

TRICOEUR ON THE SYMBOLISM OF EVIL AND SUBJECTIVITY

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Paul Ricoeur's philosophy follows a threefold path toward the revival of the subject.¹ This is even illustrated by the three seemingly opposing symbolic categories—the *hierophanic*, *oneirotic*, and *poetic*. The *hierophanic* exemplifies the grounding moment. The *oneirotic* embodies the moment of distancing. Lastly, the *poetic* demonstrates the moments of appropriation. Later, Ricoeur illustrates them by means of the primitive symbolisms of evil.

Ricoeur's notion of interpretation is rooted in his quest to understand symbol.² He observes that the symbolic tells more about itself. He defines "symbol and interpretation in their relation to one another."³ This implies that his study on symbol leads to the understanding of his notion of the subject. The interpretation of symbolisms mirrors the gradation in the subject's going into himself.

Ricoeur is fascinated with symbol and finds it to be very significant. He considers a symbol more than a mere sign or an icon on the periphery that becomes ordinary the moment its meaning is discovered. On the contrary, the symbol provides a food for thought. The discovery of its meaning leads to further discoveries. There is an apparent movement or even a cycle in the unfolding of the meaning of the symbol.

The sense of the symbol betrays its reference. Unlike a univocal sign whose sense can be reflected by its reference, the ideal sense of a symbolic sign has a reference that transcends the sense of the text. This apparent disparity of the sense to the reference of the text leads to interpretation. Symbolism is a very common human experience and is expressed by the different myths and stories of the people. The very situation of a human being is the source of such a symbolism. Experience is so vast and meaningful that oftentimes language becomes



limited and unable to express the fullness of that experience. The profundity of human experience leads man to use symbolisms. Symbolisms are so profound that they form an enigma whose meaning is inexhaustible.

The Symbolic Categories

Ricoeur enumerates the symbol's various spheres. First, he uses Mircea Eliade's term, *hierophanies*, to mark the identity of the symbol being "tied in with rites and myths."⁴ Hierophanies connote the symbol as the language of the Sacred.⁵ The second category is that of the oneirotic. For Sigmund Freud, symbols are not just representations of something else but *oneirotic* representations that go beyond individual history. The last category is the *poetics*. The poetic imagination is imported by Ricoeur from M. Bachelard who has shown that "the problem of imagination is not the problem of the image, not even of the image in relation to the absence or the annihilation of the real... [Instead], 'the poetic image...brings us to the origin of the being who speaks.' And later on: 'It becomes a new being in our language; it expresses ourselves by making us into what it expresses.'"⁶

The three symbolic categories represent in themselves various modes of interpretation. They are apparently conflicting with each other. Still, they signify the various modes of subjectivity. In *hierophany* the experience of the subject is still very objective; in *poetics* this becomes very subjective. The three symbolic categories demonstrate the internalization of the subject.

Moreover, the three symbolic categories illustrate how the subject feels about the nature of experience. This section will discuss the meaning of the three symbolic categories and the flow of the subject's affectivity as regards his experience. It will illustrate, through the symbolic categories, the philosophy of the symbol as expressed in the three stages that "stake out the movement that leaps from the *life* in symbols toward *thought*—thought that truly starts out from symbols."⁷

The Hierophanies

The hierophanies, which designate the acts of manifesting the sacred, are very much related to the phenomenology of religion and "tied in with rites and myths."⁸ Their sources the religious rites as well

as the ancient myths regarding the Holy. On one hand, the religious rites deal with the sacred or the holy and the rites apply to the worship of the gods and the goddesses. On the other hand, ancient myths are mostly stories of gods and goddesses. They mirror the relationship between the Holy Other and man.

These religious rites and myths utilize symbols which constitute the language of the sacred. Religious rites always portray the life story of the gods or goddesses, but since they can no longer reenact exactly the whole event, they use symbolism. Interpreting the symbols of the sacred is very objective in nature. To ascertain the meaning of the perceived sky symbolism, for instance, as symbolizing the abode of the gods, the interpreter compares it to other symbols. The comparison gives him the distinct confidence of its veracity.

Analogically, the symbol may have the same interpretation with other symbols if their range of experientiality is the same. There is a commonality of understanding inasmuch as shared attributes are given to these symbols experienced in the phenomenon of religion. The field of participation is external to the interpreter. Since the expanse of the experience is external, then it must be objective. The subject does not experience the event itself except as a shared experience.

The process of better understanding the truth of the experience and its extensivity involves the horizontal understanding of the symbol through phenomenology and comparative studies. With the horizontal understanding, the subject disregards the immediacy of his belief. After the horizontal understanding of the symbol, what transpires is the dynamicity of the symbol. The symbol might be serene and amicable, but it could mean war and violence. In interpreting, the subject understands the symbolic meaning anew. This new understanding takes place on the critical level. To understand critically, the subject as the interpreter abandons the position of the distant and detached observer. He now participates in the dynamicity of the symbol.

The experience of the symbol in its dynamicity may excite and have an impact on the subject. This excitement leads the subject to pursue the effect of the experience. Hence, in the consciousness of the subject, various desires and wishes are formed—some are attainable and others not; some might be real and others may not be. The sentiments that arise from the previous experience of the subject are

formed in his consciousness. Here, the oneirotic side of the experience comes in.

The Oneirotic

The second symbolic category that Ricoeur examines is the dream language, particularly in the work of Freud.

Ricoeur remarks that Freud sees dream language as symbolic, as an oneirotic representation. As such, dream language must not be interpreted literally, but symbolically. Dreams reveal a deeper meaning. They are the disguised fulfillment of repressed wishes or desires. Desires hide themselves in dreams. Thus, interpretation must substitute the light of meaning for the darkness of desire; this leads to the hermeneutics of deciphering. The elaboration of the dream symbol through countless crosschecks leads to what is called the language of desire or the oneirotic.⁹ “[D]reams attest that we constantly mean something other than what we say; in dreams the manifest meaning endlessly refers to a hidden meaning...” says Ricoeur.¹⁰

But dream symbols are not unique to an individual. They even coincide with that of an entire people. Since these symbols go beyond individual history, the *arche* is not of a particular individual. It is rooted in the common culture. Thus, the interpretation of dreams relates to the culture of the people.¹¹

The interpretation of the dream language is not as objective as that of the hierophanies. Various subjects have the same dreams, and dreams are their disguised fulfillment of repressed wishes or desires. Actually, the oneirotic emphasizes the expression of the desires, wishes or sentiments of the subject. Consequently, these dreams provide themes for the subject to become what he wants to be. The subject has his own personal interpretation on how to make that dream come true. To be sure whether the subject's desire at the moment is indeed the true desire he wishes to fulfill, an intelligent interpretation must be done.

To yield the knot of the symbolic meaning involves an intelligent deciphering. In this stage, understanding the symbol involves a circle wherein the symbol gives up its meaning as the interpreter interprets. To understand, the interpreter must have lived in the atmosphere of the meaning being sought. In this regard, Ricoeur agrees

with Rudolf Bultmann when the latter said in his article "The Problem of Hermeneutics":

Every comprehension, like every interpretation...is forever receiving direction from the way the question is put and what is aimed at. It is never without presuppositions; it is always directed by a precomprehension of the matter about which the text is being consulted. Only from the starting point of this precomprehension can it generally investigate and understand...the presupposition of all comprehension is the vital bond between the interpreter and the matter which the text is talking about, either directly or indirectly.¹²

The other half of the circle, which is "we can believe only in interpreting," has been posited. In this circle, the union between belief and criticism has been developed. In a criticism which rebuilds rather than destroys, an irrevocable gain for the truth has been achieved. The union between belief and criticism confers the second level of interpretation. Hereafter, the symbol begins to provide food for thought, which is the level of the poetic imagination.

The Poetic Image

Poetic imagination is the articulation of the subject's own reflection excited by his oneirotic experiences. This oneirotic experience is transformed into a new being which is reflective in nature. As the subject expresses experience through language, a word-image is formed. With it, the poetic imagery appears; it exists because of language itself. In contrast, the hierophanies are prior to language. The sacred is already in the cosmos, but it becomes symbolic only when it is stated in language. The poetic language is very different from the literal language. It is so rich its literal meaning, that is, its first intention, is different from other meanings (the secondary intentions). Thus, the poet shows the birth of the metaphorical word that makes it very symbolic.

The case of the poetics is the apex of Ricoeur's subjectivity. Ideally, the event of the discourse happens between the literary text and the reader alone. In reading a literary piece, the world of the text and that of the reader interact. The experience of the reader might be

similar with other people sharing the same spatio-temporal conditions. However, the impact of the experience varies from one reader to another. Inasmuch as no two individuals feel the same impact in a similar situation, interpretation text varies as well from one interpreter to another. The meaning depends solely on the interpreter. It is not shared. The subject, after finding himself in the realm of symbols through the intermediary of the phenomenology of religion and myths and that of the careful hermeneutics of individual text, can promote and shape the meaning of the symbol in a creative interpretation.¹³

To clearly illustrate the growing subjectivity of the subject or the role of symbolic knowledge in self-consciousness, (or more precisely, in philosophical reflection upon the being of man) the symbolisms of evil are discussed. The three symbolisms, namely, defilement, sin, and guilt, illustrate the growing subjective understanding and interpretation of evil. At first, the treatment of evil is very objective. Then it becomes little by little grounded on the understanding of the subject until it becomes solely the concern of the subject.

In his study, Ricoeur gives emphasis on the faulted nature of man. This faulted nature is best illustrated by man's confession of his faultiness; it leads him to interpret the reality of evil. The knowledge of the reality of evil is possible through the language of confession. However, such an experience is very unfathomable, unexplainable by words in their literalness.

Man resorts to symbolism. He explores the experience of evil symbolically in order to capture its reality. Those symbolisms are in themselves not very unique to every individual. There seems to be a general symbolism of evil. Why is this so? Again, the situatedness of the person determines it.

Ricoeur, for his part, studies the symbolisms through the most primitive known sources—the myths. Myths are the most primitive, unadulterated record of human experience. With them, Ricoeur commences his study of the reality of evil.

If the three symbolic categories—the hierophanic, oneirotic, and poetic—illustrate in general their implication to the subject's experience, here the symbolisms of evil specifically illustrate how interpretation works in the experience of the subject.

The Language of Confession

Ricoeur starts from human experience. He uses the utterance of evil as his starting point. This utterance is best reflected by language. Language, although it expresses experience within a limitation, is still the best reflection of the reality of evil. In the study of the symbolism of evil, language plays a very significant role. Ricoeur says,

Language is the light of the emotions. Through confession the consciousness of fault is brought into the light of speech; through confession man remains speech, even in the experience of his own absurdity, suffering and anguish.¹⁴

This confession of evil significantly expressed through the primitive language of confession is thoroughly a symbolic language. The three categories of symbolic structure mentioned above are interwoven in order to unfold the experiences within each of these categories. This is done through an intentional analysis of authentic symbols. Ricoeur analyzes three primary symbols of evil: defilement, sin and guilt.

The symbolic analysis he made is ultimately based on the Old Testament. In his analysis, he quotes verses from this part of the bible. From there he builds his analysis.

His study does not investigate the whatness of evil. It merely examines the possibility by way of the actuality of fault. Evil in this study is not focused on its essential possibility, but on the existential reality of human fault vividly manifested through religious confession of evil. Ricoeur investigates confessions of evil encrypted by the primitive myths.

John B. Thompson comments that "the primitive language of avowal in which the experience of evil is expressed is a thoroughly symbolic language, not in the sense of formal logic but in the phenomenological sense of double intentionality."¹⁵ The three symbolic categories—the hierophanic, oneirotic, and poetic—(which manifest the double intentionality status of symbols), are interwoven in a unified symbolic structure. With this idea, Ricoeur unfolds the human experiences behind the intertwining of the three categories.

This intertwining of the three categories is even made clearer when Ricoeur points to the three primary symbols of evil as

manifesting the three symbolic categories. Ricoeur's analysis leads him to the aspects of evil and ultimately explains the actual intertwining of the three apparently contradicting modes of interpretation. This analysis can be viewed differently if it is used to specify the trend of the subject's re-appropriation of the textual symbolisms, clearly illustrating the internalization of the experience of evil. The interpretation of evil is at first described as a communal understanding. This goes on until that communal understanding becomes personal and thus has a unique impact on the subject.

In this section, the reality of evil is first discussed. Within the explanation of the reality of evil, an analysis towards the growing subjectivism of the interpretation of evil is appended.

The Primitive Symbols of Evil

Ricoeur considers three symbolisms of evil as a result of his study of primitive myths and the Bible. In these symbolisms, the conflicting categories of interpretation are capable of harmonious interweaving.

The interconnectedness of the three categories of interpretation shows the essence of Ricoeur's philosophy, his hermeneutic phenomenology, and magnifies its historical and cultural nature. The flow of the three symbolisms is itself historical for each manifests the historical interconnectedness of the presumed conflicting categories of interpretation. Aside from the articulation of these symbols as harmoniously interconnected, they are related to one another in a dynamic movement of progressive interiorization.

In this study, Ricoeur aims at studying intently the relation of finiteness and guilt. He states that it is "most remarkable that there is no language for guilt but symbolic language. This means in the first place the highly archaic language of the stain, where evil is apprehended as a spot, a blot, and then as something positive which affects from without and pollutes."¹⁶

Defilement

The most primitive form of man's encounter with evil is found in the image of defilement. Firstly, "evil is explained and expressed through a scheme of exteriority to the human being. The stain is a

quasi-material 'event', which 'infects' humanity by concrete contact. The 'tainted being' needs, therefore, purification rites to be washed, cleansed, purified."¹⁷ "Dread of the impure and rites of purification are in the background of all our feelings and all our behavior relating to fault."¹⁸

In this nature of defilement, evil is first regarded as an impurity gleaned from various aspects of the world. However, the cosmic aspect is experienced from the subjective point of view as dread, wonder or fear, an experience related to the oneirotic response of man. This feeling of dread, wonder or fear is related to the

existential phenomenon of evil and suffering and the symbol of stain explained both evil and suffering, uniting the cosmic to the biological world and these to behavior, private and commercial. Suffering was loaded with an ethical meaning which sprang from the fact of the stain and which afterwards was rationalized."¹⁹

Evil as defilement "appears to us as a moment in the consciousness of fault that has been left behind: from an objective point and from a subjective point of view."²⁰ Objectively, it can be noticed as a cosmic activity. The subject is astonished to observe "involuntary or unconscious human actions, the actions of animals, and even simple material events called defilements—the frog that leaps into fire, the hyena that leaves its excrements in the neighborhood of a tent."²¹ This is because he does not find any point where he might insert a judgment of personal imputation from these actions. In this regard, Ricoeur emphasizes "we have to transport ourselves into a consciousness for which impurity is measured not by imputation to a responsible agent but by the objective violation of an interdict."²² Also, he adds that

the inventory of defilement surprises us by gaps. Not infrequently the same system of interdiction abounds in minute prescriptions in domain that for us are ethically neutral, but does not regard as defilements acts which the Semitic codes and Greeks legislation have taught us to characterize as evil: theft, lying, sometimes even homicide. These



actions become evil only in a system of reference other than that of infectious contact, in connection of divine holiness, respect for interhuman ties and self-esteem.²³

In short, defilement as an objective event infects by contact. However, "this infectious contact is experienced subjectively in a specific feeling, which is of the order of dread; man enters into ethical world through fear and not through love."²⁴ This dread is already "ethical dread and not merely physical fear, dread of a danger which is itself ethical and which at a higher level of the consciousness of evil, will be the danger of not being able to love any more, the danger of being a dead man in the realm of ends."²⁵ Originally, this dread is the primordial connection of vengeance with defilement. Vengeance causes suffering.

All these things explain the connection of the cosmic experience to the oneirotic or psychic experience. As the defilement is experienced subjectively, it induces a certain feeling from the individual, the feeling of fear or wonder.

Finally, the unity of the cosmic and oneirotic experience gives rise to the poetic experience. The oneirotic experience results in the rite of purification, marking the emergence of the symbol in language. As a matter of fact, Ricoeur asks this question: "How could the image of defilement survived if, from the beginning, it had not had the power of a symbol?"²⁶ Ricoeur explains,

In truth, defilement was never literally a stain: impurity was never literally filthiness, dirtiness... The representation of defilement dwells in the half-light of a quasi-physical infection that points toward a quasi-unworthiness. This ambiguity is not expressed conceptually but is experience intentionally in the very quality of the half-physical, half-ethical fear that clings to the representation of the impure... In fact, even the ablution is never a simple washing; ablution is already a partial and fictive act. And it is because the ablution is already a symbolic washing that the suppression it signifies can be effected by a diversity of equivalent acts which mutually symbolize one

another... Hence, defilement, insofar as it is the 'object' of this ritual suppression, is itself a *symbol* of evil.²⁷

In short, this purgation expressed in the rite of ablution can symbolize a ritual of purification and then a wholly moral purity.

Generally, defilement is primarily hierophanic or cosmic in nature. Although it results in dread or fear, it is primarily cosmological. In so far as it is cosmological, the people possess a common understanding of the reality of evil. It is likened to a stain on an immaculately clean slate. That is how evil as defilement works for the subject.

Aside from the defilement symbolism, there are still other symbols of human evil. The symbols of going astray, of rebelling, of wandering and getting lost, of captivity also symbolize the human evil. However, these symbols are no longer superadded to the consciousness of evil as defilement. They rather constitute the primordial language of sin.

Sin

The symbolism of defilement focuses on the exteriority of evil which transforms it into the internal concept of *sin*. The Hebrew prophets developed this theme where the scheme of exteriority becomes a scheme of interiority. Evil is no longer a 'material thing' which attacks man from the outside but an internal reality which humanity experiences before the sacred. The idol is supplanted by a name (Yahweh); the sacred acquires a face and a voice that speaks to man. Sin is understood in the context of the alliance between God and a people; evil is the expression of a broken relationship, a failure to keep the commandments. If stain were a 'thing', sin would be the absence of God, a nothingness which is expressed in the symbols of wandering, loneliness, abyss, nakedness, solitude, exile, desert and death. But the archaic symbol does not disappear. The scheme of exteriority reappears at an ethical level instead of a 'magical' one. Sin, even though understood as the breaking of the covenant between man and God - a personal, subjective, spiritual relation - continues to have the weight of the primitive trait of the 'stain', the objective, physical impurity which contaminates from the outside.²⁸



Sin is the first order of transforming a hierophanic symbol into a more internal symbol, from defilement to Ethics. Don Ihde explains, It is precisely in the 'objectification' of the experience of evil, in its ritual-poetic expression, that Ricoeur sees the possibility for such a transformation. The symbol system is a system which *defines* the pure and the impure. Now it insinuates itself into the experience itself as an instrument by which the defiled self becomes conscience of itself... Dread expressed in words is no longer simply a cry, but an avowal. In short, it is by being refracted in words that dread reveals an ethical rather than a physical aim.²⁹

The transformation of the objective aspect of defilement into the subjective experience of fear or dread leads to the ethicization of defilement. What belongs to physical contact leads to contamination that eventually creates the feeling of fear. The ethicization of defilement leads to the sin symbolism. The symbolism of sin revolves around the man-before-God schema in a Hebrew paradigm. The evil symbolism is "polarly opposed to the god before whom he stands, the penitent becomes conscious of his sin as a dimension of his existence and no longer only as a reality which haunts him."³⁰ With this point, evil as defilement moves inwardly to a human level of experience. Thus, the movement for self-reflection begins.

With the schema of sin, the experience of evil becomes anthropotropic; evil evolves within man. The symbolic context represents "the fundamental situation of a man who finds himself implicated in the initiative taken by someone who... is essentially turned toward man; a god in the image of a man... but above a god concerned about man; a god who is anthropotropic..."³¹

The Hebrew paradigm of the sin symbolism circles on the notion of the covenant between God and the chosen people, the Israelites. The contract between God and the Israelites is supposed to be kept by the Israelites as a manifestation of their faith in the Lord who saved them from the slavery in Egypt. However, the covenant has been broken. Henceforth, "sin is the breaking of the contract; piety is the keeping of faith with the contract.... The cosmic movement of sin

symbolism retains the analogues of *position*. Man is for God or against Him; God is present or absent. Evil is a visitation of the wrath of God, a punishment for being against God."³²

The psychic moment of sin is also an elevation and a transformation of fear. "In rising from the consciousness of defilement to the consciousness of sin, fear and anguish did not disappear; rather, they changed their quality."³³ The psychic response is now "fear of God" and is ethicized. Dread is the dread of the wrath of God expressed in the images of presence and absence, of God removing his face or showing it in anger. Sin anthropomorphizes dread in a relational direction."³⁴

The poetic moment of sin is manifested by the language of the repentant sinner. "To repent is to 'return', to again stand in the presence of God. The contract is re-established by the 'position' of Israel. The exile also provides a series of analogues for the experience of evil under the sign of sin. The rupture of being before God is expressed as 'wandering', being 'lost', and as 'exiled'."³⁵

Even though the sin is an elevation of the stain symbolism to the ethical ground, defilement continues to appear in the symbolism field. The ritualistic languages for getting rid of the stains are still used analogically. Still, "the psalmist and the penitent continue to speak of being 'cleansed' (of sin)—but the whole sense of stain has been transformed. To be cleansed now means that the subject's existence has been changed and does not primarily refer to a means of escaping a quasi-physical evil. The cleansing becomes a *sign* for the good faith of the penitent."³⁶

In sin symbolism, the original meaning of stain is lost. The stain symbolism has fully reverted into "a purely symbolic quality and stands for the now dominant analogue of a contract which has been broken. The sinner is under the sign of evil not because it has come upon him but because he has turned to an evil way. Sin begins the subjectivization of the experience of evil."³⁷

Guilt

The guilt symbolism is the epitome of Ricoeur's subjectivization of the evil experience. The 'law', and with it a whole series of juridical analogues, creates the notion of guilt with its internalization of an

accusation. The penitent is guilty before the law of a god or before authority. But the guilt is guilt primarily in relation to consciousness and individualization. "The second conquest, contemporary with the individualization of fault, is the idea that guilt has *degrees*. Whereas sin is a qualitative situation - it is or it is not - guilt designates an intensive quality, capable of more or less."³⁸ The subject is guilty in accordance with his conscious or 'voluntary' activity. The 'I who...' is responsible for evil to the degree of his conscious involvement."³⁹

The schema of guilt is the deepest manifestation of the subjectivization of the evil experience. The subject feels guilty when he realizes deeply that he transgresses the law. Transgression is not merely a sinful experience. The feeling of guilt is much greater than the feeling of fear in the schema of sin. The tribunal or the one that judges now is not anything external. It is now very personal. It is the self who inflicts such a feeling.

In this schema, there is now the internalization of the evil experience. That experience is seen in the act of will. There the subject feels that the origin of evil is not from the outside but from the inside. Guilt is a sort of self-conscious knowledge of the evil experience. The subject is fully aware of the repercussion of the act he wills. Thus, it is not now the external laws that bother him; his conscience does.

Freedom from the burden of guilt is only cast by pardon and forgiveness. This is possible with the self's realization of his fault. Even at this stage, the role of self-reflectiveness is very imposing. The origin of evil is emphasized. The knowledge of evil in the guilt schema is from man himself, the source of evil experience.

The elevation of each symbolism into a higher order means that previous symbolisms are being demythologized. From the beginning of its usage, each symbol is enigmatic and expresses a profound meaning. However, as each symbol goes to a higher degree, it loses its meaning and finds another. It might not be exactly the same with its first intention but it has similarity. As Don Ihde emphasizes,

The previous orders of symbolism are repeated in the symbolism of guilt. Guilt may be expressed in an obsessional or compulsive washing of hands - understood as neurotic or 'psychological.' Guilt incurred through the offense of the order or

an infraction of the law of God may also occur in the guilt system. But guilt 'demythologizes' these symbols. The experience of evil is now self-conscious. 'The consciousness of guilt constitutes a veritable revolution in the experience of evil: that which is primary is no longer the reality of defilement... but the evil use of liberty, felt as an internal diminution of the value of the self' (SE, p. 102). With guilt the voluntary, the conscious becomes the focus for the experience of evil. It is not by accident that in many languages the same word designates moral consciousness...and psychological and reflective consciousness; guilt expresses above all the promotion of 'conscience' as supreme.⁴⁰

Re-evaluating the schema of Ricoeur's symbolism of evil, one sees that it is a kind of an historico-phenomenological analysis of symbols towards an understanding of the degree of subjectivity in each symbolism of evil. The development of the schema starts with the deciphering of evil in the physical world. Nevertheless, it continues to interiorize itself until such a time that evil becomes internal. Thus, it starts as an external theme but ends as an internal theme with an ethical undertone. "In Ricoeur's understanding the reflective direction of symbol history ends in subjectivity. The progressive *telos* of symbol history repeats and absorbs the lower forms of symbol systems into higher forms."⁴¹

Conclusion

This trilogy of defilement-sin-guilt corresponds to the three symbolic categories of interpretation. The defilement symbolism is hierophanic in nature. That is, defilement is like a spot, like a stain on a white sheet. However, the stain symbolism is not confined literally. It means more than a physical stain. It is a spot that soils the cleanliness of the soul.

Evil is symbolized by defilement because evil is like a stain that taints the purity of the soul. Evil as a stain is, in the first place, taken from the subject's experience of stain literally and physically. Its

elevation into a metaphorical level is not born out of nowhere; it is rooted in the very experience of the subject about defilement. Nevertheless, it does not have any affective implication yet.

The second symbolism of evil, sin has now an effect on the subject. Sin is an idea of breach of contract between two parties. However, in the case of the sin symbolism, there is not a simple breach of contract but a breach of contract between God and His chosen people. In this instance, sin excites a feeling of fear and dread. It stimulates another idea: condemnation to the eternal fire of hell. The idea of condemnation creates the feeling of fear and dread. This is not just a creation of the subject but a result of his belongingness to a certain history which he shares with others.

As the subject sins, he entertains the idea of moral obligation and moral responsibility. Sin transforms itself into guilt. Guilt, as a symbolism of evil, is a result of the subject's understanding the nature of his activity. Guilt is not a product of the subject's self-consciousness; it is a product of its self-understanding.

The guilt symbolism is the subjectivization of the evil experience. The subject feels guilty only when he understands his deeds are contrary to the laws of the society. Objectively, there is no guilt feeling based on the collective experience of the people. Guilt is the product of the subject's distanciation from his participation and at the same time the product of his own reflection.

Nevertheless, the reflection of the subject is not totally based on himself. It is rooted first in the reality where he lives. The subject realizes he is guilty only by intensely reflecting the morally error in his deeds. Guilt feelings vary from subject to subject. Experience shows subject reacts different to the same situation. Henceforth, guilt is an ultimate experience of subjectivization.

ENDNOTES

¹ The revival of the subject is anchored on the contention that it is lost when the masters of suspicion—Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche—assert that the subject has no immediate and intuitive consciousness. Each contested the primacy of consciousness and looked upon the whole of consciousness as false. Their point contradicted the indubitability of the Cartesian cogito of Descartes. With Marx,

Nietzsche, and Freud self-consciousness becomes illusory. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Interpretation*, edited by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 148.

² This idea of interpretation rooted in the quest to understand the symbolic is based on the early writings of Ricoeur on hermeneutics like his *Philosophy of the Will* project. In his later writings, he shifts from symbol to text since he realizes that "no symbolism, whether traditional or private, can display its resources of multiple meaning (plurivocité) outside appropriate contexts, that is to say, within the framework of an entire text, of a poem, for example." Paul Ricoeur, "On Interpretation" in *From Text to Action: Essays In Hermeneutics, II*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1991), 16-17.

³ Patrick L. Bourgeois, *Extension of Ricoeur's Hermeneutics* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), 71.

⁴ *Hierophanies* is a term Ricoeur borrowed from Mircea Eliade. It designates the act of manifestation of the sacred. See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. from the French by Williard K. Trask. (New York: Harper, 1959), 11.

⁵ Paul Ricoeur, "The Symbol. . . Food for Thought," *Philosophy Today* 3 (April 1960): 197.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁸ The phenomenology of religion here refers simply to the religious phenomena as perpetuated by the history of religion. As Eliade noted, "Now, in my researches, what have primarily interested me are these facts, this labyrinthine complexity of elements which will yield to no formula or definition whatever. Taboo, ritual, symbol, myth, demon, god - these are some of them; but it would be an outrageous simplification to make such a list tell the whole story. What we have really got to deal with is a diverse and indeed chaotic mass of actions, beliefs and systems which go together to make up what one may call the religious phenomenon." Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed and Ward Inc., 1958), xii; Ricoeur, "Food for Thought," 197.

⁹ Cf. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 159-60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and introduced by Dr. A. A. Brill. Book 2: *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Modern Library, 1938), 215.

¹² Ricoeur, "Food for Thought," 202.

¹³ Ricoeur, "Food for Thought," 205.

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, translated by Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 7.

¹⁵ John B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 44.

- ¹⁶ Ricoeur, "Food for Thought," 205.
- ¹⁷ Beatriz Melano Couch, "Religious Symbols and Philosophical Reflection," in Charles E. Reagan, ed., *Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), 120.
- ¹⁸ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 25.
- ¹⁹ Couch, "Religious Symbols," 120.
- ²⁰ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 26.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 26-27.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 27.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-30.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ Couch, "Religious Symbols," 120-21.
- ²⁹ Don Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1986), 109. Cf. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 41-42.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 109-10. Cf. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 48.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 110. Cf. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 51.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 63.
- ³⁴ Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology*, 110.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 112. Cf. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 104.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*

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