (88).

In *Interpretation Theory* Ricoeur constructed a model of the symbol based on the model of the metaphor. According to this model, the differences between metaphor and symbol are that metaphor's "bizarre form of predication" is "lacking" in the symbol; metaphor "apprehends" a resemblance while symbol "assimilates" one; metaphor "occurs in the already purified universe of the *logos*" but symbol is pre-*logos* ("symbol hesitates on the . . . line between *bios* and *logos*"); metaphor "is a free invention of discourse" but "symbol is bound to the cosmos"; metaphors die, whereas symbols "are only transformed"; and finally, the evolution of metaphor is "more volatile" than the evolution of symbol (the symbol's evolution is presumably "slow").[7]

One of the purposes of Ricoeur's distinction between metaphor and symbol in *Interpretation Theory*, if not the purpose, is to establish that the metaphor is an "advance" on the symbol: "the whole enterprise of elucidating symbols in light of the theory of metaphor [is] in vain if the description of symbols does not solicit in return some new developments in metaphor theory" (63). Following Max Black and others, Ricoeur links the metaphor to scientific language by means of the similarities between the functions of scientific or theoretical models and metaphors, both of which "serv[e] to overthrow an inadequate" interpretation. Both the model and the metaphor are "instrument[s] of redescription" (*Interpretation Theory* 66-68). Presumably the symbol is a two-dimensional (semantic or figurative and non-semantic or literal) infrastructure which can only be accessed through the multidimensional metaphoric superstructure (*Interpretation Theory* 65).

We immediately run into problems with Ricoeur's definition of a symbol in *Interpretation Theory* (and elsewhere), for at one point Ricoeur defines the symbols of evil--defilement, sin, guilt--as "metaphors"[8]: "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. Moreover, these primary symbols do not occur unless they are embedded with intricate narratives of myth which tell the story of how evil began" (Reagan, *Philosophy of PR* 87). The "distinction" between symbol and metaphor quite possibly doesn't exist.[9]

SE is said by both Ricoeur and his critics to be the first step in Ricoeur's development of the hermeneutic philosophy. Without going unnecessarily deeply into that development, hermeneutics can be defined as the interpretation of what something (the symbol, as also the metaphor, the word, the sentence, the text, or language) attempts to say (meaning, discourse, meaning in context): "language expresses something, says something" (*Conflict of Interpretations* 77). In both his early and later statements on symbols, Ricoeur claims that the interpretation of symbols involves three stages: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and philosophy. Hermeneutics is the stage or point at which, after having situated the symbol in the phenomenological stage, we demythize it and ask "what I personally make of these symbolic significations?" ("Symbol . . . Food" 202-03; "Hermeneutics of Symbols: I" 45). At this stage hermeneutics is bound to single texts, and does not yet involve reflection or interpretation. But reflection and interpretation are involved in the next stage, the philosphical (reflective/speculative) stage, where we "bring out the

meaning [of the symbol], give it form" ("Hermeneutics of Symbols: I" 47). This is done by means of an elaborate process of thought "battling" with reflection and speculation, which process we need not go into here. It is sufficient to say that, when "the battle is won," thought should "brin[g] out meaning and giv[e] it form."

Criticisms? You bet. After a full-length treatment of Ricoeur's work on hermeneutics, Joseph Putti criticizes Ricoeur solely on his interpretation theory: "[W]hen Ricoeur says 'to understand a text is to follow its movement from sense [the 'what'] to reference [the 'what about']: from what it says, to what it talks about', he subscribes to a sort of textual idealism. . . .Ricoeur no where explains what he considers as reference to reality, in what situation it occurs and how an interpreter arrives at it. If this is so, how is it possible to speak of a text disclosing a possible world and of evaluating the world disclosed by it? If the truth of the text is the world disclosed by it, and if one remains unclear about the nature of the disclosed world, then, the issue of truth itself remains obscure in Ricoeur's hermeneutics" (213-14). Kockelman also suggests that this method is elusive. "A philosophy of reflection which nourishes itself at the symbolic and mythical sources is hermeneutic in principle. The question still is how this can be materialized" (80).

Much of Ricoeur's work on language, interpretaton, symbol, metaphor, and so on, argues that the most important aspect of language is its meaning. At the same time, Ricoeur argues that meaning has a plurality and that meaning creates meaning. Steven McGuire, after writing an eloquent exposition on Ricoeur's theory of interpretation, which he calls

"depth semantics" or "authentic interpretation,"[10] finds that Ricoeur's theories reach a sticking point because "multiple" meanings are possible (192-93). And Kockelman says, "[T]here are always many interpretations of symbols and myth possible; but how can philosophy [whose aim, according to Kockelman, must be to strive for univocity] ever allow the possibility of opposed interpretations?" (81).

There is yet one final related point to be made about the criticism of Ricoeur's interpetation theory in connection to symbols. The (re)description of a symbol has the potential of creating a new symbol. Several critics have raised the issue of (re)symbolization:

> Has Ricoeur escaped the . . . peril, the one that, by his own account, threatens thought in its speculative aspect, the 'temptation of gnosis', the inclination to repeat 'the symbol in a mimic of rationality', to rationalize 'symbols as such' and 'thereby . . . fix . . . them on the imaginative plane where they are born and take shape'? (White 156).

George J. Stack, too, who at the end of his review of SE hints that he may be one of those "sceptical reader[s]," says in the following that any meaning we find is our own meaning, and therefore a new meaning, a meaning not in the text but added to it: "Since hermeneutics proceeds from a prior understanding of the very phenomenon which it tries to understand by interpreting it, we can no longer share the immediacy of belief; the symbolic meaning we discover in myths is our own" (635).[11]

David Stewart suggests that resymbolization may *necessarily* be the result of philosophical "thought" or speculation: "Ricoeur insists with much

force that symbols must be 'demythologized,' that is, stripped of their etiological function and displaced from their claim to historicity. Only then can they invite thought. But if symbols are irreducible, perhaps they can invite thought only by a process of 'remythization' whose aim is to replace ancient symbolism with a symbolism that is more contemporary. But surely Ricoeur intends to deny that this is a viable alternative" (588).

Ricoeur I think assumes that he "removes" the danger of resituating the symbol by approaching the symbol through the "second naiveté," i.e., through second hand "participation" in the symbolic, which, as the term implies, is removed from first-hand or direct participation, or "first naiveté." (The psychologist listens with the same sort of naiveté to his patients; he is not a participant in his patients' crises, at least not a first hand participant, and his reflective counsel helps to order the patient's experience).

On the other hand, Ricoeur's purpose in studying symbols is to arrive at their meaning. According to Ricoeur, symbolic meaning is "created" in the same way that meaning is created in the tension theory of metaphor. Ricoeur says in his discussion of the semantic moment of symbol in *Interpretation Theory* that to understand the semantic "nature of symbols," the "tension theory of metaphor is more useful than a substitution theory" (51-57). The tension between the literal and the figurative levels of metaphors (and symbols) creates a *new* meaning. We have to recognize that "the second signification," or the "meaning of a meaning" is a creation, and in the order of the symbols, what is created is a new symbol.

Although it will become apparent that I disagree with Ricoeur about what that meaning is, as well as that I disagree with him when he says "you can't discover any meaning through analysis" (*Conflict of Interpretations* 63), my assumption in the following analysis of the symbols of evil will be that Ricoeur replaces ancient symbolism with new symbolism. By way of analyzing the elements of signification in Ricoeur's descriptions of the symbols of evil, we will discover his new symbolizations, and this in and of itself has meaning.[12]

4. The Limitations of the Established Criticism

Despite the several fine questions raised by the critics, the symbols in SE have not been seriously criticized or analyzed in the English language in the thirty odd years since it was translated. Several critics have *summarized* that work[13] and several others, as we have seen, have formed critical questions and doubts about the methods *around* the work, but no critic, not even those who have raised critical questions, has *really* looked at the work, in the full sense of that word, in the sense, for instance, in which Rasmussen and Broz have said that we must understand symbols, at "that level of existence . . . hidden from and inaccessible to us." Critics have looked at the "what" of the symbols, but not at the "what about."

More pure consensus or perhaps sheer dumbfoundedness goes into the criticism of Ricoeur's symbols of evil than anything else. "Yes," the critics of SE seem to say, "those are the symbols of evil, alright." Several

reasons might account for the lack of an in-depth study of Ricoeur's symbols of evil. For one thing, Ricoeur's writing is difficult. Even the Ricoeurian expert, if she wants to, and often she doesn't, must sometimes devote hours to deciphering just one of his paragraphs or one of his units of thought. Ricoeur is obscure too because his methods and approaches are inconsistent:

> If you tried to pin down the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, you would have a very hard time indeed. His thought has been dynamic and restless, shifting and passionate. . . . Most recently Ricoeur's hermeneutic existential phenomenology has entered into a critical conversation with Nietzsche, French Structuralism, Anglo-American ordinary language philosophy, contemporary biblical criticism and theology, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Habermas, with a promise to incorporate into his own philosophical hermeneutics the entire Germanic movement into this field, a movement that stretches from Dilthey to Gadamer. (Piscitelli 275)[14]

Ricoeur himself claims to have no consistent methodology. There is, he says, "a certain lack of continuity in my writings. For each work responds to a determinate challenge, and what connects it to its predecessors seems to me to be less the steady development of a unique project than the acknowledgement of a residue left over by the previous work, a residue which gives rise in turn to a new challenge" (*Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* 32). And again: "[W]hen I happen to look backward to my work, I am more struck by the discontinuities of my wanderings than by the cumulative character of my work. I tend to see each work as a self-contained whole generated by a specific challenge and the next one as

proceeding from the unresolved problems yielded as a residue by the preceding work" (*Essays on Biblical Interpretation* 41).

The methodological terminology *is* difficult. For instance, the three major movements in the study of symbols, as outlined by Broz--phenomenology of religion, philosophy (of symbolic forms), and philosophical hermeneutics (185-91)--are all terms used by Morgan in the history of philosophical anthropology, but the movements in *that* field go from the philosophy of symbolic forms to philosophical hermeneutics to phenomenology, and Ricoeur himself variously uses the term "phenomenology" to describe his methods as, first, a phenomenology, then a hermeneutic phenomenolgy, and finally an existential phenomenology. Ricoeur also places symbols in three domains: myths (cosmic), dreams (oneiric), poetry (poetic); distinguishs the symbol from the sign, from allegory, from symbolic logic, and from myth; and masterminds three "stages" to "comprehending" or three ways to comprehend symbols (which three stages later congeal, after some confusion--under the overall rubric "hermeneutics"): as previously noted, the first stage is phenomenological, the second stage is hermeneutical, and the third stage is philosophical. But this is not all. The study of symbols is often confused with the study of myths, and in themselves, the study of symbols and of myths are "confusing": "The semantic confusion concerning symbol is no less than the one concerning myth. Even when leaving aside the entirely specific usage of this term--for instance, in dogmatics . . . there still remains a sufficiently broad field of misunderstanding in the sphere of semantics and hermeneutics, the theory

of art, the study of religion and, of course, theology and philosophy" (Broz 181). According to Kockelman, the same might be said about myth, "[f]or anyone familiar with the literature on [myth] knows of the almost embarrassing confusion occasioned by the great variety of views and ideas which even conflict with one another in many instances" (47). Kockelman himself identifies ten or more types of theories about myth, the second type being "a form of symbolic expression," and the tenth or eleventh being "the phenomenology of religion" (whose chief representative happens to be Ricoeur) (48-65).

We should understand that the term "phenomenology" is used in two very different ways in this study, depending on whether one is talking about comprehending symbols or a process in consciousness. Although phenomenology is the term given to the process whereby knowledge is appropriated in consciousness, i.e., phenomenology itself has to do with our method in consciousness of distinguishing "between what something is in and for itself (noumena) and the manner in which it presents itself to us (phenomena)" (Putti 115), the phenomenological method of comprehending symbols is a method specific to symbols. The first stage of comprehending symbols, as has been said, is called phenomenological. (This stage has four subcategories: 1) the understanding of a symbol within a system of symbols; 2) the understanding of a symbol by comparing it to another symbol; 3) the understanding of a symbol by a ritual or a myth; and 4) the understanding of a symbol by showing how it unifies different levels or layers, such as the interior/exterior, and so forth ["Symbol . . . Food" 197; "Hermeneutics of Symbols: I" 44]). As I

understand the term phenomenology, phenomenology *is* philosophical. But when we are discussing the phenomenological stage of comprehending symbols, we are in the specific realm of symbol *properties* --and at this stage we have not yet arrived at philosophy (the *third* stage of the comprehension of symbols). So there is this confusion in the two ways the term is used, and it is important to understand this, most especially because Ricoeur uses the term "phenomenology" in both ways in SE, where he both sets his symbols going in a system whose first stage of comprehension is phenomenological *and* looks at the symbols phenomenologically by "bracketing," then lifting the brackets of, the symbols and reducing myths to their essences, and so on--and where, somewhere along the line, he drops the "phenomenological principle, [which] is found to be wanting," and performs "'an existential assimilation [an existential phenomenology], according to the movement of analogy, of my being to being' [FP, p.31]" (Zaner 42).

Another potential confusion is inherent in Ricoeur's use of the term "double meaning" in connection with symbol, for there is the double constitution of the symbol (its literal/figurative constitution), which Ricoeur sometimes refers to as its literal *meaning* and its figurative *meaning*, and there is a double-meaning of the symbol, which he sometimes refers to as its figurative *meaning* and its *meaning in relationship* with what it is trying to say.

5. Intentions

In the following critical analysis of the symbols of evil, I largely avoid philosophical terms like "eidetic reduction," "phenomenology" (in the philosophical sense), "bracketing," and so on. What needs to be said about Ricoeur's symbols can be said with minimal recourse to such terms, and although Ricoeur had previously "bracketed" evil in his study of the will, there is no sense in complicating anything with this term, especially as the brackets are at this point removed. Ricoeur claims to be studying the essence of evil, the reduced phenomena, but this I will suggest is one of his methodological "fictions," part of his own mythmaking, and nothing about his work can be known or clarified by believing it. The "literal" structures of the symbols *are* slim, to be sure, but this has more to do with the fact that Ricoeur himself has starved them than that they are actually so slenderly formed. Rather than peeling layers away to get to the essences of dread and guilt, for instance, he superadds layers to get to them. Ricoeur himself reveals the skeletal structure of his symbols of evil, putting aside the symbols' flesh, the stains in which he'd enveloped them, and directly articulating what before he had articulated only indirectly, in his essay "Evil: A Challenge to Theology and Philosophy," which essay--up to a point--marshalls its evidence in almost the same sequence as the evidence is marshalled in the first section of SE. We are nowhere near the truth when in a study of this kind we complicate things with the philosophical terminology of phenomenology.

What "kind' of a study *is* this? First, because it is a study of the symbolism of the symbolism of evil, it is anthropological. With the help of the conglomerate metaphor presented above in the outline of philosophical anthropology--the two faces of myth, the two eyes of conception and perception, and the combining human form--we can imagine that the tension between the phenomenological, hermeneutic, and philosophical stages in the three stages of comprehending a symbol *produces* a new symbol, or, in terms of the conglomerate metaphor, a human form. Ricoeur has taken the *metaphor* of stain, the *metaphor* of wandering, the *metaphor* of burden, and out of the meanings suggested by them has constructed new symbolizations. Like any other symbol, these new symbols must be understood through the process of the comprehension of symbols, which includes identifying the symbols' places in a symbolic system and questioning their truth, if by truth is meant "the internal consistency, the systematic character, of the world of symbols . . . truth boiled down, truth standing off at arm's length" and if by truth is also meant posing questions to the self about the symbols, "Do I myself believe that? What do I personally make of these symbolic significations . . . ?" (According to Ricoeur, these are questions that should occur at the phenomenological and hermeneutic stages of the comprehension of any symbol; see "Symbol . . . Food" 203; "Hermeneutics of Symbols: I" 44-45). This is a project of demystification, i. e., "of recognizing myth as myth with the purpose of denouncing it." I have no intention of remythologizing the symbols, once I take them apart. I only want to see what they're made of.

I myself believe that evil is a problem we need to battle. But unlike Ricoeur, I believe that evil *is* expressed through language and that language often perpetuates it--nowhere more than in the language or what I consider the false language of the will. As Ricoeur himself knows, there are two or more kinds of evil: evil done and evil suffered, and my discontent with the "philosophies" of the will (Aristotle's, Kant's, Ricoeur's) is that they constantly confuse the two. This, I think, is especially the aim of the project of Ricoeur's philosophy of the will: to place the blame for evil (including evil suffered, or especially evil suffered) on the individual. His philosophy of the will puts the responsibility for evil undergone on the individual and gives no account whatsoever of unintentional evil, collective evil, cultural evil, authorized or sanctioned evil, the evil of oppression and oppressors or of different kinds and levels of oppression, the evil "behind" the scene/seen (that kind of evil that harms others without touching them), or the evil *in* reason, the evil in social engineering, in eugenics (or its modern equivalents), so-called necessary evil, and a thousand other kinds of evil. What I mean is that I accept (in part) Ricoeur's challenge to philosophers (made in his essay, "Evil"), and while I demystify his symbols, will dramatize what I consider to be *his additions* to the confusion between doing and suffering evil. Whether we believe in God or not, the problem of evil is not only a problem for theodicy; it is not a problem that the Christian can answer in any way other than he already has in putting it off in faith and in final retribution.

I think the current theological attempt to "recover" or reconstruct Christian ideas through symbols, myths, texts and the like, because they

could not be constructed historically or in fact, is scandalous, if not outright evil. The concept of *homo symbolicum*, as Ricoeur appropriates it, is one way for the theologian to reconstruct, expand, and restore the notion that the text is a miraculous event revealed in double-meaning, i.e., to construct the notion that non-scientific language, from which the language of evil is carefully removed, is God's text: God speaks not only through the bible but through polysemic expressions in language. If any alarm needs to be sounded on this point, Bill DeLoach sounds one: "[Ricoeur's work on interpretation theory is] more than just another romp through the strange looking-glass of metaphor. Note carefully: semantics is the domain in question, and if you detect an empire-building tone of voice and an architect-of-systems ambition in that line about 'greatest possible extension,' you're absolutely right" (230). Religious fervor, whether the religious fervor of a tribespeople about to perform a ritual human sacrifice or of the Christian "finding," "discovering," or "putting" God's "meaning" in language--which is just another way of saying that somewhere someone or some group will be sacrificed (recall the "one lost sheep and the ninety-nine in the fold")--should invite us all to think.

So why do I set myself in among the lions if I don't believe with them? Or perhaps I should ask, *can* I, without belief, set myself in with them? Some theological critics would say no. William Placher, for instance:

> Theological hermeneutics is therefore not a subclass to be fitted into a general hermeneutical theory. Biblical hermeneutics has its own rules, and can be done only from within the community of faith. Indeed, when one turns to the Bible, 'the

> task of interpreting these specific texts will require that theological hermeneutics ultimately encompass philosophical hermeneutics and transform it into its own organon.' Thus it is a mistake to try to understand the texts from some presuppositionless point outside of faith. We must understand in order to believe, but we must also believe in order to understand. (40)[15]

Other critics, not willing to make quite such broadly exclusive claims, make the more open claim that the interpreter may move "down [up?] to the level" of the religious phenomenon, without necessarily having to undergo conversion first:

> To the western sophisticate who acts as interpreter, myths, particularly archaic myths, may seem apparent and simply impossible to believe, and for that reason - false. However, if one is willing to grant the claim of myth as real, that is, if one refuses to make myth either into primitive science or a matter of sub-conscious social behavior, it is probable that an interpretation of the myth in terms of principles germane to the structure of the myth is possible. (Rasmussen, "Myth, Structure and Interpretation" 205)

In his effort to explain how it is that one reads symbols, Ludek Broz, as David Rasmussen had also done, compares the reading of symbols with the reading or appreciation of fine music, poetry, or art, which

> *does not mediate* the respective . . . hidden level of reality, that particular sphere of existence, *for everyone*: one must be capable of listening to a melody or poem, and one must know how to observe a painting. In order to be able to 'receive' a work of art, one must be equipped with certain inner prerequisites in this respect. (187).

This is certainly more the spirit with which I go in with the lions, and being familiar with "the creation of the poetic," I feel qualified to make the foray.

6. The Structures of the Symbols of Evil, and Problems

According to Ricoeur, Western Civilization's symbols of evil--defilement, sin, guilt--are structured in the following way: the symbol or metaphor consists of two parts, an objective part, which includes specific violations, and a subjective part, which includes dread of retribution. A taboo (object) is violated and man fears punishment (subject). There are various advances in ethics and reasoning in the "confession" man makes and in his "experience" of cosmological retribution in the course of the experience of fault, but part and parcel, this is *all there is* to the structure of the symbols of evil: two traits, 1) an object (violation), and 2) a subject (dread of retribution). This structure is the same in each of the symbols of evil, defilement, sin, and guilt. Each symbol has two parts, an object (violation) and a subject (dread of retribution) (except guilt, which doesn't have an object [violation]. It only has a subject [dread of retribution]).

But there's more, because the symbols not only have these simple, literal or internal, and static structures. They also have a dialectical, dynamic, diachronic, external structure, which transforms through history--*first* stain, *second* sin, *third* guilt. The transformation, as Ricoeur configures it, is, among other things, generally a matter of *dominance*: in the prechristian period, defilement is dominant; in the christian period, sin is dominant; in the modern period, guilt is dominant.

In addition each of the symbols has an external synchronous structure. Each of the symbols--stain, sin, guilt--is *in* lateral relationship with each other, such that the symbol of stain is in relationship with the symbol of sin and guilt, and the symbol of sin is in relationship with the symbol of defilement and guilt, and the symbol of guilt is in relationship with the symbol of defilement. Exactly how it is that the symbols of sin and guilt, with *their* structures ("traits"), are situated in relationship with the symbol of defilement with *its* structure, and so on, is not something that Ricoeur ever explains. But Ricoeur claims there is a structural relationship between each symbol: "It should be understood that there are not three unconnected forms of symbols. The structure of the poetic image is also the structure of the dream when the latter extracts from the fragments of our past a prophecy of our future, and the structure of the hierophanies that make the sacred manifest" (SE 14). "The most internalized experience of guilt . . . was already aimed at by the most archaic experience of all, that of defilement. The final symbol indicates its limiting concept only by taking up into itself all the wealth of the prior symbols. Thus there is a circular relation among all the symbols: the last bring out the meaning of the preceding ones, but the first lend to the last all their power of symbolization. It is possible to show this by going through the whole series of symbols in the opposite direction. It is remarkable, indeed, that guilt turns to its own account the symbolic language in which the experiences of defilement and sin took shape" (SE 152). "The symbolic sense of defilement is complete only at the end of all its repeated

appearances" (SE 155). Meanwhile, a given symbol will have dominance, to wit:

Chart 1. The Structures of the Symbols of Evil

Pre-classical/Classical	Post-classical/Biblical	Modern /Scientific
DEFILEMENT **/ ** **violation dread** **of** **retribution**	DEFILEMENT / \ violation dread of retribition	DEFILEMENT / \ violation dread of retribution
SIN / \ violation dread of retribution	**SIN** **/ ** **violation dread** **of** **retribution**	
GUILT \ dread of retribution	GUILT \ dread of retribution	**GUILT** **** **dread** **of** **retribution**

When the symbol is in bold, it, along with its traits, is dominant. Each symbol has an internal structure (the internal traits: the objective and subjective), and two external structures (or more, if you count the literal and figurative levels, with the figurative level's relationship to the superstructure of evil, none of which is shown in this chart): a synchronous structure (which Ricoeur never actually *explains*) and a diachronous structure (the symbols as they appear and successively dominate over time). The object is missing from the symbols of guilt, and the symbol of sin is missing in the modern period because Ricoeur removes them for reasons which will be explained in their turn. My conception that the symbol is "structured" in a systematic order is taken from Ricoeur. According to Ricoeur, there is both a linguistic and a non-linguistic structure to any symbol. The linguistic structure of the symbol is its structure in the finite and synchronous universe of language. The non-linguistic structure of the symbol is its structure in the diachronous universe of events. See *Interpretation Theory* 53-54 and "Hermeneutics of Symbols: I" 38, 44.

Now the interesting thing is that, in the "preclassical" or "primitive" category of defilement, or in any of the symbols' subjective categories

(dread of retribution), dread is not simply fear; dread is *the fear or the confused fear of retribution*, of punishment *for* fault: "the anticipation of punishment [is] at the heart of the fear of the impure" (SE 27). "The origin of . . . dread is the primordial connection of vengeance with defilement" (SE 30). "The invincible bond between Vengeance and defilement is anterior to any institution, any intention, any decree; it is so primitive that it is anterior even to the representation of an avenging god" (SE 30).

Particularly in the primitive category, however, according to Ricoeur, dread is man's experience of suffering *indistinguished* from retribution: "[A]nonmymous wrath . . . is inscribed in the human world in letters of suffering. Vengeance causes suffering. And thus, through the intermediary of retribution, the whole physical order is taken up into the ethical order; the evil of suffering is linked synthetically with the evil of fault. . . .Suffering evil clings to doing evil as punishment proceeds ineluctably from defilement. . . .vengeance for a violated interdict falls upon man as an evil of suffering . . . : if a man is unfortunate in fishing or hunting, it is because his wife has adulterous relations . . . if you wish to avoid a painful or fatal confinement in childbirth, to protect yourself against a calamity (storm, eclipse, earthquake), to avoid failure in an extraordinary or dangerous undertaking (voyage, getting past an obstacle, hunting, or fishing), observe the practices for eliminating or exorcizing defilement" (SE 31). If your wife leaves you, it is because you have not given the gods the proper libation, and so forth. Fear of retribution (and the confusion of retribution) is, according to Ricoeur, the experience of dread in the subjective category of defilement.

Fear of retribution remains the trait in the subjective category of defilement until the advent of Job, whose suffering or "punishment" is not related to vengeance. The advent of Job is crucial to Ricoeur's theories of the "transformations" of dread, that is, to the transformations of one of the traits in the two-trait structure of defilement. And here is one of the most important problems in Ricoeur's work, for it is questionable whether, in the system of defilement, *once the trait of the fear of retribution is removed*, there is any longer any subjective trait in defilement.[16] In other words, when the fear of retribution (which is the "nucleus . . . that remains constant through all the symbolizations of defilement"--i. e., through the symbolizations of sin and guilt [SE 45]), when the fear of retribution is removed from defilement by the advent of Job, half of the "traits" of defilement are removed. The symbol, since it is *based* on these traits, or reduced to these traits, loses half of its structure. My criticism of SE is governed by this problem. And it is not a small problem: if each symbol in the complex of the symbols of evil has the symbol of defilement as its basis, and the myths have the complex of symbols as their bases, the problem extends through the entire work--the dialectical constitution of the symbols and myths, which holds the system together, falls apart.

But this is not the only problem, for Ricoeur *further claims* that the advent of Job removes or "breaks" the bond between suffering and retribution. But Ricoeur himself will *restore* and *reconstitute* the bond. (How he does this will be illustrated in the following pages). And here's another rub because if it is the case that the bond between suffering and retribution is reconstituted, then the "trait" of dread in the symbols is *not*

"transformed," as Ricoeur insists it is; throughout all the symbolic significations, dread of retribution remains static; in sin and guilt "dread of retribution" remains the subjective experience, suffering remains *indistinguishable* from fault, and there is no "advance," as Ricoeur says there is, in "reason" and "ethics." Or, if there *is* any advance in the entire dialectic, it is a simple advance in the notion of the *agent* of punishment--the cosmos, God, or the individual self--and not in the notion that suffering is always deserved punishment.[17] Now we shall see among other things how all this works.

II. Defilement

We should understand Ricoeur's opening claim in the chapter on defilement in SE:

> Dread of the impure and rites of purification are in the background of all our feelings and all our behavior relating to fault. What is there that the philosopher can understand about these feelings and these modes of behavior? (SE 25)

In the first sentence in this passage, the pronoun "our" has no antecedent but, in the sense that Ricoeur uses it here, "our" seems to refer to readers, me and you. If we replace the pronoun with a specific noun, a noun that refers to twentieth and twenty-first century readers, the statement reads as follows:

> Dread of the impure and rites of purification are in the background of all [modern humanity's] feelings and all [modern humanity's] behavior relating to fault.

Unless we are wrong about the pronominal referents, this is a clear statement. *We* dread the impure. Behind every behavior and feeling *we* have relating to fault is a fear of impurity, stain, taint.

Yet the statement also contains a prepositional phrase which is not really clear, the phrase "in the background." Dread of the impure is located "in the background." Now, what is meant by "the background"? Is the "background" far removed, as in some vague primordial

remembrance? Or is it near, at the base of each feeling or behavior we have relating to fault? The unspecific character of the phrase makes the phrase problematic. How much does the background (where dread of the impure is located) still influence our feelings and behaviors? Probably not much if it is a distant background; potentially a great deal if it is a near one.

In the second sentence in the passage--"What is there that the philosopher can understand about these feelings and these modes of behavior?"--Ricoeur implies that the philosopher cannot understand these feelings and these modes of behavior. The implication is that the dread of the impure is very far removed from the philosopher, in the philosopher's very distant background. In this second statement, the viewpoint and tone have subtly changed: "our feelings" has become "these feelings" and the general, participatory, plural, reader-friendly pronoun "our" has become the specific, singular, and particular noun, "the philosopher." The second sentence asks *the philosopher* what *he* can understand about "*these* feelings and *these* modes of behavior." And it is "he," "the philosopher," who replies in the next paragraph: "He would be tempted to reply: Nothing."

The specific viewpoint of the philosopher is dropped, however, as soon as it is adopted, and a plural pronoun, "our," is once again used. But now the pronoun refers, not to us, not to everybody in general, but to philosophers or other professionals only. The "we" in the following passages refers specifically to Ricoeur's fellow philosophers:

> [E]ven the representation of defilement, embedded in a specific fear and tied to ritual action, belongs to a mode of thought that we can no longer, it seems, 're-enact,' even 'in sympathetic imagination.' (SE 25)
>
> We no longer understand what the substance-force of evil, the efficacy of a something that makes purity itself a exemption from defilement and purification an annulment of defilement, could be. (SE 26)
>
> In the first stage of our investigation we shall make use of ethnological science without being concerned to appropriate its content; defilement will then appear to us as a moment of consciousness that we have left behind. (SE 26)

Philosophers, it seems, cannot, without the aid of the anthropological and the ethnological sciences, understand "our feelings" and "our behaviors." *They* do not dread impurity. Philosophers do not participate in "our" feelings and "our" behaviors; they are not immediately involved in them themselves.

Now we might begin to doubt whether or not the "our" in the first statement of the first passage we looked at really referred to "modern humanity." Perhaps it referred to "philosophers." But if we replace the pronoun "our" in that statement with the noun "philosophers" (instead of "modern humanity"), the statement does not make sense:

> Dread of the impure and rites of purification are in thebackground of all [philosopher's] feelings and all [philosopher's] behavior relating to fault.

Nor does it seem to make sense if we replace the noun "philosopher" with the pronoun "we," or the other referents "these" with "our," in the second sentence of the intitial passage:

> What is there that [we] can understand about [our] feelings and [our] modes of behavior?

With the subtle change in viewpoint and tone in the initial passage, Ricoeur seems to (re)move the philosopher from "our" feelings and "our" behavior, and, at the moment he removes him, he himself performs a sort of classical ritual purification (removal from the primitive, from "our feelings and our behavior"). The philosopher prepares to enter a known realm, the realm in which man dreads the impure, the realm of fault, of defilement, as if it were an unknown realm. He not only denies that *he* has been there before or knows anything about it, he imagines that he must be especially prepared before he can enter the ground and understand what he sees there. He must enter the ground guarded with the anthropolgist's and philosopher's special knowledge. Ricoeur is aware that he enters the ground this way:

> [T]he Hebrew and Greek words that express the consciousness of fault have a sort of wisdom of their own which we must make explicit and take as our guide in the labyrinth of living experience. (SE 9)

We dread the impure; this dread is in the background of all "our" feelings and all "our" behaviors. Yet, although the dread is in the background of all our feelings and all our behaviors, *the philosopher,*

without special scientific knowledge, cannot understand it . The implication here is that dread of the impure is in *the philosopher's* very very distant background but that the same dread is in "our"--*who*ever that may refer to: the primitive, the person in a state "akin to an obsessional neurosis" (SE 25), nonprofessionals, obsessed neurotics?--very very near background. These claims (that "we" dread the impure while "we," the philosopher, no longer understand this dread) should be kept in mind as we proceed.

Ricoeur looks at the symbol of defilement from "a double point of view" (SE 26), the objective and the subjective. (By point of view, I take it that Ricoeur means that the view is *on* the object or *on* the subject because he variously calls the object and subject "traits" [SE 30, 33] and "representations"). Although Ricoeur never explicitly defines defilement, we can approach a definition through these "views" or rather, through Ricoeur's descriptions of what it is he is viewing. In the objective point of view, we find the primitive "repertoire" or "inventory" of evil, which includes offenses against the spirits or gods and "objective violation[s] of interdict[s]" (SE 27). As part of his effort to describe defilement, Ricoeur compares the primitive inventory of violations to our modern one. Chart 2 is a summary of the two inventories. As the chart shows, the archaic inventory includes prescriptions in morally and "ethically neutral domains"--offenses against the spirits or gods, violations of interdicts, and the "stains" of blood and sexuality--but does not include offenses against others, offenses against

"theft, lying, and homicide." The modern inventory, on the other hand, includes both ethical and personal offenses: offenses against others, against neighbors and so forth, offenses like burglary and homicide.

Chart 2. Primitive and Modern Inventories of Evil

Primitive Inventory	Modern Inventory
no judgement of personal imputation (27)	judgement of personal imputation, evil is imputed to a responsible agent
minute and vast prescriptions in morally and ethically neutral domains (27), involuntary/unconscious actions, actions of animals: the frog that leaps into the fire, the hyena that leaves its excrements near the tent (26-27 and 40)	ethics in relation to others (29), interdictions against violating others, laws against lying, theft, homicide
sexual and blood impurity (contagion) (28)	belief in contagion "prowls around in our in consciousness"? (29)

This, then, is the "objective event" or objective trait of defilement (for the term "objective event," see SE 29).

The subjective trait of defilement consists of the fear of retribution, according to Ricoeur, or the "order of Dread," the origin of which "is the primordial connection of vengeance with defilement" (SE 30). Ricoeur does not describe the primitive experience of the fear of retribution in contrast to the modern experience, as he had done in his description of the objective trait (although he makes such a comparison later). Instead he contrasts the subjective trait with the objective trait, claiming that although the items in the objective inventory of defilement are ethically neutral (the items are simply items, without specific moral relevance: the

frog's jumping into the fire is morally neutral), dread of retribution itself contains the seed of ethics, for fear of retribution implies consciousness. Terror or fear of punishment for an offense, is, according to Ricoeur, prerequisite to consciousness. When vengeance is "connected with defilement" (SE 30), that is, when the primitive makes the connection between what it is he has done (his offense, his defilement) and punishment for what he has done (suffering in some way--punishment always implies suffering), consciousness arises.

Thus the primitive associates the evil he has done with the misfortune that he suffers: The gods punish him (he suffers) *because* he has done something wrong. According to Ricoeur, if we suffer, "our first question is: what have I done to deserve this?" (SE 41). The primitive believes that he is punished because he deserves to be punished--since the wrathful God strikes him, he deserves to be stricken. If I am punished by the gods, if I suffer at their hands, I did something to deserve this. (It is a peculiar trait of Ricoeur's critics that every now and then they lapse into the first person. This practice deserves study--it is odd. But I continue the tradition here). The gods cannot be blamed; I am to blame. "If it is true that man suffers because he is impure, then God is innocent" (SE 31-32). Ricoeur calls this primitive association between evil (violating an interdict) and suffering (misfortune, pain, bad luck) the first "scheme of rationalization," the "first sketch of causality" (SE 31). Although the primitive does not impute evil to a responsible agency, he begins to understand "obscurely" that he, and not the gods or God, is responsible for his suffering. The primitive knows, without knowing, that he suffers ill

because he has done ill. When he confesses evil, he has begun the act of "appropriation," of imputing evil to a responsible agency, that is, of imputing evil to himself (SE 42).

Now we arrive at the most interesting and difficult moment in Ricoeur's description, for here and elsewhere in his study, Ricouer will claim two contradictory things about the association of evil with suffering. It is important to be clear here because as we analyze these contradictory claims or this moment, we will neither say that Ricoeur is ambivalent about the association, nor that the association itself is ambiguous. We say that Ricoeur directly contradicts himself: that he claims that the association between committing evil and suffering evil is false *and that it is true*, without, it seems, any idea that he does so.

The association of evil with suffering, which Ricoeur calls at one point the "bond between defilement and suffering" (SE 31), is fused with vengeance:

> [t]his anonymous wrath, this faceless violence of retribution, is inscribed in the human world in letters of suffering. Vengeance causes suffering. And thus, through the intermediary of retribution, the whole physical order is taken up into the ethical order; the evil of suffering is linked synthetically with the evil of fault. . . .Suffering evil clings to doing evil as punishment proceeds ineluctably from defilement. (SE 31)

Figure 1, below, is an illustration of the bond between defilement and suffering.

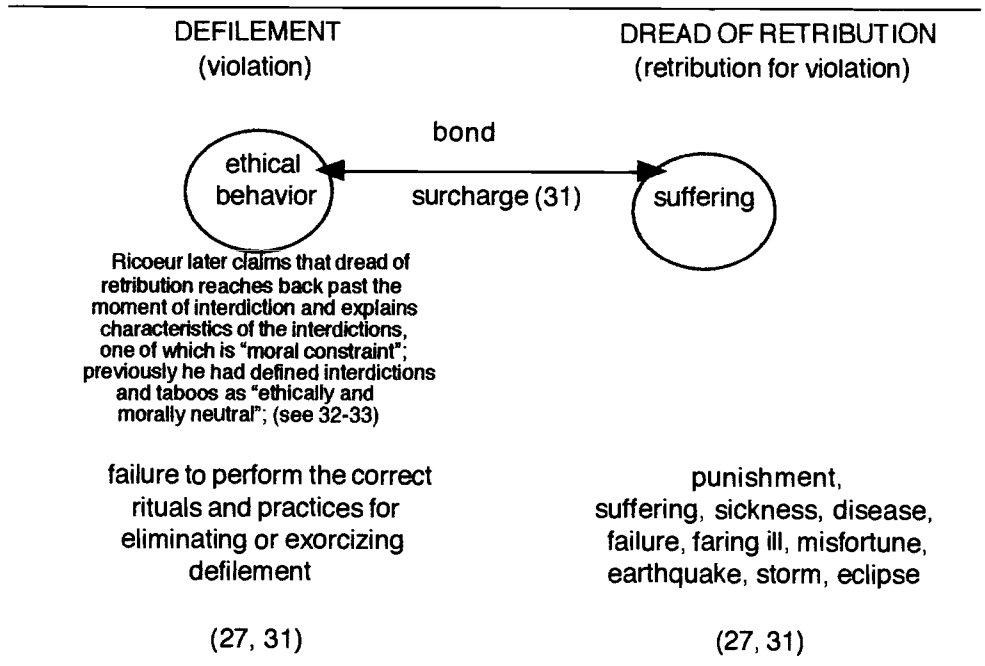

Figure 1. The Bond Between Defilement and Suffering
One commits violations (by failing to perfor the correct rituals and practices) and suffers punishment. This is the association of the ethical world of sin (violation) and the world of suffering.

According to Ricoeur, the bond between evil and suffering remains intact until it is "call[ed] in question" by "the Babylonian Job and the Hebrew Job [who] were the admirable witnesses to dissociate the ethical world of sin from the physical world of suffering" (SE 32). The example of Job, whose suffering is unconnected with any fault, destroys the association of evil with misfortune, for if Job suffers inexplicably, unjustly, or undeservedly, if he suffers *even though* he is not evil, his own defilement cannot be the cause of his suffering: "man [is] already secretly accused of the misfortunes in the world; wrongly accused" (SE 32).

Ricoeur calls the question of Job the *crisis* of the first rationalization or the *crisis* of the law of retribution (SE 32). In the crisis of the law of retribution, the bond between defilement and suffering is broken: "[I]t required nothing less than the . . . crisis [of the rationalization--the example of Job] to dissociate the ethical world of sin from the physical world of suffering" (SE 32). Figure 2 illustrates this "dissociation."

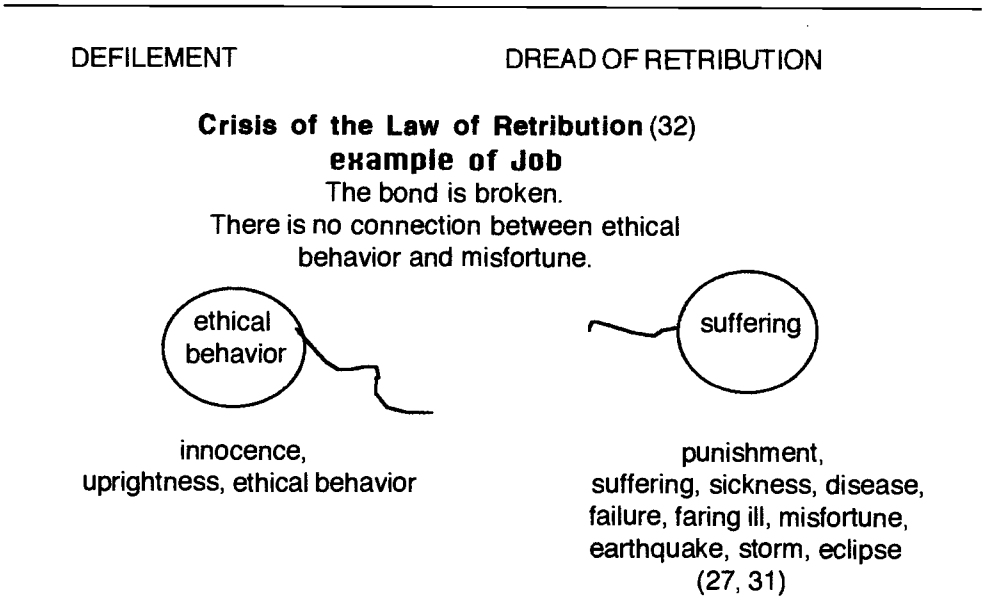

Figure 2. The Break Between Defilement and Suffering
("the dissociation of the ethical world of sin from the world of suffering")

The reason that the physical world of suffering is dissociated from the ethical world of sin by the example of Job is immediately apparent: "The figure of the just man suffering, image and type of unjust suffering, constitute[s] the stumbling block against which the premature

rationalizations of misfortune [are] shattered" (SE 32). There is no connection between violation and suffering. Job suffers without having committed any violation.

Now here is the tricky or difficult part of the argument because, having located the exact moment of the dissociation of evil from misfortune in the crisis of the law of retribution (in the example of Job), Ricoeur does not leave the dissociation there; he *reassociates it*, and he does this *in the exact same moment* as he had dissociated it. He says,

> [S]uffering [the suffering of Job] had to become inexplicable, a scandalous evil, in order that the evil of defilement might become the evil of fault. (SE 32)

Scandalous suffering enables the evil of defilement to *become the evil of fault.* I am as intrigued with this statement as Ricoeur is intrigued with the statement, "The symbol gives rise to (invites) thought" (SE "Conclusion"), for it is not at all apparent why, if Job suffers inexplicably, unjustly, undeservedly, the *evil of fault*, rather than the evil of defilement, *is* the cause of his suffering. In either the matter of fault or the matter of defilement, Job, as the story goes, is innocent. What is the difference between the evil of defilement and the evil of fault? Is there a difference between the two? Both are concepts of "fault," as Ricoeur says:

> [*S*]*in, in its turn, is a correction and even a revolution with respect to a more archaic conception of fault--the notion of defilement'* conceived in the guise of a strain [sic--this should read "stain"] or blemish that infects from without. (SE 7-8, emphasis added)

Throughout SE, Ricoeur uses the term "fault" fairly consistently as a sort of umbrella term encompassing all three symbols: defilement, sin, and guilt. Thus, when he discusses defilement, sin, guilt--any of these three--he is discussing concepts of fault, or forms of fault, or symbols or metaphors of fault. "Fault" is not otherwise defined in the work, although in the introduction to SE, Ricoeur briefly says that

> this sympathetic re-enactment in imagination cannot take the place of a philosophy of fault. It will still remain to be seen what the philosopher makes of it. . . . (SE 3)

In *Fallible Man*, Ricoeur defined fault as a rift in the geological sense; this definition applies generally to all Ricoeur's concepts or symbols of evil. And later in SE, when Ricoeur describes the symbol of sin, he will say, "transitions from one form of fault [defilement] to another [sin] are constantly observable" (47).

So what does Ricoeur mean when he says that "suffering had to become inexplicable, a scandalous evil, in order that the evil of defilement might become the evil of fault"? Perhaps we ought to assume that what he means when he says Job's inexplicable and scandalous suffering allowed *the evil of defilement to become the evil of fault* is that suffering had to become inexplicable in order that the evil of defilement might become the evil of sin (it is better to assume he says this than to assume he says suffering had to become inexplicable in order that the evil of fault might become the evil of fault). But if this is what he is saying, the question still

remains: how does the suffering of Job allow the evil of defilement *to become the evil of sin*?

In the very moment that Ricoeur declares that suffering has no association with defilement (with evil, impurity, ethical behavior), he declares that suffering does have an association with sin--that is, that man--and not just any man, but Job--causes his own suffering through sin. *Is* Ricoeur accusing Job? Momentarily, it will become apparent that that is exactly what Ricoeur is doing.

While illustrating the significance of the "break" between the bond of evil and suffering, Ricoeur projects how the example of Job will affect the experience of sin by contrasting sin with defilement: "This dissociation [of evil and suffering] has been one of the greatest sources of anguish for the human conscience, for suffering has had to become absurd and scandalous in order that sin might acquire its strictly spiritual meaning. At this terrible price, the fear that was attached to it could become fear of not loving enough and could be dissociated from the fear of suffering and failure; in short, the fear of spiritual death could be divorced from the fear of physical death" (SE 32). Chart 3 is a table of this contrast.

Chart 3. The First Rationalization of Evil and the Post-Jobian Rationalization of Evil

Primitive Rationalization	Post-Jobian Rationalization
do evil, suffer evil	crisis of first rationalization: man suffers without having done evil
"premature rationalizations of misfortune" (32) (immediate explanation)	complex (mature, unimmediate) rationalizations of misfortune
anonymous, faceless wrath (31-32)	
ethical/physical tie (link, bond, connection, confusion); "punishment proceeds ineluctably from defilement" (31)	ethics is separated from physicalness (32); suffering is disconnected with ethics (fault); punishment (suffering) does not proceed from fault
man suffers because he is impure--"God is innocent" (31-32)	man suffers because he is at fault; man is guilty (32)
"evil of defilement" (32)	"evil of fault" (32)
fear of suffering and failure	fear of not loving enough
fear of physical death	fear of spiritual death
man is "secretly accused of the misfortunes in the world; wrongly accused" (32)	man is "directly" accused: "*before any directaccusation*, [man] is secretly accused of the misfortunes in the world" (32, emphasis added)

The differences between the two conceptions, or rationalizations, as the chart should show, are generally or largely differences in ethics, not physics. The physics of suffering, that is, the bond between ethics and suffering, occurs in both these conceptions. However, it may be that in the post-jobian rationalization, the *accusation* is more direct while *the bond between suffering and punishment* is less direct.

Somehow, between these two moments, i.e., between the discussion of the significance of Job and Ricoeur's projection of its significance--with that intriguing sentence ("suffering had to become inexplicable, a scandalous evil, in order that the evil of defilement might become the evil of fault") in between--over the course of just a handful of paragraphs, or not

even paragraphs, but sentences, Ricoeur will say that not only does man move from being secretly, wrongly accused, but he moves *to being accused "directly"*: "Hence it is in the era before this crisis of the first rationalization, before the dissociation of misfortune (suffering, disease, death, failure) and fault that the dread of the impure deploys its anxieties; the prevention of defilement takes upon itself all fears and all sorrows; man, *before any direct accusation* [i.e., before the advent of Job], is already secretly accused of the misfortunes in the world" (SE 32, emphasis added). Man is first secretly then directly accused.

It is really extraordinary that the example of Job is used as the bridge from indirect (obscure) accusation to direct accusation. Again, is Ricoeur accusing Job? Is he saying that Job suffers for the evil *he* has done?

In Part II of SE, Ricoeur argues that "the innocent Job, the upright Job, repents. Of what can he repent, if not of his claim for compensation [for fortune instead of misfortune], which made his contention impure? . . . This is what is at stake [for Job or for the Job story]: to renounce the law of retribution to the extent not only of ceasing to envy the prosperity of the wicked, but of enduring misfortune as one accepts good fortune--that is to say, as God-given (2:10)" (321-22). We have to take these statements, together with the statements that "[a]t the lowest degree [of symbolization, i.e., defilement]. . . .the Babylonian suppliant 'confesses' and 'repents': he knows obscurely that his bonds are in some way his own work; if not, why should he cry: 'Undo the many sins that I have committed since my youth.' . . .Why should the suppliant beg to be *released* from what

he has *committed* if he did not know obscurely, if he did not know without knowing, if he did not know enigmatically and symbolically, that he has put upon himself the bonds from which he begs to be released?" (SE 153)--we have to take these statements as accusations.

Suffering and ethics, although momentarily dissociated, are thus reassociated; Job suffers *for the evil he has done. The evil of defilement becomes the evil of fault*; the anonymous, faceless wrath which secretly accuses becomes the God who rightfully accuses and punishes directly (SE 32-33). This is what Ricoeur says.

What are we to make of the example of Job if Job is not, as we thought, and as Ricoeur had initially claimed, innocent but guilty--guilty of demanding just compensation, of envying the prosperity of the wicked, and of complaining about his misfortune? Ricoeur includes the example of Job *because* it demonstrates that there is no tie between evil and misfortune: one may be innocent *and yet* suffer. The fact that Job is innocent, or that his guilt is open to question, *and yet* suffers, is Ricoeur's reason for including the Job example.[18]

If Job deserves his misfortune, if Job suffers because he "env[ies] the prosperity of the wicked" and because he has not "endured misfortune as one accepts good fortune . . . as God-given" (SE 322), and furthermore, if the bond between evil and suffering is broken *based on* Job's innocence, but Job is guilty, as I think Ricoeur finds, then we cannot have our cake and eat it, too--we have to put the offender, Job, "under the regime of defilement" (SE 27), where the primitive was before the bond between fault and misfortune was "broken," in the regime in which evil and

misfortune are *not* dissociated, in which the ethical order of doing ill *has not been* distinguished from the . . . order of faring ill . . . in which suffering, sickness, death, failure. . . . punishment . . .*still* falls on man in the guise of misfortune and transforms all possible sufferings, all diseases, all death, all failure into a sign of defilement. . . .where vengeance still *causes* suffering. . . . where the evil of suffering *is* linked synthetically with the evil of fault. . . .where suffering evil *still* clings to doing evil. . . .

By accusing Job of wrongdoing, Ricoeur *reconstitutes* the bond between suffering and ethics, takes back the calling into question of the first rationalization, the *crisis of the crisis* of the rationalization, and we must return, go back, to the law of retribution, the law of the first rationalization. See Figure 3.

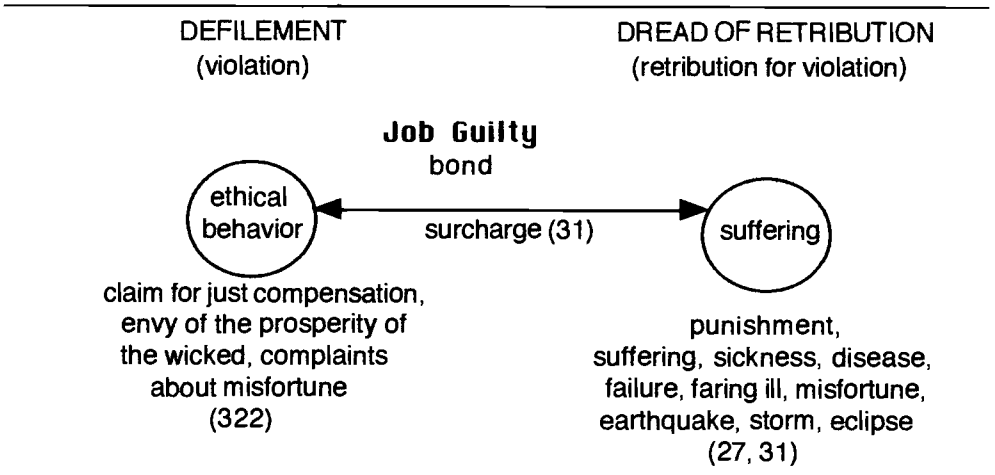

Figure 3. The Bond Between Defilement and Suffering Reconstituted

One commits violations and suffers punishment.

Such, according to Ricoeur, is the experience of the dread of retribution in the symbol of defilement. Thus far, then, we have seen that the symbol of defilement has two traits: an objective trait consisting of an inventory of evil, and a subjective trait, consisting of the dread of retribution or the bond between fault and misfortune, which bond is supposed to have been broken by the advent of Job but is in fact reconstituted by Ricoeur when he says that "suffering had to become inexplicable, a scandalous evil, in order that the evil of defilement might become the evil of fault." While the subjective trait of the dread of retribution is theoretically broken by the example of Job, the example of Job also forms the bridge to direct accusation. It does this in three ways: in Ricoeur's claim that the evil of defilement becomes the evil of fault, in his discussion of pre-Jobian and post-Jobian rationalizations, and in his accusations of Job.

At this point it is necessary to ask what we are now to make of the subjective trait of defilement. Is the trait "dread of retribution" *necessary* to the symbol of defilement? It seems to be. After all, it is one of the two characteristics of it. It is difficult to determine just exactly what we *should* make of all of this. But I think we can say that Ricoeur both breaks and constructs a major trait of defilement, leaving quite in question whether or not the trait is essential.

Conjuring up the conglomerate metaphor (the two faces, the two eyes, and the human form), we can say at this point that Ricoeur has, so to speak, fashioned a nose for his figure, and that he has both broken that nose and subsequently patched it up.

Next in his discussion of defilement, Ricoeur defines the specific historical "transformations" of defilement's objective and subjective traits, while also further embellishing the functions of those traits in the original model (which we have just analyzed). And here again is a problem, for as Stephen Dunning points out, "On the one hand, [Ricoeur] insists that 'our re-eneactment' is not of the historical order; it is a phenomenology, philosophical in character, which works out 'types' and consequently distinguishes before uniting' ([SE] 50). This implies . . . that any impression of 'progress' from one symbol or myth to the next is illusory. On the other hand, in such sections as his transition from sin to guilt Ricoeur uses unambiguously historical language: 'The birth of a new 'measure' of fault is a decisive event in the history of the notion of fault; and this event represents a double advance, from which it is not possible to turn back' ([SE] 104). . . .What are we to make of this repudiation of historical analysis and simultaneous use of historical language for tracing the phenomenological order?. . .The concept of religious evolution no longer enjoys its nineteenth-century popularity. . . .Certainly Ricoeur would recoil from the bald Hegelian claim that Christianity is the realization of the ultimate truth of Greek religion and Judaism. Yet his entire analysis . . . implies such a claim" (361-63).

Returning first to look at the objective trait of defilement, Ricoeur claims that the inventory of evil in the system of defilement is "retained and later transposed" into language, imagination, culture, and ethics. Because defilement "is itself a *symbol* of evil" and not a literal stain or infection, "it only enters into the universe of man through speech, or the word (*parole*)"

(SE 36). With their specific interdicts and taboos, their specific inventories of evil, cultures say what must not be done (what is impure), and they "*say* what must be done in order that the impure may become pure" (SE 36). This is the "vocabulary of the pure and the impure," and, as Ricoeur stresses, it is "of capital importance" because "it defines and legislates" (SE 36). Western man inherits this vocabulary from the Greeks, whose word καθαρος means absence from impurity: "non-mixture, non-dirtiness, non-obscurity, non-confusion" (SE 37-38). This meaning later in its historical development becomes "philosophically purified" in "the word group "καθαρος–καθαροις," which means, or comes to mean, "intellectual limpidity, clarity of style, orderliness, absence of ambiguity in an oracle--absence of moral blemish or stigma" (SE 38). Based on, or "transposed" from, the "imaginative model" of defilement (SE 34), the word group, according to Ricoeur, encompasses both a physical and intellectual or ethical purity, a broader and more sophisticated meaning than is held in the single word καθαρος. The concept of purity thus moves from the physical level to the intellectual level.

Dread of retribution in the subjective view of defilement is retained and transposed into "experience itself" (SE 41), or, more specifically, "consciousness," "by way of confession" and suspicion. Just as defilement is itself a symbol of evil and "not an actual stain," so dread is a "consciousness" of vengeance and guilt and "not a physical fear": "Dread expressed in words is no longer simply a cry, but an avowal . . . it is by being refracted in words that dread reveals an ethical rather than a physical aim" (SE 42). According to Ricoeur, dread is transposed in three

successive stages or degrees, progressing from the physical to the ethical. (Notice that in these three successive stages, Ricoeur more broadly outlines the primitive, Christian, and modern experiences of dread, not just the primitive experience of it; he will speak of the primitive experience of dread, then of the intermediate experience of dread, and finally, of the future experience of it). In the first stage of the dread of retribution, man fears vengeance; vengeance is expected and anticipated. We've seen this. Dread or fear of punishment is a recogniton that there *is* an order; it is a "demand for [and a fear of] just punishment and legality" (SE 42). "Perhaps there is no taboo in which there does not dwell some reverence, some veneration of order" (SE 43).

In the second stage of the dread of retribution, according to Ricoeur, man, realizing that vengeance has "a limit and a direction," knows that vengeance will end; vengeance is endured and the restoration of order is anticipated. Vengeance or punishment is a "satisfaction" of the demand for justice and a demand for a return to order: "Vengeance has a limit and a direction (an end), to destroy and then [thus] to restore order" (SE 43). Yet real suffering in the world, such as the suffering of Job, is suffering or vengeance that has no limit or direction and which does not restore order: "And conscience, not *finding* the manifestation of the law of retribution any longer in real suffering, *looked for* its satisfaction in other directions, whether at the end of history, in a Last Judgment, or in some exceptional event, such as the sacrifice of a victim offered for the sins of the world, or by means of penal laws elaborated by society with the intention of making

the penalty proportionate to the crime, or by means of a wholly internal penalty, accepted as penance" (SE 42).

In the third stage of dread, man hopes that his love of order, which he himself has demanded in his "demand for legality" and for the restoration of order, will instigate the "disappearance" of the first two stages; this final stage "involves the *hope* that fear itself will disappear from conscience as a result of its [fear's] sublimation . . . and a change of rule from fear of vengeance to love of order" (SE 44). If humanity progresses, its love of order should eventually replace its fear of vengeance: "If the *demand* for a just punishment involves the *expectation* of a punishment which has a meaning in relation to order, this expectation involves the *hope* that fear itself will disappear" (SE 44). This third degree or stage of dread is not yet realized. It is on the "*horizon* "; it is the "eschatological *future* of human morality" (SE 45). According to Ricoeur, it will never be realized *publicly*:

> Certain forms of human relations, the relations that are properly speaking *civic*, cannot, perhaps, ever get beyond the stage of fear. One can imagine penalties that afflict less and less and amend more and more, but perhaps one cannot imagine a state which has no necessity to make law respected through the threat of sanctions and which can awaken consciences that are still unrefined to the notion of what is permitted and what prohibited without the threat of punishment. In short, it is possible that a whole part of human existence, the *public* part, cannot raise itself above the fear of punishment and that this fear is the indispensable means by which man advances toward a different order, hyperethical in a way, where fear would be entirely confounded with love. (SE 45)

The first two degrees or experiences of dread are experiences in humanity's past and present. They arose with primordial man and are still with us: we desire order, we dread punishment, we do not find the manifestation of just suffering and so wait for it in the future.

I take issue with Ricoeur's projections here. For instance, if the "*future* of human morality" will never be realized "*publicly,*" in "the *public* part," where *will* it be realized? And by whom? Ricoeur neither asks nor answers these questions directly, but he asks and answers them indirectly. It would be beneficial to raise his questions and answers to the level of consciousness.

By whom, then, will the ethical consciousness be fully realized? According to Ricoeur, the ethical consciousness will be realized "[b]y the wise man," by the saint, by those who are "truly educated." The ethical consciousness will be realized by the wise man: "The whole philosophy of Spinoza" is a model of the ethical consciousness, for it "is an effort to eliminate the negative--fear and pain--from the regulation of one's life under the guidance of reason. The wise man does not act through fear of punishment, and he does not meditate on pain or sorrow. Wisdom is a pure affirmation of God, of nature, and of oneself" (SE 44). The ethical consciousness will also be realized by those who are *truly* educated: Fear is "indispensable" in civic education, but fear's "*final* extenuation [its elimination] is the soul of all true education" (SE 44). Finally, the ethical consciousness will be realized by the saint, by those who have or will cast fear out: "Before Spinoza, the Gospel" is the model for ethical consciousness, for it "preaches that 'perfect love casts out fear'" (SE 44).

But "[b]efore casting fear out, love transforms and transposes it. A conscience that is militant and not yet triumphant does not cease to discover ever sharper fears. The fear of not loving enough is the purest and worst of fears. It is the fear that the saints know, the fear that love itself begets. And because man never loves enough, it is not possible that the fear of not being loved enough in return should be abolished. Only *perfect* love casts out fear" (SE 45). If the ethical consciousnesss will not be realized publicly, it will be realized privately in the circles of the "truly educated," in the circles of the wise, in the circles of those who love enough.

In the same indirect way, Ricoeur claims that "the *public* part" is "the whole part of human existence [which] cannot raise itself," implying that the saint and the wise man do not form a part of the public (or that, if they do, they do so only to the point at which their "consciences are awakened"; after that, they will have "transformed and transposed fear": "Much is learned through fear and obedience--including the liberty which is inaccessible to fear" [SE 45]). The wise man and the saint, guided by perfect reason or perfect love, raise themselves--they do not, Ricoeur implies, commit infractions, violate interdictions, or cross the lines of "what is permitted and what prohibited." The wise man and the saint know what is permissible and prohibited. They *are* refined to the notion of what is prohibited and what permissible. We have already radically moved from the cosmological notion of evil--evil as separation from purity--to the wholly worldly notion of evil as separation from the law. Those people who don't know enough to know what in the world is prohibited and what permitted

form the public part and remain defiled. "Fear [will] remai[n] an indispensable element [for the public] in *all* forms of education, familial, scholastic, civic" (SE 44-45, emphasis added). Only those consciences "that are still unrefined to the notion of what is permitted and what prohibited" commit infractions. When we speak of the notion of what is permitted and what prohibited, we return to the objective view of defilement, that is, to the inventory of evil, for the inventory is nothing more than a catalog of what is permitted and what prohibited. Though Ricoeur does not say so, the inventory of evil, unlike the experience of evil in fear, is always new, changing in time and space, from one historical period to another and from culture to culture, even from generation to generation and class to class. Thus another question we must ask of Ricoeur's analyses and projections of a "future" in hope and past in evil is, what or whose inventory of evil or notion of prohibitions and permissions will we live by? Surely Ricoeur says that we must live by Western civilization's modern inventory, which is the inventory of violations against persons (homicide, theft, lying).

In this same section of his discussion, Ricouer says that society must be protected "against the infractions of citizens. The project of an education which would dispense with prohibition and punishment, and so with fear, is undoubtedly not only chimerical but harmful. . . . There are steps that cannot be dispensed with without harm" (SE 45). In context with his other statements, this is an interesting and equivocal comment. Society, which presumably composes "the *public* part," must be protected "against the infractions of citizens." Because the public part is composed

of citizens who are "still unrefined to the notion of what is permitted and what prohibited," this means that society must be protected against itself. (Or it means that the society which we must protect against the infractions of citizens is the society of the wise, the saintly, and the truly educated). The masses ("society," "the public part") must be protected from those who do not know "what is permitted or prohibited." The masses are in the system of defilement *and* they must be protected from defilers. They are unrefined to the notion of what is permitted and prohibited *and* they are victimized or threatened by those who do not know what is permissible and what prohibited.

Ricoeur includes this discussion about the utopic future of dread in the final pages of his study of defilement. From defilement the wise man and the saint will be raised. They will be above fear, which itself is located in the system of defilement. Those who are "unrefined to the notion of what is permitted and what prohibited" *will not* be raised. The masses, then, will remain in the system of defilement. Evil will remain in the "lower" echelons. The demarcations in a future (utopic and hopeful) society are presumably open, but in Ricoeur's scheme they are re-closed by the same hierarchical structures which have previously closed worldly societies and which make "the *hope*" that anything new will be achieved in the "final extenuation" bleak indeed. We will simply have drawn the lines differently, to enclose an elite of philosophers rather than of kings and petty tyrants. And such lines and demarcations will be challenged, as they always are. Need we *hope* for such a future society?

A final review of the "symbol" of defilement recalls the following. As we saw in the essential "model" of defilement, defilement has two traits, the objective trait or the inventory of evil, prescriptions against frog-hopping, and so on; and the subjective trait or the experience of the dread of retribution. We then saw that the crisis of retribution brought about by the example of Job, which was to have broken the bond between evil and suffering, furnished the bridge to the experience of sin *and*, as far as the experience of the dread of retribution is concerned, placed man back under the old regime of retribution, erasing the *crisis* in the law of retribution. Finally we saw that although Ricoeur claimed that he was distinguishing traits and that these traits were essential to the formal structure of the symbol of defilement, they progress historically from the ethical to the intellectual level, in the case of the objective trait, and, in the case of the subjective trait of the dread of retribution, from the physical to the conscious level, which progression ranges from earliest beginnings to future projections, and even finally to the eradication of dread for the truly educated, the saint, and the philosopher.

III. Sin

It is not known whether evil precedes innocence or innocence precedes evil.[19] Creation myths have expressed both possibilities: in myths of golden beginnings, innocence precedes evil; in myths of dark or violent beginnings, evil precedes innocence. The Biblical myth is a myth of golden beginnings: God precedes chaos and Adam precedes sin. In Adam himself, *innocence* is original: in the biblical myth, original sin begins with original man but *sin is not original in man.* Adam existed in a space in which goodness and obedience existed, a space in which evil did not exist: "[M]an [was] created good and became evil" (SE 247). Goodness and order in the biblical myth precede evil, then, as purity precedes impurity in the system of defilement (the difference between original purity in the symbols of sin and defilement lies in "sexuality"--in the system of defilement, sexuality and birth are original stains or original evils. Yet, unless we change the context and the fundamental meaning in the definitions of pure and impure, a stain cannot stain what is not pure, and purity must always precede stain, for the "central intention" of the term "pure" "is to express *exemption* from the impure: non-intermixture, non-dirtiness, non-obscurity, non-confusion" [SE 39-40]). The point here is not that man is originally good or innately innocent but that purity and innocence in the biblical imagination are *mythologized* as original. We can define innocence at this point as order or purity that excludes evil. Since all cutures define good (order, purity) and evil (disorder, impurity) using their own inventories, and since such inventories constantly change,

we must, although Ricoeur does not make a point of this, and perhaps intentionally avoids it, define "inventory." "Inventory," in the *inventory* of evil, as I use the word here, and as Ricoeur uses it, includes those laws, taboos, or interdictions by which a culture determines that to break or violate them *is* a violation (Ricoeur uses the terms law, taboo, and interdiction synonymously in his discussion of defilement, and so I take the same liberty--see SE 32-33). Hence, presumably in any culture, including primitive cultures, there are cultural inventories of the order of good defined by interdictions, taboos, and laws. For "it is always in the sight of other people who excite the feeling of shame [violation] and under the influence of the word [or inventory] which says what is pure and impure that a stain is defilement" (SE 40). We can extend this definition to the Hebrew experience of good and evil. In the biblical myth, the garden (in which are placed humanity, work, service to God, language, and sexuality) is pure because it precedes evil and because it is in the realm of purity or order *before* defilement or sin. In the Hebrew imagination, order precedes disorder. Violation is always alienation *from* order (as punishment, purgation, confession, and salvation are a return to order).

Sin begins, then, in the violation of an interdiction. It differs from primordial humanity's sense of defilement in that sin is always a negative (mixed with positive elements), while defilement is always a positive. In this distinction--the distinction is Ricoeur's--sin is a detraction (a loss of the connection to God) while defilement has a substance (symbolically, a stain, filth, and so forth):

> [S]tain indicates the positive character of defilement and the negative character of purity

> [defilement is always a substantial 'something']. . . . If sin is primarily the rupture of a relation [the rupture between God and man] it becomes difficult to express it in terms of defilement . . . [therefore, defilement is] convert[ed] from positive to negative in the vocabulary of sin [the vocabulary of loss and return]. . . . [But] sin, too, is a 'something' . . . . Thus, we have to give an account . . . of the preferment of a new symbolism and of the survival of the old under the system of the new. (SE 70-71)

Yet, the distinction between defilement and sin is not clear. Ricoeur has some difficulty defining the distinction and later either intentionally obscures the distinction or actually fails in his project to distinguish the two. Two possible reasons may account for the difficulty. First, defilement *may be* indistinguishable from sin (and further on, I will argue that the two are hardly distinguishable), and second, the distinction *is* obscure: if sin is a "something," it is not a negative.

One of the distinctions Ricoeur tries to make between defilement and sin is that sin must be paired with the symbolism of redemption: "The break with the symbolism of defilement and its reaffirmation on a new level become still more striking when the symbolism of sin is complemented by the symbolism of redemption; indeed, it is not possible to understand the one without the other" (SE 71). However, just as sin must be paired with redemption, defilement must be paired with purification: "It was no more possible to speak of defilement without speaking of purification" (SE 71). Ricoeur, as he says, finds sin "difficult to express in terms of defilement" (SE 70). However, he realizes he can hardly explain sin in any other way, for he says that "the old survives under the direction of the new." Defilement survives under the direction of sin. In other words, sin governs

defilement. We see that it is difficult *not* to express sin in terms of defilement rather than that it is. The distinction--if it exists--is obscure. The one distinction between defilement and sin that Ricoeur makes clear is that "sin is the preferment of a new symbolism." But what does this mean? The claim hardly seems more meaningful than that we prefer a blue symbol to a green one.

If defilement and sin are indistinct, Western civilization, perhaps no more than any other civilization, has had as one of its aims the goal of distinguishing them. According to Ricoeur, sin differs from defilement in that sin presupposes a covenant with God, a spiritual relationship, which is prior to commandment or interdiction. The covenant is a bond which includes interdictions and laws, but the personal relationship with God comes first; law and interdictions come second. In the system of defilement one is bound and possessed by external evil (the demon enters and one sins), whereas in the system of sin, one is bound to God (or gods) and to divine presence, then in sin breaks with God (one sins and the demon enters).

As in the system of defilement, in the system of sin there is both an "'objective' and 'subjective' pole" (SE 55), that is, in the system of sin, there is an inventory (or ethical moment) and dread of retribution. In the ethical moment, man is accused by an indignant God (of crimes which exist in an inventory of crimes); man is threatened by God with destruction (and dreads the threat). The inventory of evil in the system of sin consists of

"unlimited indignation and detailed prescription," "infinite demands and finite commandments" (SE 55-56).

Ricoeur attempts, unsuccessfully I think, to distinguish the inventory of evil in the system of sin from the inventory of evil in the system of defilement:

> We should grossly oversimplify and travesty the sense of this second moment in the religious consciousness of evil if we reduced it to the victory of moral law over ritual law. We should rather say, in Bergsonian language, that moral law is attained only because the prophetic demand aims further. . . . 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. But as this infinite demand does not declareitself in a sort of preceding void, but applies itself to a preceding matter, that of the old Semitic 'codes,' it inaugurates a tension characteristic of all Hebrew ethics, the tension between an infinite demand and a finite commandment. (SE 55-56)

As Ricoeur says, though, "[t]here was a time when Biblical critics failed to recognize this rhythm of prophetism and legalism, essential to the Hebraic conception of sin [mistaking the rhythm for ritual]. They [the biblical critics] also displayed an excessive contempt for legalism, which, they said, remained under the influence of the negative character of the ancient prohibitions, disregarded intentions, and finally fragmented, 'atomized' the 'will of God.' This tension between the absolute, but formless, demand and the finite law, which breaks the demand into crumbs, is essential to the consciousness of sin: one cannot just feel oneself guilty in general; the

law is a 'pedagogue' which helps the penitent to determine how he is a sinner; he is a sinner through idolatry, filial disrespect, etc." (SE 59). The specific difference between the objective traits in the two systems, defilement/sin, then, lies not so much in the "prescriptions" or the inventories as in the fact that the prescriptions in the system of sin are accompanied by indignation (by the tension between the absolute demand and the finite law), and this indignation has the power to convert: "Each accusation, in pointing to the seat of iniquity, is a summons to a conversion more complete than any partial correction" which one might find in the "limited demands of the ritual codes" (SE 56). Without conversion in the heart of the sinner, his correction of fault has little meaning.

The inventory of evil in the system of sin is marked in stages. God demands first justice, then affection, and finally sovereignty: "[A]fter the God of justice, after the God of the conjugal bond betrayed, there is the God of sovereignty and majesty, the holy God. By his measure man appears 'unclean in lips and heart.' Henceforth sin is represented by the figure of violated suzerainty; sin is pride, arrogance, false greatness" (SE 57). With this final demand, God's sovereignty is violated by man's "false greatness"; man becomes sinful: "sin is the false greatness of purely human domination" (SE 57). Faith in God's sovereignty, relinquishment of human sovereignty, is an infinite demand: "unarmed obedience, without any reliance on itself, without defense and without alliance[,] true contrary of sin, Isaiah, it seems, was the first to call faith" (SE 57). This demand, this faith, is more important than following any prescription, although it does

not nullify the necessity of the prescriptions: "How could the prophet become indignant against injustice, if his indignation were not articulated in definite reproaches: exploitation of the poor, cruelty towards enemies, the insolence of luxury?" (SE 60). According to biblical dogma, even if we follow legal prescriptions, if we are not part of the Covenant of the infinite demand, we will not be saved: "If this dialectic [the Covenant] is broken, the God of the infinite demand withdraws into the distance and the absence of the Wholly Other; or the legislator of the commandments becomes indistinguishable from the finite moral consciousness and is confounded with the witness that the Just One bears to himself. In this double manner the paradox of distance and presence which constitutes the 'before God' is abolished at the heart of the consciousness of sin" (SE 62). Conversely, although Ricoeur does not make the converse point until later, when he discusses the symbolism of guilt, even if we do not follow legal prescriptions, if we are a part of the Covenant of the infinite demand we will be saved. We may call this the privilege of the Covenant.

We find the same fear--i.e., the fear of retribution--in the symbolism of sin as we found in the symbolism of defilement, although the "quality" of the fear changes. Violation and dread of retribution in the system of defilement are communal: whole nations are guilty (and defeated and destroyed) rather than individuals. However, in the system of sin, dread marks the point at which sin and fear will begin to be "individualized and personalized" (although the actual individualization of sin will not come

about for some time): "Wrath is no longer the vindication of taboos, nor the resurgence of primordial chaos, as old as the oldest gods, but the Wrath of Holiness itself" (SE 67). God in his Wrath is not the close god or gods of the cosmos who satisfied their vengeance or guaranteed success within the immediate limits of "historical and geographical space" (SE 67); He is "the Lord of History," whose "historical complicity with the chosen people" is "shattered" "through the infinite demand" and "revealed through prophecy" (SE 67).

It is not clear exactly how this change from *the dread of the gods* to *the fear of God's wrath* comes about (and I think we can say that it wasn't at all clear in the description of defilement how *Job* acts as the bridge between the two "kinds" of retribution), but the difference is "revealed" in the fact that man began to "decipher . . . the Wrath of God in History" (SE 66). There is no "moment" in which to locate this change; the change is "revealed through prophecy": "Prophecy consists . . . in deciphering future history[.]" Prophecy "joins promise to threat" (SE 68). The prophet predicts misfortune--generally he does not predict fortune--and gives it a meaning, interprets it. The unfortunate event--the calamity, defeat, destruction--is never avoidable, but the meaning of the event can be variously interpreted: "the bare occurrence [the event] can be prophesied as irrevocable and its meaning as revocable" (SE 68).

Ricoeur's choice of terms here, "irrevocable," "revocable," is interesting. He says that *the event* cannot be turned or taken back or changed but that *the meaning* of the event can be taken back: from the destructive event, another meaning may be found: "As something that

happened, the occurrence was irrevocable, and the prophet anticipated it as happening and as irrevocable. The calamity consists rather in the *meaning* attached to the occurrence, in the penal interpretation of the event prophesied" (SE 68). At the same time as he predicts destruction, the prophet predicts a promise, a salvation ("'You shall surely die . . . perhaps God will have mercy'" [SE 68]). Although the event is irrevocably destructive, out of the event a "new day is born." The prophet predicts two events, then, one destructive, one constructive or reconstructive. He does not revoke the *event* by revoking the meaning of the event; the destructive event remains a destructive event. Ricoeur chooses the term "revocable," and we may find the reason behind the choice in his further discussion, for when the prophet links the cause or the result of the event to human agency, "the dialectic of destruction and salvation admits a sort of respite," or the possibility of turning back, and even, amazingly, of averting disaster altogether. From the onslaught and terror of the inexorable, imminent, successive, and irrevocable destruction, the inexorable will "sometimes [appear] to be subject to human choice" (SE 68). Thus, we may revoke not only *the meaning* of destructive events but *the destructive events* themselves if we choose wisely or justly: "'If you do justice, perhaps God will have mercy' (Amos 5:15). . . .'I have set life before you; choose life and you shall live' (Deut. 30:19)" (SE 68). Although the claim was that *the event is irrevocable*, actually the event *is* revocable. Some events ("history") are "held in suspense [are determined] by the ethical choice of man" (SE 68). Destruction, "considered by itself, would make history fate. The paradox is that the inexorable is modified by an appeal to right choice,

but the choice does not, in its turn, annex either the Wrath of God or his pardon to the arbitrament of man" (SE 69).

Here is man's first step--at least the first step that can be located unequivocally--in responsibility and guilt. (Ricoeur now I think most clearlly arrives at "the reality of evil in man" as he set out to do in his prefatory remark, i. e., he now most clearly begins "to make the transition from the possibility of evil in man to its reality, from fallibility to fault" [SE 3]). I may revoke (or "modify") my destruction or a destructive event by choosing rightly and doing justice (but I will not have "annexed" God's pardon). Ricoeur uses the term "paradox" to obscure the irrationality of this reasoning. First of all, by doing right and avoiding disaster, I have *already* annexed God's pardon, at least to some extent, for by choosing rightly, I have averted, revoked, or modified a catastrophe. Second, if I avert disaster by following the right prescriptions and doing justice, I return to the moment in the "order of dread" in the system of defilement, which was supposedly "abolished by the progress of moral consciousness itself" (SE 30), that is, I return to the law of retribution, to the rationalization that "suffering evil clings to doing evil." I suffer evil by my "wrong choice" just as I experience a "respite" from destruction and or evil by my "right choice." I was the agent of my suffering in the system of defilement, *and* I am the agent of my suffering in the system of sin. In the system of defilement, "[i]f you suffer, if you are ill, if you fail, if you die, it is because you have sinned" (SE 31). Likewise, in the system of sin, "'[i]f you do justice, . . . God will have mercy,'" and if you do not do justice, God will not have mercy, you will

be destroyed: "'I have set life and death before you; choose life and you shall live'"; if you do not choose life, you shall die.

The "images" of sin hold the threat of retribution. Sin is symbolized as deviation, tortuous road, rebellion (against God), going astray (this going astray "forecasts the modern symbols of alienation and dereliction" [SE 73]), the silence or absence of God. According to Ricoeur, these are revolutionary images which "prepare . . . the way for the revolution in the meanings themselves" (SE 74). The symbols of deviation are necessarily bound to the symbols of pardon and return, "the renouncing of the wrath of holiness" (SE 78), for "'pardon' is 'return'. . . . return . . . is nothing else than the taking away of blame, the suppression of the charge of sin" (SE 79). But "[j]ust as sin is a 'crooked way,' the return is a turning from the evil way" (SE 80). Pardon is conditional, "suspended" or not suspended by the "power of human choice[,] [leading] us back to the famous choice in Deuteronomy: 'Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse . . .' (11:26); 'Behold, I set before you this day life and good, death and evil' (30:15)" (SE 81).

Ricoeur completes his description of sin by comparing it to defilement. In both symbolisms, the sinner takes on the sins of the community ("forgotten sins as well as sins committed unwittingly") and his own sins. But the defiler sins "in the system of taboo, sacrilege, and ritual," while the sinner sins under the system of the law: "the explanation of these examples by some survival of the system of taboo, sacrilege, and

ritual expiation must not conceal the more important fact that makes this survival possible, namely, that the Law, as the ethico-juridical expression of the Covenant, has been substituted for the anonymous power of taboo and the automatism of its vengeance, and establishes a hypersubjective reference for sin" (SE 83).

The consciousness of alienation is also "common to the two types" (defilement and sin) (SE 86). As with the symbol of defilement, the symbol of sin reveals a distancing from justice or wisdom in the form of possession. When one is "possessed by evil," one does not "choose" evil; evil is "inevitable": "It is at the very heart of the evil disposition, which has been called separation, rebellion, going astray, that the Biblical writers discern a fascinating, binding, frenetic force. The power of a man is mysteriously taken possession of by an inclination to evil that corrupts its very source: 'A spirit of debauchery leads them astray and they go awhoring, abandoning their God' (Hos. 4:12); 'wickedness burns as the fire that devours the briers and thorns and kindles the thickets of the forest, from which columns of smoke mount up' (Is. 9:18). Jeremiah, perhaps more than anyone else, felt with terror the evil inclination of the hardened heart (3:17; 9:14; 16:12); he compares it to the savage instinct, to the rut of beasts (Jer. 2:23-25; also 8:6)" (SE 87-88).

The sickness associated with evil in the system of defilement is like the sickness one experiences before one is pardoned in the system of sin, and the inevitability of evil in the symbol of sin is compared to the inevitability of possession or the lack of control that the possessed person experiences in defilement. Later in Ricoeur's description, we will learn that

Satan in the Christian myth represents the evil of possession, or what Ricoeur calls "radical evil." In the Christian myth, the serpent (as Satan) is "the only monster who survived from the theogonic myths, the chthonic[,] [the only monster who] has not been demythologized' (SE 255). The serpent survives as the symbol of the evil which is outside of, removed from, God and man; he is a symbol for inexplicable evil. Interestingly, Ricoeur will claim that the snake is not "created"; it is "already there." According to Ricoeur, neither God nor man creates it: "[E]vil is *already there*; nobody begins it absolutely" (SE 257). Thus neither God nor man has to account for this evil: "Thus the serpent symbolizes something of man *and* something of the world . . . he represents the aspect of evil that could not be absorbed into the responsible freedom of man" (SE 258).

In the second section of his work, Ricoeur claims that the Adamic myth, opposed to other myths, became "preferred," became "pre-eminent," *because* in this myth evil is not original to God or man. But if evil in the snake is "already there" in the Adamic myth, so is evil "already there" in other myths, making the preferment or preeminence of the Adamic myth rather curious, at least on this ground. For if evil (the snake) is, as Ricoeur stipulates, "externalized to remove it from god and man," then the question of the snake's origin would necessarily return evil to god or man, for either god creates it or man does. But Ricoeur does not ask or answer the question of the snake's origin; the snake is simply "already there."

Radical evil expresses the same sense of fate that Greek tragedy expresses: "Here one sees the beginning of an anthropology which is not only pessimistic--that is to say, one in which the worst is to be feared--but

which is strictly 'tragic'--that is to say[,] one in which the worst is not only to be feared, but is strictly inevitable, because God and man conspire to produce evil" (88-89). Man "conspires to produce evil": when he succumbs to evil, to desire, to freedom, to experience, he *creates* evil, or recreates it. "[B]ad faith . . . seizes upon the quasi-externality of desire in order to make it an alibi for freedom. The artfulness of the excuse [that the serpent is to blame for tempting man] is that it puts temptation completely outside. . . . [T]he serpent represents the psychological projection of desire. . . . Man thus accuses the serpent for his own faults" and "exculpates himself." Thus the serpent is really *not* outside but is "a part of ourselves" (SE 256-57).

In his description of the symbolism of sin, Ricoeur distinguishes between radical evil and voluntary or chosen sin: "[T]his abortive theology [of 'blinding'] could be conceived [in the Old Testament] because it is the prolongation of one of the constitutive experiences of the consciousness of sin, the experience of a *passivity*, of an alteration, of an alienation, paradoxically blended with the experience of a voluntary deviation, and hence of an activity, an evil initiative" (SE 89). The "symbolism of 'purification' is taken up into the symbolism of 'pardon'" (SE 91). This symbolism is comparable to the symbolism of defilement (stain, blemish, dirtiness, contagion). As one could cleanse oneself of impurities in the primitive experience of defilement, one may be liberated from evil in the experience of sin by returning or by "redemption (which means buying back)" (SE 92).

Being the only monstrous "theogonic" relic which "has not been demythologized," the snake is a mythologization, although Ricoeur does not explicitly say this. The snake, according to Ricoeur, really is a figure which is both primordial and biblical and which contains both positive and negative; he is both the symbol of defilement and the symbol of sin: he is an external infection, but his ability to infect requires the willingness of the responsible agent to be infected.

Thus it can be said that, like the defiler, the sinner offends and fears God, who demands justice, affection, and sovereignity. God's demand for sovereignity (or faith) is an "infinite demand," the final demand, more sophisticated and important than the demand for justice and affection. The individual sinner fears God. The suffering and destruction in the world, as well as the promise and the salvation, are interpreted by the prophet as being determined by man's ethical choice. If man chooses rightly, he may avert disaster; if he chooses wrongly, disaster is inevitable.

Although sin is negative and defilement is positive, one being symbolized as a stain and the other as a tortuous road or deviation, the distinction between sin and defilement "is [merely] the preferment of a new symbolism." Defilement is *governed* by sin. The objective trait in the symbolism of sin consists in numerous prescriptions and legalisms accompanied by the indignation of a mighty God, which indignation is "the summons to conversion more complete than any partial correction" and develops in three stages: justice, affection, sovereignty. Both defilement

and sin contain the subjective trait of the dread of retribution, but the dread of retribution, where previously it had been communal, begins to be individualized. This change in the dread of retribution is revealed through prophecy; the prophets interpret an event as being revocable based on human choice. Evil is *realized* in the prophetic "interpretation," i.e., evil at this moment is transposed from possibility to reality. The symbolism of sin has various similarities to the symbolism of defilement, similar images, similar inventories, consciousness of alienation, possession, and so forth; both include communal and personal offenses and imply sickness and a distancing from goodness (from order, justice, purity, innocence); both make use of the symbols of external or radical evil, of the evil which is not caused or created by God or man (yet whose "origin" is unknown).

Once again conjuring up the conglomerate metaphor--in terms of the human form, which was previously fashioned with a nose of sorts--what shape is it in now? It hasn't changed shape much. Perhaps its nose has been tweaked.

IV. Guilt

Before presenting an account of Ricoeur's description of the symbolism of guilt, it is important to emphasize that guilt is the *later* development of humanity's sense of fault. Ricoeur will trace the "splintering of the idea of guilt" (SE 100) through history, but guilt itself is specifically or primarily *modern* man's "experience of evil." "Guilt," as Ricoeur sees it, is a primary symbol in a system of symbolization which modern man "can no longer understand." According to Ricoeur, guilt is a stage of development in the system of fault known only through defilement and sin, "through a movement of rupture and a movement of resumption" (SE 100). We cannot know guilt without its passage through defilement and sin. In the symbolism of guilt, we have "the paradox toward which the idea of fault points--namely, the concept of *a man who is responsible and* captive, or rather a man who is responsible for being captive, in short, the concept of the *servile will*" (SE 101, some emphasis added). Guilt is present in the experience of defilement and in the experience of sin, that is, in the act of violating and in the fear of retribution; it is even necessary to those experiences, as Ricoeur says, but guilt *dominates* at a *later* stage in the consciousness of fault. Whereas the trait of the dread of retribution in the symbol of defilement is a fear of punishment that is only vaguely conscious and only minimally acknowledges responsibility, guilt is fully conscious, fully expressing the consciousness of responsibility. "[G]uilt expresses above all the promotion of 'conscience' as supreme" (SE 104): "[T]he 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" (SE 102).

Yet guilt is a specifically late phenomenon. Ricoeur will speak at great length of the "beginnings of the consciousness" of guilt (SE 109), which "beginnings" we will summarize, but for the moment it is important to know that "the order [that guilt] introduces into its concepts *is already late in comparison to the themes of impurity, impiety, and injustice*" (SE 109, emphasis added).

Perhaps I am taking a liberty here by saying that guilt is specifically modern man's experience of fault. Ricoeur never makes a statement to this effect. But guilt "expresses the conscience as supreme," the "I" without God, man the measure, without God, man alienated, individualized. These characteristics, as we know, are modern. To arrive at the modern experience of guilt, Ricoeur will take us down three roads (SE 108). Guilt is made up of three "traits" (three roads--Ricoeur argues that guilt is subjective, so these "traits" cannot be considered objective; they must be considered subjective): "the primacy of 'man the measure' over the 'sight of God' [road 1]; the division between individual fault and the sin of the people [road 2]; [and] the opposition between a graduated imputation and an all-inclusive accusation [road 3]. . . . By . . . these three traits reflection has led us to the three roads along which this new experience [guilt] proceeds" (SE 108). After lengthy excursions and detours, these three roads eventually converge, at which point we will "have arrived at the

farthest limit of the whole cycle of guilt" (SE 143). The metaphor of the three roads suggests a movement *in time*; we move past the Pharisees and I think the Hebrews. The origins of the roads, Ricoeur's starting points, don't go much further back than the Greeks, and the roads eventually terminate at the doors, so to speak, of Nietzsche, Freud, Marx--the three "masters of suspicion" and alienation. Therefore, although Ricoeur makes no such explicit statement to the effect, I take the liberty to say that "guilt" is a historical and *modern* development. The claim that he is *not* following a historical progression is incredible.

Ricoeur does not divide the symbolism of guilt into objective and subjective traits, as he had divided the symbolisms of defilement and sin. Guilt is only experienced subjectively: "It can be said, in very general terms, that guilt designates the *subjective* moment in fault. . . .[A]s dread is from the beginning the way of internalization of defilement itself, in spite of the radical externality of the evil, guilt is a moment contemporaneous with defilement itself" (SE 101). The point needs to be made emphatically here--there is no objective trait in the symbol of guilt. Stephan Dunning has the general idea when he says: "The exact point at which the subject/object categories disappear is hard to determine. They are very prominent throughout the chapter on defilement, but seem to be totally absent from the discussion of guilt" (350). This is not strictly true, obviously, for, as we have just seen, Ricoeur clearly says the experience of guilt is a *subjective* experience, an experience with a subject but without an object.

According to Ricoeur, there are "two measures" of guilt in this later symbolism: man's and God's. But in the symbolism of guilt, we are not concerned with God's measure; God's measure is "liquidated": "at the price of the liquidation of the religious sense of sin [God's measure]. . . .man is guilty as he feels himself guilty; guilt in the pure state has become a modality of man the measure[, representing] a complete cleavage between guilt and sin" (SE 104).

Under man's and not God's measure, guilt as fault exists in "three modalities" (and we should ask: are these three "modalities," or one or two of the three, *inventories* or *objects*?): "in the individualization of offenses in the penal sense, in the delicate conscience of the scrupulous man, and in the hell of condemnation" (SE 104). In the first modality of guilt, the individualization of offenses, "communal sin [changes] to individual guilt, and the change corresponds to a definite historical situation. The preaching of sin had represented a mode of prophetic summons in which the whole people was exhorted" (SE 105). The law of collective retribution, ordained by God, gives way to the law of personal retribution, ordained by man. Ricoeur explains how the individualization of offenses comes about by comparing personal with collective offenses. To do this, he bypasses "sin"--guilt does not require an association with sin; guilt is not even "very evident" unless "one directly contrasts guilt and impurity, leaping over the stage of sin" (SE 102)--and juxtaposes guilt to "defilement," for it is in defilement that people lived by the old "economy" of collective deliverances and collective punishment. As God grows in his montheistic stature, man's relationship to Him becomes more distant yet

more personal. It's clear that Ricoeur claims that guilt is internalized and individualized, although it is not clear how this happens. When offenses are individualized in the "new temporal economy" of guilt, "the personal imputation of evil" "breaks with the 'we' of the confession of sins" (SE 105). The "law of hereditary debt is broken"; "everyone pays for his own faults"; "evil is an act that each individual 'begins'" (SE 106-07). The weight of punishment, in anticipation of punishment, now proceeds not from an irrational "deployment of anxieties" but from a "consciousness of being cause, agent, author."

Ricoeur briefly argues that the individualization of offenses in the symbol of guilt "aggravated rather than resolved the crisis opened up in the doctrine of retribution. That every man dies for his own crime is precisely what Job will dispute, and a new idea of tragedy will be born from this discovery (cf. Pt. II, Chap. V)" (SE 106). But this brief statement, along with the relatively brief analysis of the enigma of suffering in Part II (SE 322), does not sufficiently answer for the "aggravation" we found (and find) in the crisis of the law of retribution. Besides, Ricoeur "resolves" the crisis in the simplistic "way of unverifiable faith" (SE 321).

In the second modality of guilt, that of the scrupulous man, which arises "contemporar[ily] with the individualization of fault" (and which is also therefore a later development in the system of fault), man ranges fault between "two polar figures[:] the 'wicked' and the 'just'" (SE 107). Although sin has no range ("it is or it is not"), in the modality of the scrupulous man fault and punishment become relative and can be measured in corresponding degrees. This is a Greek development.

By placing the sanctity of the cosmos in the city, the Greeks separated the cosmos from justice: "This rationality [the rationality of justice and injustice, which is rooted in the "archaic consciousness of the impure and the pure"] consisted essentially in a division between Cosmos and City" (SE 110). Public infractions against the city were treated as "offenses of sacrilege" (SE 111), as serious as infractions against the gods. Private infractions against persons were less serious. These lesser infractions were measured by tribunals and punished according to the seriousness of the offense and the voluntariness or involuntariness of the offender: "The psychology [of criminal acts] is rarely direct; it takes the roundabout way of poetry--gnomic, elegiac, tragic--which, in various ways, evolved . . . a meditation on oneself and a subtle analysis of acts" (SE 112). Responsibility for fault (for crime) would be measured by voluntariness, fate, negligence, and prudence after reflection by philosophers, dramatists, lawyers. Involuntariness would be taken into account and would help to develop a sense of responsibility: "the individual principle of transgression--something like a deliberate will, [became] distinct from being led astray by desire and from being carried away by anger [as well as from being blinded by the gods]--an intelligent will to evil for the sake of evil" (SE 116-17).

After the individualization of fault and the measuring of fault in degrees by man, scrupulousness develops. Scrupulousness is the "advanced point of guilt, in the sense that it carries to the extreme . . . the personal imputation of evil and the polarity of the just man and the wicked man" (SE 128). In particular, the Pharisees, who believed that the laws of

God could be followed in life, carried responsibility and the polarity of the just and the wicked to extremes by attempting "to make a whole people, corporately and individually, lead an actual and effectively practical existence under the Law and by the Law" (SE 120). The Pharisees, basing the Law on the Torah, asked: "How will God be truly served in this world?" (SE 123). The answer for the Pharisees was that God will be served--*in this world*--by following His laws. The Pharisees believed that perfection based on the laws of the Torah was achievable, for "nothing is demanded of a man that he cannot *do*" (SE 129).

In connection with the idea of achievable perfection, of serving and pleasing God in this world, the Pharisees developed a system of merit and reward. When a man serves and pleases God, his character is improved; he has merit: "Now, this character of being pleasing to God does not remain external to a man, defined by his practical relation to the holiness of God; it adds something to his personality, to his inmost existence. Man's self-worth increases and that self-worth is "connect[ed] with the idea of 'reward'" (SE 129).

As a man's worth increases corresponding to his good acts, his worth decreases corresponding to his evil acts: "If, then, 'merit' expresses the new conceptualization that Pharisaism developed in carrying on the two themes of personal imputation and the polarity of the just and the wicked, the explicit contribution of Pharisaism to the idea of guilt can be expected to be something like the contrary of merit. Objectively sin is transgression; subjectively guilt is the loss of a degree of worth; it is perdition itself" (SE 130). The individual's *character* becomes an all

important indicator of his goodness or wickedness. Although sin is "inevitable," retaining something of the fated, determined, and tragic about it, this inevitability is not "something irreparable": man may *choose* not to succumb and he may *choose* to repent:

> [M]an is subject to the duality of two tendencies, two impulses--a good inclination and an evil inclination. The latter . . . is implanted by the Creator in man; it is one of the things that God has made and of which he has said that they were 'very good,' The evil inclination, then, is not a radical evil, engendered by man, from which he is radically powerless to free himself; it is rather a permanent temptation that gives opportunity for the exercise of freedom of choice, an obstacle to be transformed into a springboard. 'Evil inclination' does not make sin something irreparable.
> (SE 131)

Man will do evil, but he may repent. The language of merit and of the contrary of merit is, according to Ricoeur, the "greatness of scrupulousness" (SE 132).

However great scrupulousness is, it is limited because of its very practicalness. "The will to complete and exact obedience" of laws or interdictions misses the true relationship between man and God; by following the law--which becomes ritualistic and prescriptive under its own aegis--we do not follow God. Presumably the exact obedience to the law and the prescriptive increase under the law are objective traits quite similar to the ritualistic and prescriptive inventory of evil in the symbol of

defilement, but Ricoeur does not make any comparison. The limitations in scrupulousness are in the overzealous, prescriptive, static (or "sedimentary") obedience to laws.

Now we arrive at the third modality of guilt as fault: the "impasse of guilt," or "the hell of guilt." The impasse of guilt is "'the curse of the law' (Gal. 3:13)" (SE 139). Because the law is infinite, it can never be satisfied: "The observance of the law is nothing if it is not whole and complete; but we are never done: perfection is infinite and the commandments are unlimited in number. Man, then, will never be justified by the law; he would be if the observance could be total" (SE 140).

Not only this, but the attempt to satisfy the demands of the law is itself evil, for "the will to save oneself by satisfying the law" is "'justice that comes by law'"; to save oneself by satisfying the law is worldly, of this world; "it is the opposite of liberty" (which can only be found in relationship to God) and is therefore "slavery, bondage to 'the weak and beggarly elements'" (SE 141). The will to obey the law can never be satisfied, and since it can never be satisfied, man is always guilty. Thus the law itself "is a source of sin" (SE 140); perfection, thought possible, is not possible: the multiplication of laws makes the effort to obey all law impossible. Thus we are not perfectible under the law; the law is so cumbersome that in itself it becomes a "source of sin." Ricoeur calls this the "'evil infinite'": "We . . . call this indefinite enumeration and indictment, which make the law 'accursed,' an 'evil infinite'" (SE 144).

Furthermore, if we do somehow satisfy the law or justify ourselves by our obedience to the law, we become self-righteous, and self-

righteousness is a sin: "the attempt to reduce sin by observance becomes sin. That is the real meaning of the curse of the law. . . .the supreme sin consists, in the last resort, in the vain attempt to justify *oneself*" (SE 143-48).

Man can never be justified by the law, only by faith. But if we are not judged before God, we are judged before our fellow men, or we are judged before ourselves and are alienated--we do not receive "God's repentance," His mercy. We accuse ourselves and are "shut in": "the guilty conscience is also a conscience that is shut in. . . .At the limit [of guilt and self-condemnation], distrust, suspicion, and finally contempt for oneself and abjectness are substituted for the humble confession of the sinner" (SE 145-48). Although we must serve the law, when we find that we cannot satisfy the law, when we find that we sin anyway, we shall find that we may be redeemed only through faith. Even though we cannot sin "in order that [we obtain] grace" (SE 149), we can obtain grace even though we sin.

It is not by accident that Ricoeur precedes his discussion of justification by law and justification by faith with a discussion of the "ethico-religious experience in the idea of *merit*" (SE 129). The idea of merit, in "connection with the idea of 'reward'"--which ideas themselves are not limited; these ideas "rais[e] the glory of the Pharisee to . . . heights" (SE 139); they are "the greatness of scrupulousness"; they have nothing to do with the *limits* of *legalism*--the ideas of merit and reward are extended quite intentionally in his discussion of justification. The man justified by observance of the law does not merit reward; he merits punishment, the

punishment of "death," for he is a servant enslaved to his will (but "too weak to fulfill it" [SE 142]), alienated from the Covenant, "condemned . . . to death" (SE 141), in "bondage" to the "moral and immoral" laws or "sorrows of this world" (SE 141). He is not rewarded but punished; he is not really living. But the man justified by faith *is* rewarded--he lives. He discovers the limits of guilt under the law and in ritual, and, then, he finds God and is delivered (SE 152): "Proverbs had already said: 'For he who finds me finds life . . .' (8:35-36)" (SE 130).

Guilt, then, according to Ricoeur, is the wholly subjective self-conscious "experience" of defilement. Modern man *knows*, as primitive man knew obscurely, that he has *chosen* to do evil, and he expects punishment. And so we have seen that, in the symbolism of guilt, man measures himself in three modalities. In the first modality of guilt, the individualization of offenses, communal guilt changes to individual guilt. In the second modality of guilt, scrupulousness, man judges or rationalizes the wicked and the just, punishes offenses according to their seriousness, and through poetry "meditates on the psychology of crime" (voluntariness and involuntariness), as well as distinguishes between deliberate will, seduced will, blinding, and passion. The Pharisees introduced the ideas of merit and reward but took the law refined by scrupulousness to legalistic extremes in their belief that the exact individual could practically obey the law and attain perfection. Such perfection is not possible; in fact, the attempt to attain perfection is itself an imperfection. The ideas of merit and reward help to define not only offenses but the individual (the character of the individual): the individual's worth increases or decreases according to

his good or evil acts. In the third modality of guilt, the hell of condemnation, man finds that he can never perfect himself under the law. The laws are too numerous and they are indefinitely enumerated, an "evil infinite." Justification by law is not possible; one may be justified only by faith.

Missing in Ricoeur's description of guilt is an account of radical evil. What, for instance, happened to the snake? Perhaps radical evil is implied in the inevitability of sin or in the impossibility of satisfying the law. Nor is there any indication that man--man as an entity, as in "mankind" or "human race," not God, the cosmos, or the individual--*is* responsible for the human conditon. The law of retribution works on an individual basis (merit, reward), in sight of the community or the self but without reference or appeal to God, and with no communal or collective responsibility or guilt.

If we were to imagine Ricoeur's work on the symbol of guilt in some final way in the human form of the conglomerate metaphor, we would say that that form hadn't changed in any way but that its two eyes had crossed, turned inward, and shut.

V. Conclusion

Ricoeur's argument on the primary symbols simply ends in a Christian polemic, much the same way his essay "Evil" ended, maintaining God's innocence and declaring man justified by faith. Thus perhaps it can be said that the symbolizations of defilement, sin, and guilt rejuvenate theology.

But what, in the specific case of the theory of symbols or of the symbols of evil or even of the problem of evil, do these symbols do for man, for philosophical anthropology, for philosophy? Ricoeur does not answer these questions. He says, "The problem remains: how to integrate this re-enactment in sympathetic imagination into reflection? How give reflection a new start by means of a symbolics of liberty in bondage? We are not in a position to answer this question, which will find its solution in the course of the third part of this work" (SE 19). He never produced that part of the work.

In his discussion of the servile will, which discussion appears between his descriptions of the symbols and myths, Ricoeur claims that the primitive *has known all along* that *he* is guilty, that *he* is responsible for evil:

> [B]ut the process of symbolization has undoubtedly already begun; the Babylonian suppliant 'confesses' and 'repents'; he knows obscurely that his bonds are in some way his own work; if not, why should he cry: 'Undo the many sins that I have committed since my youth. I will fear the god; I will not commit offenses'? Why should the suppliant beg to be *released* from what

> he has *committed* if he did not know obscurely, if he did not know without knowing, if he did not know enigmatically and symbolically, that he has put upon himself the bonds from which he begs to be released? (SE 153)

The transition from the possibility of evil in man to its reality is complete. But the reality of evil in man was already there. The suppliant in the regime of defilement knew symbolically what he should have known all along. We have seen the entire essential contents of defilement.

If there is a typology to the symbols of evil, it would have to be systematic and consistent. It is questionable, based on this and other criticism, whether or not there is a typology to the internal structures of the symbols based on "essential" traits: the objective and subjective traits (the inventory of evil and the dread of retribution). Although Ricoeur claims that the objective traits of the symbols are "transformed" from one symbol to the next, the transformations do not amount to more than the exchanging of one item in the inventory of evil for another, and the inventories themselves as Ricoeur presents them are quite "limited." Ricoeur has not been exhaustive in composing them. Nor does he account for probable changes in inventories from culture to culture or period to period. He claims that numerous prescriptions aren't important in one symbol (guilt), while he gives the prescriptions in another symbol (defilement) an incredible prominence.

The subjective trait of defilement cannot exist as it is outlined by Ricoeur in the original description, i. e., as "the bond between suffering and fault." There *is no* bond between suffering and fault. And yet this trait is said to "survive" (and indeed, according to Ricoeur, does survive) through all the symbolizations. Neither is the subjective trait of the dread of retribution "transformed" in the symbols' "dialectical" evolution, as Ricoeur claims it is. Evil done and evil suffered are confused in each. While perhaps the *consciousness* of the dread of retribution, of the agent of punishment, and of the agent of fault is transformed, the subjective trait itself remains the same in each symbol (although it is questionable whether or not the trait exists). Ricoeur says often that his aim is to elucidate the religious *consciousness* of fault (SE 3, 4, and Conclusion). But the consciousness of fault and the experience of fault are not the same things ("[g]uilt, sin, and defilement . . . constitute a primitive diversity in experience. Hence, the feeling involved is not only blind in virtue of being emotional; it is also equivocal, laden with a multiplicity of meanings. This is why language is needed a second time to elucidate the subterranean crises of the *consciousness* of fault" [SE 8, emphasis added]). In defilement the defiler experiences fault (suffers, believes his suffering is punishment) without consciousness of his own guilt or with a confused consciousness of guilt. In the progression of the symbols, the defiler eventually *becomes conscious* of fault. But there is no progression in the experience of fault--the experience of fault remains an experience of defilement (SE 12).

A final view of the symbols' objective and subjective traits and their "transformations," as illustrated in Chart 4, reveals the following:

Chart 4. The Transpositions of Defilement

Pre-classical/Classical	Post-classical/Biblical	Modern /Scientific
Cosmological explanation	***Biblical explanation***	***Modern explanation***
DEFILEMENT	**DEFILEMENT**	**DEFILEMENT**
violation against Cosmos / **dread of retribution** Collective or indefinite retribution	**violation** / **dread of retribition**	**violation** / **dread of retribution**
SIN	SIN	
violation / dread of retribution	violation against God / dread of retribution Collective and individual retribution	
GUILT	GUILT	GUILT
dread of retribution	dread of retribution	against SELF / dread of retribution Individual retribution
Job	**Job**	**Job**
(or any individual)	**(or any individual)**	**(or any individual)**
innocent/guilty	guilty	guilty
Before **Cosmos**	Before **God**	Before **Self**
gods/man	God/man	Individual

This table should be compared with the table in Chart 1. Defilement dominates throughout the symbol system. Sin and guilt revive and transpose defilement (SE 12), but they do not change it. The agent of retribution is transformed in all these cases: Gods -- God -- Man (first I am accused in the cosmos; then I am accused in relation with God; finally I am accused by man or myself), but the idea that one always suffers deservedly or the fact that one's misfortune will always speak for one's moral integrity, does not change.

Up to a point Ricoeur remains faithful to the hermeneutic practice of questioning the "truth" (if we define truth as reality): some of the historical work seems fair, the work on the contributions of the Pharisees, for instance. But just as often he hasn't been faithful to such truth. He manipulates the typology of the symbols by the "selection" of the traits (how does Ricoeur know these are their traits?), tilts the whole schema in a historical rather than a systematic direction while claiming that the symbols have a lateral relationship and not a linear progression, and provides more of a Protestant history than a description of "symbols." And although he sometimes refers to the "tenacity" of the law of retribution, of confusing misfortune with fault, he also manipulates the law of retribution in his claim to break the law, in his reconstitution of the law, and in his blindness to that law in biblical doctrines.

This leads again to one of the dangers or problems described in the introduction: the potential for resymbolization in interpretation, of interpretation not based in the work, of self-serving interpretation. In the conglomerate metaphor, I have suggested that Ricoeur does not avoid this danger. Ricoeur has claimed that it is his purpose to double-demythize. But one can't resymbolize unless one has a symbol. One can make new symbols, however, out of anything, and this is perhaps what Ricoeur has done. What symbols has he made? He has resymbolized the old notions of defilement and retribution, given them (re)new(ed) meaning for modern man.

Ricoeur adds to the confusion between doing and suffering evil and places the blame for evil suffered on the individual. If we take God and

Satan out of the story of Job but otherwise leave the story intact--and I think that this can be done; it's just a story, a "hypothesized innocence"--inexplicable suffering still remains. Yet Job today is suspect. Coming upon him (we come upon Jobs everyday, in every town, every country, every era--there are many Jobs), our first act, our first inclination, like Eliphaz', Bildad's, Zophar's, and Elihu's, is suspicion: Surely fortune does not reject a blameless man . . . If you will put away your fault . . .You did this to yourself; you should have done better. . . Will you keep to the evil path? . . . Suffering is the price for the violation of order . . . If you suffer, if you fail, it is because you have made bad choices . . . Since you experience this failure, this evil misfortune, what bad choices have you made? . . . If you remove bad choices from your house. . . .

Job's companions and accusers today are many, more than Job. Like Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu, we--we joe schmoes, we moderns, we philosophers--accuse the sufferer of moral inerectitude, of causing and deserving his own suffering. Ricoeur's philosophy of will *sets out* to accuse Job, sets out to accuse the sufferer.

Notes

1 See for instance *The Symbolism of Evil*; "The Symbol . . . Food for Thought"; "Structure and Hermeneutics"; "The Problem of Double Meaning as Hermeneutic Problem and as Semantic Problem"; "'Original Sin': A Study in Meaning"; "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: I"; "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: II"; *Interpretation Theory* (Essay III, "Metaphor and Symbol"); and "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language."

2 I know of three instances where Ricoeur discusses other symbols (the symbols of virtue). In SE, in the section on myth, Ricoeur describes Christian purification and pardon as "symbols," in contradistinction to the symbols of evil (274-78). In "Structure and Hermeneutics," he briefly discusses the medieval Christian "symbolism" of virtue (57-61). And in "The Hermeneutics of Symbols: II," he says the symbols of evil are only "a particular part of religious symbolism in general. One can suppose that the symbolism of evil is always the contrary of a symbolism of the good or salvation or that a symbolism of salvation is the counterpart of a symbolism of evil: the pure corresponds to the impure, forgiveness to sin, freedom to bondage" (316). He never elaborated on the symbols of virtue further than this, however, at least not in his philosophical statements. And in none of these cases does he devote the same depth of analysis as he devotes to the symbols of evil. This is possibly because he considers Christian religious symbols "poetic" or *post-linguistic* rather than, as in the case of the symbols of evil, cosmic/oneric or *pre-linguistic*. It is hard to say, since he's never produced a major philosophical statement on this. This may have been a quandary for him--how to define the symbols of Christian purity or virtue as *post-linguistic* symbolic experiences when the advent of virtue precedes or arises contemporaneously with the *pre-linguistic* experiences of evil expressed in the symbols of defilement, sin, and guilt.

3 I do not analyze the myths in SE except marginally, even though Ricoeur defines myths as "secondary symbols." By this he means he "regard[s] myths as a species of symbols, as symbols developed in the form of narrations and articulated in a time and a space that cannnot be co-ordinated with the time and space of history and geography according to the critical method. For example, exile is a primary symbol of human alienation, but the history of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise is a mythical narration of the second degree, bringing into play fabulous personages, places, times, and episodes. Exile is a primary symbol and not a myth, because it is a historical event made to signify human alienation analogically; but the same alienation creates for itself a fanciful history, the exile from Eden, which, as history that happened *in illo tempore*, is myth" (SE 18). To decipher his work on the myths in SE would be as strenuous as, or perhaps more strenuous than, deciphering his work on symbols; therefore, I have restricted this study to symbols. Furthermore, I am not sure I would have the same arguments about his work on the myths. Although I believe he "mythologizes" in both cases, by which I mean *makes new symbols or myths*, in the case of the myths, his mythologizations *seem* to expand meaning, while in the case of symbols, his symbols seem to *superadd* meaning.

4 My brief discussion of the history of philosophical anthropology draws heavily from Morgan's essay. I'm not convinced that Morgan, at the time he was writing, grasped all of the implications of Ricoeur's contributions. For this reason and for the reason that we're going far deeper into Ricoeur's ideas later, I gloss over what Morgan says here concerning Ricoeur.

In his article, Morgan talks about the influence of the functional and structural schools on both anthropology and philosophy, but because the discussion doesn't bear heavily on the present study, I don't include it here.

5 See "The Antinomy of Human Reality" 20-21. This essay is Ricoeur's summary statement of *Fallible Man*. In it Ricoeur asks, "Why pose the problem of man as a being of the mean? For its value as an approach to one of the greatest difficulties of philosophy, the problem of evil."

6 For Ricoeur's statements to the effect that evil can only be expressed symbolically, see SE 9; "Structure and Hermeneutics" 28-29; "OriginalSin" 281-86; "The Hermeneutics of Symbols: I" 36-41; "The Hermeneutics of Symbols: II" 322-26; *Interpretation Theory* 57-60; and "Symbol . . .Food" 205-06. The best example of this kind can be found in "The Hermeneutics of Symbols: I": "In fact *there is no direct language of evil undergone, suffered, or commited*; whether man admits his responsibility or claims to be the prey of an evil which takes hold of him, he does so first and foremost in a symbolism whose articulations can be traced out thanks to various rituals of 'confession' that the history of religion has interpreted for us" (emphasis added 38). The symbols of evil can only say anything through reflection; otherwise they are speechless, indirect, *pre*-linguistic, unconscious, mute, dumb. As Ricoeur is fond of saying in this connection, quoting "Heraclitus the Obscure": "'The king whose oracle is at Delphi does not speak, he does not hide; he makes signs' (Frag. 93)" ("Symbol . . . Food" 207).

7 Of course, these are neither precise nor scientific distinctions: bizarre/non-bizzare; apprehended/assimilated; logos/pre-logos; free/bound; dead/transformed. What is the difference, for instance, between "[t]he interplay of similarity and dissimilarity" in metaphor, and the fact that "the boundaries are all blurred" in symbol?; or between the "living" metaphor's tie to a network of "root metaphors" (God: king, Father, Husband, etc.), and the symbol's "bind" to the correspondences in the Sacred universe (sky, earth, air, etc.)?; or between the speed of the "volatile" metaphor, and the speed of the "slow" symbol? (56-64). As David Pellauer remarks, "it must be said that Ricoeur has more asserted than demonstrated this difference between symbols and metaphors" (113).

8 Van Leeuwen was first, to my knowledge, to point this out; see114. It should be recalled that Ricoeur has not analyzed any other symbols.

9 Yet obviously a symbol is not a metaphor. Pellauer also suggests this. Ricoeur at one time says that the symbol "must be [a] dead metaphor" (*Interpretation Theory* 64). But if this is true, then the dead metaphor (the symbol) must once, in its *pre*-linguistic past, have been a live one, placing the live metaphor in the prelinguistic, prescientific universe. Or, conversely, placing symbol in the universe of *logos*.

10 McGuire 192-93. "This depth semantics is 'less a subjective operation than an objective process; less an act on the text, than an act of the text . . . interpretation is the act of the text, before being an act of exegesis; it is like an arrow borne by the text itself, indicating the direction for the exegetical work.'. . .The interpreter anticipates that the text makes a claim regarding the things to which it refers. The very meaning and structure of historical interpretation are not some psychic state but the 'thing' being delivered by historical tradition. That which is interpreted is the unity of the interpreter's preunderstanding with the thing interpreted; historical reality is constituted through their relationship . . . and the truth content of that which is interpreted takes primacy over the subjectivity of either

interpreter or agent. . . .The key point . . . is that interpretation exists as a kind of chain, in which the first interpreters serve as a tradition for later ones. Each in a sense subordinates him/herself to the movement of the text itself, to the thing itself, which in its own way guides the dialogue between interpreters . . . This interpretation attains an objective status in that it makes use of explanatory procedures and in that it is part of an intersubjective dialogue guided by the object itself."

11 I am not sure if I am taking Stack out of context here or not.

12 This summary of the major criticism of Ricoeur's symbols has not included the major statements about Ricoeur's hermeneutics and phenomenology (phenomenology in its philosophical rather than criteriological sense). For major statements in these areas, see Ihde and Rasmussen, *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology.* Ihde's and Rasmussen's studies have seemed to me to be broad and uncritical discussions of the whole spectrum of Ricoeur's work, which discussions aren't relevant to the work here.

13 For summaries of the symbols of evil in SE, see Putti136-39; Van Leeuwen138-44; Ihde 103-14; Anderson (1993) 101-09. To my knowledge, there are two exceptions; see Dunning and Rasmussen, *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology.* Dunning's analysis does not go nearly deeply enough, however, and it is purely wrong at some points, as when, although acknowledging that not all of the objective/subjective traits stand up in each symbol, he says that the objective and subjective traits are in dialectical opposition in the symbols.

14 For additional statements about the "shifting" of Ricoeur's methodologies, also see Anderson (1993) 9, 13 and the DeLoach article.

15 The theological critics take their cues from Ricoeur, who says, "'We must understand in order to believe, but we must believe in order to understand'" (SE 351). Professor Daniels has been kind enough to point out that Ricoeur is quoting from the opening pages of St. Augustine's *Confessions.*

16 It is this problem, I believe, which leads Ricoeur to try to explain himself in his subsequent discussions of the hermeneutics of symbols and symbol theory and which ultimately leads him to abandon the study of the symbol and the concept of evil as a specifically symbolic phenomenon (For a statement that Ricoeur has abandoned the study of symbol, see Pellauer. For Ricoeur's discussion of evil as a non-symbolic phenomenon, see "Evil").

17 We are not talking about suffering resulting from natural calamities. Science has advanced our understanding of the "fault," the cause, of physical disasters. In "Evil," Ricoeur makes several distinctions between sin and suffering, but these distinctions are not helpful to the question of the suffering of Job, and I flatly disagree with him there that people "suffer" as victims in committing evil, except perhaps those people who consider themselves to be committing "necessary" evil as the lesser of two or more evils, or something such as this. But even these people probably do not "suffer," because they generally feel perfectly justified by the "limits" of their choices.

18 In an earlier essay, Ricoeur had argued that "Job represents the failure to explain suffering by punishment; here we are confronted, in effect, with innocence ("innocence by hypothesis"; "Job is a dramatized hypothesis"), the innocent one driven to desperation.

The companions of Job, who are representative of an explanatory theodicy, try to make him confess that his misfortune is but an effect of his sin. Yet Job does not yield and his protestation exposes and intensifies the enigma of the misfortune which is out of proportion to his fault. The anguish of guilt is therefore not the last anguish: I had tried to assume evil, to regard myself as the one who establishes evil in the world, but here is Job, righteous and yet suffering; here is evil which happens *to* man, the evil which is woe" ("True and False Anguish" 301-02).

19 I take some of the discussion here on the symbolism of sin from the Adam section in the second half of SE. I do this for two reasons. First, some of the description of the symbol of sin remains obscure to me. Second, the description of sin obviously has biblical relevance, and the myth which "narrates" or dramatizes sin, and which Ricoeur considers "pre-eminent," makes the myth relevant to the symbol.

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