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Daniel Frey

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[p. 3] **Imagination and Religion:**

The Myth of Innocence in *Fallible Man*

Daniel Frey

The Reorientation of the Initial Project of the Philosophy of the Will

We know that the development of the philosophy of the will did not go as Ricœur had planned. The *Philosophy of the Will*, as Ricœur conceived it in his 1948 thesis, was originally supposed to connect the eidetics of the will to an empirical study of the passions and the fault, which finally would have been followed up by a "concrete *mythics*" emerging from a poetics of the will.¹ Such a long-term project takes time, so it is not surprising that the second volume, which itself is divided into two books, appears ten years after its announcement. What is a little more surprising is that, along the way, the project was radically revised and modified. In fact, we can recall that in the actual development of his *Philosophy of the Will*, Ricœur would extend the pure description implemented in the first volume to the first book of the second volume, *Fallible Man*, while the empirics of the passions will be replaced by a hermeneutics of the fault dedicated to the interpretation of the symbols of evil, constituting the second book of the second volume, *The Symbolism of Evil*. This latter book, however, gives up – but without explicitly stating it – the prospect of a poetics of the will in relation to what Ricœur called "Transcendence." In fact, Ricœur is silent about this enigmatic "revolution at the very center of my self"² that was announced in his thesis, which would have allowed him to no longer restrict the opening to transcendence as an alienation, as an abandonment of one's fundamental freedom.

"The Foreword" to *Fallible Man* opens quite naturally with this change of perspective. Ricœur acknowledges that the reasons for making a detour through a "*concrete mythics*"³ has [4] appeared in the meantime, along with the complications caused by this detour, such that "the methodological questions"⁴ have dominated the development of the book, according to its author. It is worthwhile to stop there, in order to understand the link between myth and imagination mentioned in the title of this chapter.

A Detour Announced by the Deciphering of Myths

The first reason for the detour is that it appeared to Ricœur that the passions and the fault do not lend themselves to any description, even empirical, insofar as their "encoded" language⁵ is already the language of myths. Although he does not indicate it, but as can be seen

in reading the 1947 books that are devoted to Karl Jaspers, it is indeed with Jaspers that Ricœur found this conception of philosophy as *deciphering* non-philosophical myths that are an inexhaustible resource of thought. The following excerpt from the book on Jaspers and Marcel attests to this:

[For Jaspers] the theory of ciphers marks the stage entrance of *myth* in the philosophy of existence. When Jaspers asserts that faith is not an imperfect knowledge, the faith of which he is dreaming is not oriented towards dogma as in G. Marcel, but towards *myth*. Myth is not a provisional approximation of knowledge, but the ultimate resource by which the philosopher can still speak about transcendence. Philosophy becomes a universal myth where art, religions and philosophies regain their truth as a cipher.⁶

Ricœur therefore abandoned the empirical study that he had initially projected, and forced himself to justify the introduction of a "mythics into philosophical reflection"⁷ – without, however, mentioning hermeneutics⁸ – because the myths of evil cannot be constituted for philosophy as raw data, as is the case with the history of religions. In the 1953 essay to which he refers his readers in a footnote, the philosopher thus sought to prepare a welcome ground for the "myths of the fall, chaos, exile, and divine blindness," which consists in reconstructing "the universe of discourse" from which these myths are drawn:

It then appeared that myths could only be understood as secondary elaborations of a more fundamental language that I call the language of confession; it is this language of confession that speaks to the philosopher of the fault and evil; for this language of confession is remarkable in that it is through and through *symbolic*; it does not speak of stain, sin, and guilt in direct and proper terms, but in indirect and figurative terms; to understand this language [5] of confession is to implement an exegesis of the symbol that calls for rules of deciphering, that is to say, a hermeneutic.⁹

The study to which the philosopher refers his reader, entitled "Tragic Guilt and Biblical Guilt,"¹⁰ actually constituted a test beyond *Finitude and Guilt*. It is actually an essay of comparative mythology, where the narrative of guilt in Greek tragedy¹¹ is confronted with its figuration in the biblical myth of origins recorded in Genesis. It is worthwhile to dwell on this point, because Ricœur applies the concept of the "phenomenological reduction" to the Biblical and Greek religious symbols:

The application of the comparative method to Greek myths and Hebraic myths is conditioned by the *neutralization* of the act of faith that could eventually be reattached to these myths by a redeeming act that concerns *me*, which concerns *us*; the election of Israel, the Creed of the Christian Church concerning the second Adam undergo a sort of *phenomenological reduction* by which the transforming intention that goes from the pagan myth to the Hebrew myth is retained, but without the historian taking part; the myth retained in its structure and in its intention thus becomes a meaningful cultural *phenomenon*. This methodological artifice – because it is an artifice, like all the sciences practice when developing their 'object' – henceforth allows a homogeneous comparison of myths in terms of a single phenomenology.¹²

The phenomenological reduction evoked here seems to be synonymous with the suspension of assent, an *epoche* in the Husserlian sense of the word. By affirming that the prerequisite for the comparative study of myths is the suspension of the act of faith whereby the subject could reconnect the myth to an act of salvation – whether the latter derives from the Christian faith or the Dionysian pagan religion –, Ricœur formalizes a methodological rule that is essential to the hermeneutics of symbolic language that he is undertaking. It should also be noted that if *the act of faith* is suspended, *belief* is lived through but yet "in a neutralized mode": far from being inconsequential, this distinction seems to us to express the whole difference between the scientific attitude, concerning which Ricœur says elsewhere that it "proceeds from a certain 'reduction' of our total relation to the world; only one aspect of the world is retained: its quantitative and measurable aspect"¹³, and the phenomenological attitude. Indeed, if it is enough to suspend all faith in the reality evoked by religious myths in order to study them scientifically, it is necessary, in order to propose a phenomenological analysis of them¹⁴, to be open to the religious intention expressed by the symbols and narratives that employ them. Ricœur explicitly says this on the first page of the introduction to *The Symbolism of Evil* (entitled "The Phenomenology of Confession"), [6] when he calls for "a repetition in imagination and sympathy" of the confession that the religious consciousness makes of evil:

If the 're-enactment' [*répétition*] of the *confession* of human evil by the religious consciousness does not take place in philosophy, this *confession* nevertheless belongs already within its sphere of interest, for this confession is a *word*, a word that man pronounces about himself; every word can and must be recovered in the element of philosophical discourse. We will soon say what the philosophical site, if you will, of this 'repetition' is, which is already no longer a religious lived experience and which is not yet philosophy.¹⁵

If it is conceivable that the phenomenological repetition of the confession is no longer religion, why is it not yet philosophy? Because all that comes from philosophy is a conceptual approach to evil which asks, what is "the human place of evil, its entry point into human reality"?¹⁶

An Anthropology of Fallibility: The Ethical Vision of the World

This search for a conceptual approach is the reason why the detour through a hermeneutic of the symbols of evil is itself preceded by an "outline of a philosophical anthropology"¹⁷ :

This study focuses on the theme of fallibility, that is, the constitutional weakness that makes evil possible; through the concept of fallibility, philosophical anthropology comes to encounter the symbolism of evil, just as the symbolism of evil brings myths to philosophical discourse; through the concept of fallibility, the doctrine of the human approaches the threshold of intelligibility where it is comprehensible that through man evil has been able to 'enter the world'; beyond this threshold begins the enigma of an emergence concerning which there is nothing but indirect and encrypted discourse. Just as the symbolics of evil represented an extension of the mythic that the *Freedom and Nature* proposed, the theory of fallibility represents an expansion of the anthropological perspective of the first work which was more narrowly focused on the structure of the will.¹⁸

The above excerpt offers the second of the reasons why Ricœur amended his initial project. Before arriving at an interpretation of the symbols of evil, it was still necessary to move from the polarity of the voluntary and the involuntary to the broader polarity of finitude and infinitude, which in fact opens the study of *Fallible Man*, and that Ricœur, again, had tested in a number of previous studies that are cited in footnotes.¹⁹ It is indeed the function of a [7] "reflexive thought" to constitute a concept of fallibility designating "the possibility of evil"²⁰, before the mythical language about its entrance into the world is interpreted. Ricœur already signals to his reader that the hermeneutics of the symbols of evil is not "homogeneous" with such a reflexive philosophy, insofar as it will require the invention of "rules of transposition [...] into a new type of philosophical discourse," which will be done in the conclusion to *Finitude and Guilt* - "The Symbol gives rise to Thought" - which is in the eyes of the author "the pivotal point of the whole work."²¹ Thus a hiatus exists, on the level of method, between a pure reflection and a philosophical hermeneutic, since it will be a question of "both respecting the specificity of the symbolic world of expressions and of thinking not 'behind' but 'starting from' the symbol", that is to say, of preparing for the empirics of the servile will anticipated by his thesis.²²

This is where the philosopher announces – his experience, however, should have led him to be more cautious! – a "third part, which will be published in a later volume [...] entirely devoted to this thinking that starts from the symbol."²³ In this announcement painted in broad brush strokes, it is clear that this third volume would have been more directly devoted to an "empirics of the servile will", which would engage psychoanalysis as well as criminal law, political philosophy – and in a general manner, the social sciences.²⁴ This announcement, once again, was a bit too risky since there would not be a third volume devoted to thinking starting from the symbol of the servile will, no more than there was a third volume offering a "concrete mythics" back to back with a poetics of the will. However, there was a deeper engagement than initially foreseen with the question of psychoanalysis, which led to *Freud and Philosophy* (1965), as well as a mixture of hermeneutical tests of great importance collected in *The Conflict of Interpretations* (1969), which do offer segments of a poetics of will, as we will try to show.

Let's return to the hiatus mentioned a little bit earlier, in order to say that the pure reflection implemented in the first part of *Finitude and Guilt* is paradoxical in that it moves toward a philosophical interpretation of the symbols of evil by using the only resource that is available to the philosopher, that of the "ethical vision of the world", but a resource which cannot suffice however. This is why Ricœur does not hesitate to disorient his reader by stating that to designate the stakes of *Fallible Man*, he could have "chosen for the subtitle of this book: *The Grandeur and Limits of an Ethical Vision of the World*."²⁵ This involves going all the way through to a mutual understanding of evil and freedom; the grandeur of pure reflection is precisely to "try to understand evil through freedom"²⁶ by leaving behind any speculation about other sources of evil than human freedom. Ricœur stands [8] firm on this point: "the humanity of the human is, in any case, the space of manifestation of evil."²⁷

It is important to be aware of the specificity of this vigorous entry into the matter: here the first word is up to philosophy, in this case, to ethics. The affirmation of freedom therefore

has a primacy over religious discourses that have denounced human guilt since time immemorial.²⁸ The philosopher is the one who, invariably, honors the background of goodness of human freedom which is more fundamental than its deviance, and who at the same time relentlessly calls humans to responsibility. The philosopher is a moralist for whom there is only one conceivable freedom: a "freedom that recognizes itself as *responsible*, that vows to take evil as *evil committed* and confesses that it depends on freedom for evil not to be."²⁹ This entrance into the question of evil through human freedom is already recognized by Ricœur to be at work in Kant's "*Essay on Radical Evil*," where "through formalism, evil tends to be reduced to a maxim of the free will."³⁰ Note that Ricœur writes "tends to be reduced": in the ethical approach to evil initiated by Ricœur in the wake of Kant, "it is very possible indeed that the human is not the radical origin of evil, that he is not the absolute villain." But immediately afterwards, Ricœur clarifies: "Even if evil were contemporaneous with the radical origin of things, it would remain the case that it is manifest in the way it *affects* human existence."³¹

So this is the indelible grandeur of the ethical vision of the entrance of evil into the world. But Ricœur also has as a project, as we have seen in the introduction of *Freedom and Nature*, of accounting for the unavailable nature of freedom, servile freedom. He has not forgotten it, and reiterates in the preface of *Fallible Man* that "the enigma of the servile will", the enigma of a "*free will that binds itself and finds itself always already bound*, is the ultimate theme that the symbol gives to be thought."³² In the debt that he intends to honor with regard to Jean Nabert,³³ Ricœur has found an additional reason to arrive at a philosophical reflection on the servile will. Indeed, Ricœur asserts that he has drawn from the reflexive philosopher a meditation that is the reverse of the one he draws from Kant. This Nabertian meditation never ceases to "broaden and deepen the doctrine of freedom under the sting of the evil which, however, it has taken back into itself," to the point that with Nabert, one may understand that "in an ethical vision, it is not only true that freedom is the reason for evil, but the confession of evil is also the condition of the consciousness of freedom."³⁴ It is particularly in a "difficulty" with Nabert's *Essay On Evil* that Ricœur sees the link with the theme of the servile will:

[9] If Evil is [as Nabert maintains] 'the unjustifiable', can it be fully reiterated in the confession that freedom makes of it? This difficulty is one that I encounter in another way, in the *symbolics of evil*. The main enigma of this symbolics is that the world of myths is already itself a broken world; the myth of the fall which is the matrix of all subsequent speculations concerning the origin of evil in human freedom [...] leaves outside itself the rich mythics of chaos, of tragic blindness, and of the exiled soul; even if the philosopher wagers on the superiority of the myth of the fall because of its affinity with the confession that freedom makes of its responsibility, even if this wager allows all the other myths to be regrouped with the myth of the fall as their center of reference, it remains that [...] the exegesis of the myth of the fall directly leads to the appearance of this tension between two meanings: on the one side, evil enters into the world insofar as the human posits it, but it is only posited because the human *cedes* to the adversary's investment. The limit of an ethical vision of evil and of the world is already signified in this ambiguous structure of the myth of the fall: by positing evil, freedom is in the grip of an other.³⁵

The link between the difficulty evoked by Ricœur and the theme of the servile will is not easy to discover. One indication would be the discreet critique of Nabert in this excerpt, which could be made explicit by the more candid one that Ricœur proposes at the end of a glowing book review entitled "*L'Essai sur le Mal* de Jean Nabert."³⁶ There he regretted Nabert's tendency to identify evil and finitude, insofar as the fact of being finite and having to choose ultimately seems for him to be the equivalent of evil itself.³⁷ Despite his assent to the book as a whole, Ricœur reaffirms, after *L'Essai de Nabert*, "that it is a task of the philosophy of evil to distinguish between evil and finitude."³⁸ He reiterates all the value he grants – along with Nabert himself, and also with Kant – to the assertion of a fundamental difference between the original affirmation, good in itself, by which the subject posits itself in being, and the preference of this same subject for itself to the exclusion of any other. In other words, the affirmation of a freedom that may or may not do evil is in principle different from a passivity experienced in doing it: everything happens as if, in freely choosing to do evil, I was actually only giving in to it. It is precisely the lesson of the symbolism of evil that Ricœur anticipates at the end of his foreword, as usual. The broken character of the mythical field evoked here is due to the fact that the affinity of the biblical myth of the fall with the discourse of ethics (evil is the fruit of freedom) does not prevent other myths from depicting a form of exteriority of evil towards the human. The real development of the symbolic will show that this exteriority originates in the symbol of the stain, which was not completely eliminated from the biblical symbol of guilt (or: from the Genesis narrative).

[10] Here we have arrived at the center of our proposal: our hypothesis is that the exercise of pure reflection implemented in *Fallible Man* is based in part on the power of the representation of innocence in the biblical myth of origins.

Pure Reflection on the Originary: The Power of the Imagination

Fallible Man, as has been noted, is situated on the threshold of a hermeneutic of myths and symbols of evil. But the introduction of the mythical in the philosophical reflection announced by Ricœur's Foreword begins long before *The Symbolism of Evil*. Already with *Fallible Man*, the central theme of the mythical, *the imagination of innocence*, appears at the core of the analyses derived from pure reflection. Here is a particularly striking example, which occurs in the analysis of affectivity:

With the affective closure, we recover the feeling of the original difference between myself and every other; feeling good or bad is feeling my singularity as inexpressible and incommunicable; just as one's place cannot be shared, the affective situation in which I find myself and feel myself cannot be exchanged. *It is here that egoism, as a vice, finds its opportunity: out of difference, it makes a preference.* But the preference for oneself, inherent in all inclinations, is what the Stoics called an attachment to oneself, an original tendency to want good for oneself, a love of one's own constitution, that I would readily call a love of oneself as a point of view.³⁹

Ricœur asserts the point forcefully: if I can come to give myself preference over the whole world, it is first because I am constitutively carried by a desire to be which, in itself, is good. In particular, I am a being who is naturally led toward self-love. Our hypothesis is that the place of the *myth* (and thus of the imagination) is inscribed in these analyses deriving from pure reflection, insofar as these analyses are all pointing toward the state of innocence through its constant betrayal in our fallen being.

The Innocent Nature of Man: Ricœur in the Footsteps of Rousseau

Of course, Kant already evoked, as the first "original provision to the good in human nature", "the physical and simply mechanical self-love" by which the human being emerges from animality.⁴⁰ But Kant himself owed this idea to Rousseau who, first and much more strongly, had issued a plea for a morally neutral "love of self", because it is the expression of [11] a natural will for self-preservation.⁴¹ If Ricœur, like Rousseau, does not hesitate to speak about self-love rather than attachment, like the Stoics, it is because he represents the self-love of the human being as the trace of a lost innocence that the mythical narrative of Genesis lets us imagine.⁴² Ricœur also tends to identify this state of innocence with the affirmation of an original goodness of the human being. Rousseau, as we know, affirmed the natural goodness of man even though he never ceased to denounce the wickedness of human society. In an important 1952 essay devoted to the "revival of non-philosophy through philosophy,"⁴³ Ricœur comments on the book *The Philosophy of Existence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1952) by his friend Pierre Burgelin. It presents what he considers to be "Rousseau's stroke of genius, which coincides with the wound of his life and perhaps with the crack of his psyche":

To have identified guilt and socialization. This stroke of genius began the modern philosophy of history. Philosophy is no longer meta-physics but meta-history: it is necessary to pierce through the fact of sociality up to what is beyond our history, up to this *natural goodness* which is both *our innocence* and *our nature*. [...] The rich and informed power of innocence and the wickedness of the limited achievements of history do not belong on the same level; they are like an *overlaying* [*surimpression*].⁴⁴

By *secularizing* the biblical myth of the fall and by identifying evil as the entrance into sociability and history, Rousseau regains the intention of the myth, which is to indicate the point of passage from the state of innocence to that of civilization, since it is clearly stated that after the fall work (with all its painfulness) will form the daily life of humans (*Genesis* 3, 17-19). Natural human goodness remains nonetheless; it is unavailable but yet present at the heart of social being. Here Ricœur finds the opportunity to credit Rousseau with a schema, that of "overlaying", which is in reality his own, since it was already present in his thesis:

The fault is understood as a lost innocence, as a paradise lost. The objection is therefore right to deny us any direct description of innocence. Yet it is not the lost paradise of innocence that we are claiming to describe, but the structures that are the fundamental possibilities offered both to innocence and the fault as the common keyboard of a human nature on which mythical innocence and empirical guilt play in such different ways.⁴⁵

When he develops this schema of overlaying ten years later, in *The Symbolism of Evil*, Ricœur pays homage to Rousseau, in close proximity to Kant:

This is what Rousseau brilliantly understood: the human is 'naturally good', but we know the human under the regime of civilization - that is to say, of [12] history - only as 'depraved.' Above all, that is what Kant understood with admirable rigor in his *Essay on Radical Evil*: the human is 'destined' to the good and 'prone' to evil. This paradox of 'destination' and 'inclination' concentrates the entire meaning of the symbol of the fall.⁴⁶

The proximity between Rousseau and Kant should not, however, give rise to an identification between them, insofar as the notion of *respect* for the person, which forms the synthesis of character and happiness in Kant,⁴⁷ is based in the final instance on an ethical dualism "where the duality of good and evil is already constituted and where man has already chosen the side of evil."⁴⁸ In short, one finds in Kant a "pessimistic anthropology dominated by the theory of radical evil,"⁴⁹ while pure reflection on fallibility requires another anthropology than one which is already situated "in the circle of fallenness."⁵⁰ It is a question of seizing the possibility of failing and not the actuality of evil:

We have no other access to the origin than through the fallen; in return, if the fallen does not give an indication of that from which it has fallen, no philosophy of the original is possible and one cannot even say that man is fallen; for the very idea of fallenness involves a reference to the loss of some innocence that we understand enough to name it and to designate the present condition present as a gap [écart], a loss, or a fall.⁵¹

In an analysis resulting from pure reflection, the right to represent innocence through fallenness is undeniable from the methodological point of view, as one can see in the above passage. Yet, it is clear that this research itself already bears the imprint of a *philosophical reading of the myth of Genesis*. In other words, Ricœur implements in pure reflection a form of philosophical imagination which is conceptual in nature and which assumes (without directly justifying) a particular reading of the biblical myth that conceives innocence as what endures through and in spite of the fall – hence the schema, so fecund, of the "overlaying" of original goodness and historical wickedness. From the point of view of what religion gives philosophy to think, the *power of the imagination* is held there, in the call that is sent to the philosopher by the myth of origins to conceive an intrinsic goodness of all human acts, which is always denatured and betrayed. The Ricœurian anthropology of *Fallible Man*, in particular, is directed toward the original mode of human being, while highlighting the mistakes and deviances which, from a pragmatic point of view, characterize the practical modalities of its being. In this regard, Rousseau's influence seems to outweigh the considerable influence of Kant: with the latter, who is also heavily influenced by Rousseau,⁵² [13] Ricœur pays the utmost attention to the disfigured aspect of the human passions, but with the former, he constantly intends this original goodness which Rousseau denotes as "natural goodness."

From Fallen Figures of Self-feeling to the Restoration of the Original

The central passions studied by Kant's practical anthropology, relating to possession [*Habsucht*], domination [*Herrschaft*] and honor [*Ehrensucht*],⁵³ will provide a place for Ricœur's masterful study of having, power and valuing, before they become disfigured. Under the heading of "affective fragility,"⁵⁴ the philosopher proposes a "philosophy of feeling," in which the feeling of the self can be understood starting from *appropriation* (having is necessary to be a subject), *the effort of civilization* against nature (power is at first only a differentiation of functions for this purpose) and the desire for *recognition* that each one addresses to others (value aiming first toward the esteemed character of the self as a human being, as an end in itself). In studying these specific forms of the *desire* to be human, Ricœur's intention is clearly aimed toward the original state of these constituent modalities of the *affective being* as having, power and worth,⁵⁵ all the while also seeing in them the opportunities to fall:

Kant places himself immediately in front of the *fallen* figures of human affectivity; the *Sucht* of each of these passions expresses the modality of aberration, of delirium, under which they enter into history; an anthropology elaborated from a practical point of view is undoubtedly justified in doing so [...] But a philosophical anthropology must be more demanding; it must proceed to the restoration of the original that is at the root of the fallen; just as Aristotle describes the perfection of pleasure beyond all forms of 'intemperance', we must recover, behind this triple *Sucht*, an authentic *Suchen* [...] the quest of humanity [...] constitutive of human praxis and the human self; we must proceed in this way, because even if we only *empirically know* these fundamental quests under their disfigured and hideous face, in the form of greed, the passions of power and vanity, we *understand* these passions *in their essence* only as perversions ...; it must even be said that what we understand, first of all, is the primordial modalities of human desire and constituents with regard to the humanity of the human; and then we understand the 'passions' only as a gap [*écart*], deviation, fallenness, from these original quests. This understanding of the original first and the fallen second, starting from and through the original⁵⁶, undoubtedly requires a kind of imagination of innocence, the imagination of a 'reign' where the quests of having, power and worth would not be what they actually are; but this imagination is not a fantastic dream; it is an 'imaginative variation,' to speak like Husserl, which manifests the essence, breaking the prestige of the fact.⁵⁷

[14] In this passage, the expression "restoration of the original" refers to the description of the original modality of human affectivity, made possible by an imaginative variation of a phenomenological nature. At the same time, as is often the case with Ricœur, there is a term of biblical provenance, suggesting a community of insight between the philosophical imagination and the biblical imagination: "The imagination of a 'reign,'" understood as the reign of God that the evangelical parables evoke in many ways ("The Kingdom of God is similar to..."). The theme of power will also bring Ricœur to clarify this biblical allusion, since he will write a little later about: "the utopia of a Kingdom of God, a City of God, an empire of minds, or a kingdom of ends, implies an imagination of a non-violent power. This imagination releases the essence, and this essence regulates all efforts to actually transform power through the education of freedom."⁵⁸

For Ricœur, imagination is already in power: *the philosophical imagination* allows us to conceive the original through the fallen, *the mythico-poetic imagination* offers a figuration of original innocence as innocence regained; *the utopian imagination* invites within history the courage for concrete action – and, of course, the theme of utopia will be the subject of important developments later on. Distinguished by their modalities, these three aspects of the imagination are rejoined in their ability to liberate *the essence* of its empirical achievements: the *original* is thus the indication of an understanding of the factual and historical, depending on whether it is envisioned as what fundamentally *is*, what is *originally*, or what is *yet to come*.

In every way, the origin is what grounds essences but factual reality does not know. It is absent from actual human history since human history always already moves within the empirical realm of the passions. Only the mythical narrative can figure it, in its naivety – since it is prior to the invention of history – which lets it believe in the possibility of designating the tipping point where the *origin* becomes *the beginning* of history, the passage from innocent humanity to real and present humanity. Based on original freedom, without which human responsibility would be nothing but a meaningless word, ethics comes too late when it comes to observing the passage to the deviant act by which one passes from fallibility to the fault. It has already been accomplished, everywhere and always, because the human cannot cope with its emotional fragility. This leads to the painful worries about having enough, being powerful enough, and being recognized enough.⁵⁹ *Worry* [*l'inquiétude*] is indeed the mode of expression of self-feeling: "It is noteworthy," notes Ricœur, "that the self is never assured [*assuré*],"⁶⁰ that it is relentless in the quest for what would justify its existence through *domination over the other*. This is indeed a quest for *being*, in someone whose fragility is constitutive of his or her personhood; but this quest is a pathos, for this great fragility only [15] knows – in order to be – how to give precedence to its own desire to be over any other consideration.

Ricœur returns, in conclusion, to this relation between the philosophical imagination and the mythical imagination which appears to be representative of his relation to religion in this volume, even if it is dedicated to pure philosophy. And this places it definitively on the threshold of *The Symbolism of Evil* :

Innocence would be fallibility without fault, and this fallibility would be only fragility, only weakness, but not fallenness. It does not matter that I can represent innocence only by way of myth, as a state realized 'elsewhere' and 'long ago' in places and times that have no place in the geography and history of rational man. The essence of the myth of innocence is to give a symbol of the original which tran-spires (*trans-parait*) in fallenness and is denounced as fallenness; my innocence is my original constitution, projected into a fantastical story. This imagination is nothing scandalous for philosophy; the imagination is an indispensable way of investigating the possible; [...] One could say, in the style of Husserlian eidetics, that innocence is the imaginative variation that makes the essence of the original constitution stand out, by letting it appear *on* another existential modality; [...] I must understand together and as an overlaying [*surimpression*] the original destination of 'goodness ' and its historical manifestation in wickedness [*méchanceté*]; however original wickedness may be, goodness is even more original. That is why, as we will see, a myth of the fall is only possible in the context of a myth of creation and innocence. If we had understood this, we would not have wondered if 'the image of God'

can be lost, as if, in becoming wicked, man ceased to be human; nor would we have accused Rousseau of inconsistency when he professed, with obstinacy, the natural goodness of man *and* his historical and cultural perversity.⁶¹

This text is representative of Ricœur's style in the 1950-60s: long sentences in a row, separated only by semicolons – Ricœur was fond of them – which invite a quick reading, in one breath, as if each sentence could not make sense without the following one, which nevertheless has another, complementary perspective. In the end and in one gesture, the opposites connect – here goodness and wickedness, the mythical fable and the eidetic – not by taste or the way of the dialectic but because, *actually*, the original is the index for understanding the fallen, and innocence for wickedness. Philosophy only knows this when it listens to the mythical *logos* which it always knew but without ever knowing it, that is to say, without thematizing its own discourse. This is perhaps the lesson that will have to be expected from *The Symbolism of Evil* : to aim toward a *reflexive* state of human knowledge, in this case to reach a philosophical awareness of the passage from the original to the fallen, from fallibility to evil. When Ricœur announces that the next volume will focus on the "continuous transition of vertigo" that seems to lead from the freedom of the human will to the bad will, when he expresses an "ultimate paradox" that "evil only proceeds [16] from this weakness because it is posited,"⁶² he shows the tenor of this philosophical hermeneutics that meditates on pre-philosophical discourse, the paradoxical nature of the lessons it draws from a *logos* which, because it is formed out of symbols woven together by a narrative, tends to be chronologized in the form of a canvas governed by the narrative logic of a before and an after that the philosopher has learned – thanks to the myth, but below it – to read as "an overlapping."

Translated by Scott Davidson

¹ Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 25-6.

² Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 32.

³ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlii (Ricœur's emphasis).

⁴ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlii.

⁵ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlii.

⁶ Ricœur, *Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers*, 46-47 (Ricœur's emphasis).

⁷ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlii.

⁸ The word will appear only at the end of volume, under the title of a "philosophical hermeneutic" (*Symbolism of Evil*, 353; Ricœur's emphasis)

⁹ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlii (Ricœur's emphasis; tr. mod.).

¹⁰ In *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* de la Faculté de théologie protestante de l'université de Strasbourg, no. 33 (1953/4) : 285-307.

¹¹ Many elements of the tragic part are found in the first part of "The Wicked God and the "Tragic" Vision of Existence," in *The Symbolism of Evil*, 211-231. In the same year, Ricœur also published another essay on the tragic alone, through this time a reading of Gerhard Nebel, Henri Gouhier and Karl Jaspers. See "Sur le tragique," in *Lectures 3*, 187-209.

¹² See "Culpabilité tragique et culpabilité biblique, » in *Lectures 3*, 299.

¹³ Ricœur, "L'homme de science et l'homme de foi, » *Le Semeur*, 1952, 16.

¹⁴ It should be noted here that phenomenology and hermeneutics are already linked, the second being a specification of the first, which seems to foreshadow the important thesis set forth in *From Text to Action*, according to which "Phenomenology remains the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics. On the other hand, phenomenology cannot constitute itself without a *hermeneutical presupposition*" ("Phenomenology and Hermeneutics," in *From Text to Action*, 26; Ricœur's emphasis).

¹⁵ Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 4 (Ricœur's emphasis; tr. mod.).

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- ¹⁶ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xliii (tr. mod.).
- ¹⁷ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xliii.
- ¹⁸ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xliii (tr. mod.). The quoted expression most likely refers to the Apostle Paul in *Romans* 5.1: "Wherefore, just as by one man [Adam] *sin entered the world*, and by sin death [...]" (emphasis added).
- ¹⁹ This is "Negativity and the Originary Affirmation (1956)," the study entitled "Feeling (1959)," "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limit Idea (1951)," and "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will (1952)." See Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xliii, note 4 and note 5. The first was included in *History and Truth*, while the others appear later in *À l'école de la phénoménologie*.
- ²⁰ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlv for both quotes.
- ²¹ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlv for all quotes.
- ²² Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlv; cf. xlv.
- ²³ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlv.
- ²⁴ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlv (tr. mod., note: replacing "servile will" for "slave will").
- ²⁵ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlvi (Ricœur's emphasis).
- ²⁶ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlvi.
- ²⁷ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlvi (emphasis added). The comparison with Kant is eloquent, who wrote in the "Essay on Radical Evil" that opens *Religion within the Limits of the Reason Alone*: "A penchant for evil can only be attached to the moral faculty of the arbitrator." There is nothing morally wrong (that is, likely to be imputed) outside of what is our own *action* [AK Vi3] "(Kant's emphasis).
- ²⁸ Let us remember again the remarkable *incipit* of *Religion within the Limits of the Reason Alone*: "that the world is bad, is a complaint as old as history and even the oldest poetry, as ancient as the oldest of all poems, I mean the religion of priests." (E. Kant, *Religion... op. Cit.*, p. 29).
- ²⁹ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xvii (emphasis added).
- ³⁰ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xvii. Kant's *Religion within the Limits of the Reason Alone* opens in effect with a first part entitled "From the immanence of the bad principle to the good, or on the radical evil in human nature" [AK VI, 19]. Previously published in 1792 under the title "On Radical Evil" in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*.
- ³¹ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlvi (Ricœur's emphasis).
- ³² Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlv (Ricœur's emphasis).
- ³³ *The Fallible man* It is also dedicated.
- ³⁴ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xvii and xlix.
- ³⁵ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlix (Ricœur's emphasis).
- ³⁶ "L'essai sur le mal de Jean Nabert" was published in *Esprit* in 1957, two years after the publication of Nabert's book. It is reprinted in Paul Ricœur, *Lectures 2* (Paris: Seuil, 1999): 237-262.
- ³⁷ Ricœur, "L'essai sur le mal de Jean Nabert," in *Lectures 2*, 248.
- ³⁸ Ricœur, "L'essai sur le mal de Jean Nabert," in *Lectures 2*, 248.
- ³⁹ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 55 (emphasis added).
- ⁴⁰ Kant, *Religion within the Limits of the Reason Alone*, AK VI, 26
- ⁴¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754), in *Œuvres complètes* III. *Du Contrat social – Écrits politiques*, B. Gagnebin et M. Reymond dir., Paris, Gallimard, 1964, p. 109-237, ici p. 126.
- ⁴² In this sense, Ricœur does not hesitate later to write, at the time around *Oneself as Another* : « This is the profound reason why the command in *Leviticus* dares to state: "You will love thy neighbor as yourself" [*Leviticus*, 19, 18]. There is absolutely nothing shocking in this 'as yourself': I will say that we are in search of a *right to the love ourselves*; this is the first ethical impulse" (« L'éthique, la morale, la règle », *Autres Temps*, n° 24 (1989-90), 55).
- ⁴³ Ricœur « Aux frontières de la philosophie », *Esprit* 20/11 (1952) : 760-775, which is reprinted with a somewhat unfortunate title as: « Philosophie et prophétisme I (1952) » in *Lecture 3*, 153-172, cited at 153.
- ⁴⁴ Ricœur, « Philosophie et prophétisme I (1952) », in *Lectures 3*, 169.
- ⁴⁵ Ricœur, « Philosophie et prophétisme I (1952) », in *Lectures 3*, 169.
- ⁴⁶ Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 26 (trans. mod.).
- ⁴⁷ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 252 (emphasis Ricœur; tr. mod.).
- ⁴⁸ See Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 69 ff.
- ⁴⁹ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 75.
- ⁵⁰ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 75 (tr. mod.).
- ⁵¹ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 76.
- ⁵² See the thesis of J. Ferrari, *Les sources françaises de la philosophie de Kant*, Université de Paris IV, 1976, 1981, whose third part is devoted to « Kant lecteur de Rousseau », pp. 171-253. See also D. Frey, « La culture, fin dernière de la nature. Kant critique de Rousseau », in G. Vincent (dir.), *La Partition des cultures. Droits culturels et Droits de l'Homme* (Strasbourg : Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2008) : 69-97.
- ⁵³ See Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 111.

⁵⁴ See *Fallible Man*, Chapter 4, 81-132.

⁵⁵ Ricœur places this study under the sign of the *thumos* (a term taken from book IV of Plato's *Republic*; cf. *Fallible Man*, 7 ff.), the locations of the affective fragility of the human, torn between the vital and the spiritual. See *Fallible Man*, 106 ff.

⁵⁶ The attentive reader will have spotted a tension between this passage and the previous one, which affirmed the possibility of seizing the original not through oneself but through the fallen. Ricœur's conclusion will remove this apparent contradiction: "In short, it is always 'through' the fallen that the original appears [...] But in return, this reference to the original constitutes evil as a fault. I can only think evil as evil 'starting from' that from which it falls. The 'through' is thus reciprocal with a 'starting from'; and it is this 'starting from' which permits it to be said that fallibility is the *condition* of evil, while evil is the revelation of fallibility" (*Fallible Man*, 144; Ricœur's emphasis).

⁵⁷ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 111-112 (Ricœur's emphasis).

⁵⁸ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 120 (trans. mod.).

⁵⁹ "When would I have enough? When will my authority be established? When will I be appreciated enough, recognized?" (*Fallible Man*, 126).

⁶⁰ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 126 (tr. mod.).

⁶¹ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 145 (Ricœur's emphasis).

⁶² Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 146 (Ricœur's emphasis).