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*In Debate with Ricœur's Philosophy of the Will*

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*Freedom, evil and forgiveness:  
in debate with Ricœur's Philosophy of the Will*

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**Abstract**

The question of forgiveness arose for Paul Ricœur from the first moment of his phenomenology of the will. Isolating consciousness in order to describe its structure, especially that of its willing dimension (freedom), presupposes a distancing from the world, but also a distancing from evil. The precondition of this distancing is forgiveness. Forgiveness appears when consciousness is ready to reject the finitude that, of necessity, opposes itself to freedom: this 'face' of forgiveness, distinguished from the articulation of phenomenology and hermeneutics, is the admiration carried by Stoic and Orphic myths. This forgiveness releases freedom from an evil identified as contempt for finitude. Forgiveness appears next when the evil endured at the hands of another challenges one's freedom: this essay will develop what Ricœur could only sketch regarding the idea of "Franciscan" hope. Forgiveness appears, finally, when Ricœur explores it in connection with guilt. In conclusion, this essay seeks to articulate the unity shared between these 'faces' of forgiveness.

**Keywords:** Evil; Forgiveness; Freedom; Hermeneutics; Phenomenology; Ricœur.

*Introduction*

The question of forgiveness arose for Paul Ricœur from the first moment of his phenomenology of the will. Indeed, isolating consciousness in its willing dimension, in order to describe its structure, supposes not only a distancing from the world, but also a distancing from evil. On what condition can the conscience keep evil at a distance from itself, thus permitting the description of its structure of freedom? This condition is forgiveness.

Ricœur proceeds in two stages. First, in *Freedom and Nature*, he places both evil and the world within parentheses, so as to describe freedom as the structure of the human will marked by finitude. Second, in *The Symbolism of Evil*, he removes the parentheses, so as to study practical

freedom, and more specifically, freedom under a double influence, evil and forgiveness. In doing evil, freedom loses itself, but in welcoming forgiveness, it finds itself anew.

Our first hypothesis is that Ricœur introduces forgiveness already at the first stage. After the description of freedom as project and as corporeal motion, he comes to the question of the difficult question of consenting to necessity. At that stage, liberty rests upon a choice that Ricœur calls metaphysical: one must say yes or no to the recognition by the ego of a certain self-transcendence and to the renunciation of self-positioning of self by the self (*l'autoposition*). This crisis of liberty tested by finitude cannot, according to Ricœur, be traversed without the support of Stoic and Orphic myths that carry the ego to admiration for life.

Even if Ricœur did not make it explicit at that point, the question of evil emerges under the mode of a challenge for freedom: conscience commits evil when it chooses to say no to finitude, when it opts for the self-positioning of the self by the self. It pretends to become creative, taking itself for God. But Ricœur (1966) ceaselessly affirms that human freedom is not creative, for “to will is not to create.” (p. 521) While even theoretical freedom is not entirely formed – this only occurs in the consent to its finitude – it already runs the risk of losing itself. Faced with this risk, forgiveness is the support that freedom receives not to fall. The first face of forgiveness comes in the dialogue with what the Stoic and Orphic myths announce: the victory of admiration of life over contempt for it. This will be the topic of our first part.

Freedom must nevertheless confront a second crisis, deeper than the first, when it is confronted with evil committed by human beings against others. Ricœur distinguishes two aspects of this evil: suffering and fault. Evil as suffering is the new hardship to which freedom is exposed, where it risks losing itself. To endure, freedom must find a support: consolation, thus showing us a new dimension of forgiveness. We will explore this aspect in our second part. Since Ricœur did not probe this in detail, we have sought to develop this aspect in greater detail and will present the results here.

Forgiveness is, ultimately, what is asked by the conscience that judges itself guilty: two notable Ricœurian texts treat this theme, writings separated by forty years. The first belongs to the philosophy of the will, *The Symbolism of Evil*. The second comes as the epilogue of his work, *Memory*,

*History, Forgetting.* Beyond their notable differences, what unites these texts is the question of confession and of forgiveness. In our third part, we will focus on Ricœur's results in the *Symbolism of Evil*.

*1. The First Face of Forgiveness: Freedom Tested by Finitude and Supported by Admiration*

To understand what forgiveness signifies, we will begin by exploring the consciousness that lives it, whether as the one who pardons or as the one who seeks forgiveness. The consciousness experimenting forgiveness is, for Ricœur, one who is structurally free and whose liberty is placed in peril or reduced to slavery. When reduced to slavery, it may be seeking liberation. The question of evil and of forgiveness orients us straightaway towards the willing dimension of consciousness. Concerning methodology, Ricœur follows Husserl, at least in the first part of its description: the will as project and motion. But he distances himself concerning the interpretation of the results of method, particularly about the question of the origin of conscience. If Husserl is seeking a pure transcendental ego, Ricœur (2004) speaks of an ego that is enlarged and humbled.

The enlarged ego is the one that is never without a body. This is why Ricœur constantly evokes the voluntary with the involuntary, the project with corporal movement. This enlargement is also the place of humbling for the ego, which wanted to posit itself: the ego cannot but recognize that it is always preceded by a life that it cannot fully understand, a life that escapes it and which, sometimes, is radically opposed to one's own life plans, but a life the ego must consent to. Without life – and its necessities – there is no freedom, even if freedom meets, with this necessity, its contradiction.

Ricœur speaks of a threefold sadness which threatens the will in its process of becoming free through consent to its life: the sadness of the past, when the human person conceives his or her own character as a state that condemns him or her to an unbearable subjectivity; the sadness of formlessness when the menacing shadows of his unconscious emerge; the sadness of contingency before the incredible and hazardous complexity of our body which at each moment could go irredeemably awry, before

irreversible aging, before inevitable death. In this sadness, the risk is to say no to the finite, to the formlessness and to contingency, pronouncing a triple confession of totality, transparency, and self-positioning.

What is it that permits us to understand the destructiveness of these wishes? What is it that comes to prevent us from falling into the illusion of absolute lucidity? What is it that authorizes us to choose a path where it may be possible at the same time to consent to finitude without thereby resigning ourselves to sadness?

The description must stop here for a moment, for a philosophical choice must be made, one that Ricœur calls metaphysical. There is an alternative: yes or no, do we believe that freedom continues to be possible in this finite life? Ricœur replies “yes,” and invites his reader to follow him.

Consent is at the same time described theoretically and now carried out within the description. And the will is no longer alone: another has been invited – poetry. As for the methods: hermeneutics comes along and enters in conversation with phenomenology. The first fruit of this encounter is the discovery that necessity is not a bloc of causality hermeneutically sealed off from the freedom that we were tempted to reject: necessity – character, the unconscious, and life – is the world where freedom discovers itself to be responding “to an appeal or a grasp which surpasses it” (Ricœur, 1966, p. 469).

This appeal or this grasp opens the path, located at the very interior of the sadness of finitude, towards the joy of consent. They take the form of admiration for life experienced by consciousness in reading Stoic and Orphic poetry. Even if he does not say it explicitly, “Admiration” is the symbol<sup>1</sup> deduced by Ricœur through hermeneutics: we recognize it as the symbol of forgiveness for a consciousness confronted to the metaphysical choice previously discussed: we could call it metaphysical<sup>2</sup> forgiveness. Admiration

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<sup>1</sup> In *Freedom and Nature*, the first detour offered to phenomenology passes through the sciences: consciousness cannot describe the life that carries it without passing through concepts elaborated by biology. In this detour, the scientific concept is received by the consciousness as an “index.” In the same way, the myths give access to the depths of experience that are not directly accessible for investigation by the understanding itself. The myths are received by the understanding as “symbols.”

<sup>2</sup> Jaspers (2001) distinguishes four types of guilt: criminal, political, moral and metaphysical. Ricœur (2000) follows this distinction and uses the term to describe the experience, for the guilty, to be expelled from himself, from mankind and from the world, not to be able to recognize himself in the wrongdoings that he committed. The meaning here

is the appeal and grasp which comes to unmask the illusion of self-positioning, all the while inviting and aiding freedom not to flee but rather to advance towards itself despite the challenge. On the other side, we encounter another symbol, the one of evil: "contempt" toward this finite life.

Stoicism saves the human person from his contempt for finitude that passes through the admiration he professes for the world in its organized totality. The victory of admiration over contempt is the "detour"<sup>3</sup> which begins to lead the person momentarily tempted to reject the world back towards consent. The challenged ego discovers itself enlarged, under the horizon of totality, and at the same time humbled, its core going out of itself to the Transcendence from which all order stems. This gives him the capacity to understand this order. Stoicism, though occasionally scornful of the smaller details of human experience, nevertheless manifests a kind of admiration by default for the whole. The admiration of Orphism goes further by consenting to this world even in its troubling elements.

Orphism – Ricœur cites Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* extensively – carries man beyond his death and the contempt that it provokes, towards a goodness more originally manifested in the great metamorphosis of the world where ruin is continually overcome. In doing this, Orphism humbles man's immoderate will to be Being itself, immortal, and pushes him to conversion: "As consciousness, renouncing the attempt at self-positing, receives being with wonder and seeks in the world and in the involuntary a manifestation of Transcendence which is given to me as the mighty companion of my freedom!" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 478) But Orphism also carries with it the possibility of excess: it can push the subject to forget himself in idolised nature. The admiration by default seen in Stoicism offers something to resist.

Thanks to the combined effects of Stoicism and Orphism, admiration is offered as the passage towards consenting to finitude. Evil is identified through the symbol of contempt, and forgiveness through the symbol of an admiration more powerful than contempt. This symbolism appears as a pole in circulation with another pole, the will phenomenologically

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is similar: the rejection of finitude is, for the enlarged ego, rejection not only of its bodily dimension but also of himself and of the world.

<sup>3</sup> The figure of the detour is dear to Ricœur, when he opposes the long path of hermeneutics with the short path of Husserl and Heidegger.

described as Freedom. Freedom is faithful to itself in recognizing and rejecting the previous confession of self-positioning, and in the same movement, welcoming enlargement and humility as essential characteristics of the renewed ego.

In return, freedom discovers itself as “an only human freedom” (Ricœur, 1966, p. 482), that is, “a freedom which is human and not divine, a freedom which does not posit itself absolutely because it is not Transcendence. To will is not to create” (p. 486). Transcendence appears not directly but through the detour of the symbols of evil and forgiveness.

The hermeneutic detour permits phenomenology to follow the description of consciousness. It integrates into this description elements that it receives from outside. These elements are integrated in their being recognized as indications of what comprises consciousness – going beyond that to which consciousness has immediate access. The “only human freedom” can be understood in the circle between the conceptuality that the phenomenology of the will constitutes – freedom – and the symbolism that the hermeneutic of Stoic and Orphic myths elaborate: admiration more powerful (forgiveness) than contempt (evil). Ricœur has explored this circularity in the conclusion to “The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought” (Ricœur, 1967, p. 347-357).

We have described freedom up to the difficult but not impossible contentment to finitude. This is the end of a first detour. But it does not signify the end of the path: consent and admiration remain in tension because of another dimension of evil: sufferings and wrongdoings committed by other human beings. The admiration of a world where freedom is possible does not suffice when such evil is present: the hope of an entirely different world becomes necessary, Ricœur says; a world where freedom will be delivered from the slavery by which evil threatens to diminish freedom.

2. *The Second Face of Forgiveness: Freedom Tested by Suffering and Supported by Consolation*

On the path of consent, a new stumbling block emerges: evil committed (culpability) and its result for others: evil endured (suffering). In contrast with the metaphysical evil already discussed, we will call it effective evil. At the end of *Freedom and Nature*, Ricœur insists above all on the impossibility of consenting to a necessity that has become bad – at least partly – because of human actions. To consent will only be possible with the support of something other than admiration: evil mingled with necessity cannot be the sign of good Transcendence. If a world must be the sign of a good Transcendence, it will be other than this world – it will be a world where evil is absent, a world where “I hope to be delivered from the terrible and at the end of time to enjoy a new body and a new nature granted to freedom” (Ricœur, 1966, p. 480).

The hope of this world, if it helps freedom to follow the path of humanisation, cannot lead to the desire to flee from the world, even though it is marked by human evil. Hope comes in welcoming the promise of deliverance: it sustains patience during freedom’s testing by human evil, it aids the engagement of freedom in its battle against it. It announces, on the horizon, the conciliation between freedom and necessity, despite finitude and despite evil. On one hand, Rilke’s Orphic poetry shows this hope. And Ricœur cites these verses: «Only in the realm of praising may Lament/ Go, nymph of the weeping spring» (Rilke, R.M., 1942, p. 31).

A nymph consoles man in carrying a word returned from death and from nothingness: life, says the nymph, in contrast with death, is of such splendour that even the perspective of annihilation cannot completely trouble it. The hostility placed by suffering between freedom and life has to be converted into a “into a fraternal tension within a unity of creation. A Franciscan knowledge of necessity: I am ‘with’ necessity, ‘among’ creatures” (Ricœur, 1966, p. 481).

This ending by Ricœur is very brisk. Nevertheless, we are now familiar with his way of proceeding: Orphism permits one to take a step along the path of consent, when confronted to a suffering provoked by nature. But another obstacle presents itself that leaves the Orphic outlook without force: evil committed by other human beings. Another recourse

appears here: Franciscan fraternity. In his *Canticle of Creation*, Francis of Assisi writes: «Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Earth, our Mother, who nourishes us and sustains us [...]. Be praised, my Lord, for those who forgive for love of you» (Francis of Assisi, 2006).

The Franciscan tradition shares Orphic poetry's admiration for life, but it prolongs this admiration in hope and consolation by means of love, helping freedom to face the new challenge of a suffering lived through the fault of another person. Another aspect appears immediately: the suffering that we force upon others. We will return to this in the third part, following Ricœur in *The Symbolism of Evil*. It seems nevertheless essential to give place to the victim before turning to the guilty. The privilege that Ricœur gives to guilt is inscribed within the Christian tradition, marked by the Protestant Reformation.<sup>4</sup> Beyond this orientation, the force of Ricœur's position is to expose the detour of his reading: his hermeneutics contains, without making it explicit, numerous elements linked to the sufferings of victims. This permits the emergence of a symbolism parallel to the one of guilt that he has elaborated (Causse, 2014).

Babylonian, Greek, Hebrew, Christian, and Orphic texts (Ricœur, 1967) not only display hope, but witness a consolation that supports freedom to remain free when challenged by the suffering caused by humans. Forgiveness continues to accompany freedom along the way of humanisation, helping it to resist that which could enslave it and delivering it when it is subjugated. The confrontation with suffering endured from another illuminates a new dimension of forgiveness.

From a philosophical point of view, forgiveness contains another interest: that of shedding light on the evil that threatens freedom, of permitting men to recognize it better, to reject it for oneself and to combat its effects. Ricœur (1967) notes this concerning 'sin', the second symbol of guilt: "This symbolism of sin gets a new emphasis when sin is considered retrospectively from the standpoint of that which goes beyond it, namely, 'pardon.' At the end of this first part we shall stress the fact that the complete and concrete meaning of sin becomes apparent only in this retrospection" (p. 78).

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<sup>4</sup> In his reflection on guilt, Ricœur (1967, pp. 130, 139) cites the Apostle Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther together.

What fruit might we gather from this reading of Ricœur, complemented with our own investigations (Causse, 2014)? The first symbol of evil suffered because of another is the “stain”, the same as that which Ricœur brought to light for guilt, even if it is perceived from a radically different angle. Evil takes, in league with our embodied nature and our relationship to the environment, the form of a contracted impurity. The victim does not see the other as guilty in the first instance, for the victim is at once submersed in suffering and so sees otherness at the border of the physical and the moral. This suffering resembles misunderstandings of illness, but it is so sudden, radiating from the exterior towards the interior, and obscurely implicating a relationship to the other, whether the other is a person or an object. It is charged with evil.

Just as illness carries with it an archaic tinge of fear of divine wrath, how much more this ambiguous suffering, where the angry divine seems to have incarnated itself in this other who commits violence against me? The confusion is even greater for the children who suffer violence from their parents or their close relations: if it is in a father that this figure is incarnated, what child do I become? I am no longer a man; I am a thing, and an impure and rejected thing. The confusion is even greater when the aggression is sexual, where a form of pleasure is mixed with suffering. All is confused, nothing has sense any longer; everything – pleasure or displeasure – brings one back to being only something impure, in whom desire is dead. The victim disintegrates in order to survive: within the self the sacred and the profane are split. And as nothing of humanity escapes profanation, it is in a disincarnated ‘elsewhere’ that the sacred finds refuge, at the risk of madness and of death (Daligand, 2004).

What face does forgiveness – effective forgiveness, in contrast with metaphysical forgiveness – take that can unveil this evil and indicate a way out of it? Following Ricœur, we call it “purification”. What purification can come to aid the child or the adult so challenged? This purification is of the order of rite and of myth,<sup>5</sup> establishing a tight alliance between the gesture

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<sup>5</sup> The myth is here understood in the way that Eliade and Ricœur speak of it: it is a narrative giving a situation meaning that it would otherwise lack, giving the gestures and the words to live this transformation. The rite is the enactment of these gestures and words: throughout the rite, the reading of texts comes to link the spoken words with the gestures

and the word. It links as well the collective with the personal: it seeks to separate once more the pleasure of desire, to reinstate the confidence in one's embodied and relational being, in re-establishing the joy of friendship. We refer here to Ricœur's remarkable passages about emotion in the second part of *Freedom and Nature*. It requires nothing less than a rite of new birth to bring the victim into freedom. We can think of the ritual of Baptism, present already in Ancient Babylon and the Greek world, as it is now in the Jewish and Christian tradition. To these rites correspond myths that we cannot cite but in passing here: in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Enkidu passes from the wilderness to civilization washing himself; in the Bible, Noah is saved from the flood, the Israelites are liberated from Egypt passing the Red Sea; Jesus of Nazareth is baptised by John in the Jordan, and so on.

This purification operates together with several other actions such as medical and psychological care, associational support for the reconstruction of the self and of one's ties with others, and the support offered by recourse to justice. Transitional justice (Hayner, 2011), restorative justice (Zehr, 2012) and mediation (Iula, 2012) are of this order, while penal justice (Garapon, 2002) – with its primary attention to the law and to infraction – leaves the victim in the shadows and demands an additional accompaniment.

Forgiveness as purification situates us straightaway on the level of the body, collective and individual: it is here that it replies to the defilement and, as much possible, warns it through education, prevention, the fight against recidivism, protocols concerning abuse, etc. Finally, the symbolism of stain and of purification is operational concerning the pollution of our environment and the management of our waste. Without going so far as to hypostatize nature, it permits us to remember that, by our bodies, we belong to one another, and to the land: a child made ill because of pollution is also a victim of the action of other people. Forgiveness as purification permits us to recognize the person within the right to clean air and to healthy food, and to identify the communal actions geared towards this transformation of his or her situation. In the same way, poor populations

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made, seizing the person that participates in it and renewing her humanity capable of just gestures and true words, of gestures and words that are coherent and humanizing.

threatened by the rising of seas demand to be recognized in their right to a habitable earth.

Purification, the first symbol of effective forgiveness for a victim, unites the individual with the covenant among all humanity, the land and the source of goodness from which all emerges: the splendid image of the rainbow at the conclusion of the Noah story situates us all in this place. But humanity thus re-founded is far from an Eden: the covenant does not cease to be broken. The second symbol of evil suffered appears: the misery in which part of our humanity is submerged. Mercy<sup>6</sup> is the symbol of the pardon that precedes it.

If the first symbol situates us in the broader human range – the earthly condition, the most singular, the incarnated condition of us all – this second symbol reduces this breadth to situate us at the interior of a specified human community. We can consider the Hebrew people, having arrived in the Promised Land at the time of the kings and prophets, as a symbolic model of it (Beauchamp, 1976).

This people lives an unbearable paradox: it has been born of mercy, having been enslaved in Egypt and then liberated. Its identity is founded in this experience. And nevertheless, the rich and the powerful do no better than the Egyptians: they hold many of their own people in miserable poverty. It is in this context that the prophets speak up. Their announcements proclaim that mercy will once again be exercised in favour of those bowed down. They are going to be liberated and a new land will be given to them. Let the rich and the powerful hear this and understand the consequences for them!

Forgiveness as mercy appears under the form of a preferential love for the poorest, for it is they that give the community the power to live together. And forgiveness is incarnated in every person or group of persons who seeks and finds the gestures and the words to incarnate this preference. Here again, Jewish and Christian rites and texts about Easter are particularly relevant, even if it is possible to participate in these rites in the very manner that the prophets denounce, perverting them and making them tools of one's own power. It is indeed there that we find the heart of

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<sup>6</sup> In French, to speak of "misery" (*misère*) is also to speak of "mercy" (*miséricorde*). There is an intimate – indeed, unbreakable – connection between these two realities.

the battle of the prophets: giving the rites and texts their true meaning, denouncing interpretations and the practices that can only be described as false and perverse. These political associations, institutions, parties and movements can incarnate mercy. We could cite, for example, "ATD Fourth World,"<sup>7</sup> founded by Father Joseph Wresinski.

After the purification given to freedom in order to break free of the stain, after the mercy shown to freedom in order to break free of the miseries of poverty, a third symbol of forgiveness appears: it comes to touch the victim at their very core, where suffering has brought them to the brink of losing the very basis of their identity, the confidence in a source of goodness from which everything emerges, and from which emerges the person that I am: unique, and in relationship with a multitude of others on the way to freedom. Extreme suffering prevents our responding to the question "who am I?", for it muffles the voice that calls "where are you?"<sup>8</sup> Suffering renders one insensitive to the hand that is extended in order to prevent us from falling into the abyss (Girtanner, 1999), and it ties the tongue that can no longer even call for help. We might think of those who were victims, along with others, of terrible atrocities – those in concentration camps or gulags, for example (Lomax, 1995) – and who, on returning, feel themselves guilty for having survived (Causse, 2014). What symbolism meets this experience? It is desolation.<sup>9</sup>

Can forgiveness reach these depths? It is Ricœur (2004) who shows us the way, citing St. Paul's hymn of love from the First Letter to the Corinthians (p. 468). Love has the capacity to descend to the abysses where evil reigns. Love grows to the same measure, and no distance is able to stop it. Love shows its height and depth when it meets the person submerged in desolation.

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<sup>7</sup> ATD (All Together in Dignity) Fourth World.

<sup>8</sup> We touch here upon Ricœur's reflections about narrative and its foundations: Ricœur (1992).

<sup>9</sup> According to the dictionary of the CNRTL (Centre national de ressources textuelles et lexicales), *désolation* designates first of all the act of ravaging a country, to empty it, to destroy it; it designates also the result of such acts. In a figurative sense, it designates the act that reduces a person to isolation, to live in a state of extreme pain, of painful affliction owing to the lack of a beloved or of a sign of God.

A victim, his heart marked profoundly by suffering, may see himself as no longer capable of being loved. To be found once more by love, to be touched by it in the most distant regions, is forgiveness in its largest dimension: consolation. Consolation is not a state, it is an urge, and the growth of love that does not abandon freedom when put to the test. This growth, in order to be experienced, presupposes the belief that it is possible and to welcome it. There is no other condition, even if, paradoxically, we can need to be helped by others to believe it, by some witness of consolation.

Those who incarnate this consolation are numerous but their humility renders them discreet. There are texts that identify them: the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke, the figure of Sonia in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, a nurse in Wiesenthal's *Sunflower* (Wiesenthal, 1998). People, individually or through institutions, practice this as well: none can pretend to possess it, only to transmit it, and to inscribe in space and time the rites and texts (for example, Yom Kippur in the Jewish tradition, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Catholic tradition, but also, in some cases, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions<sup>10</sup>) that dispose us towards it and towards living it.

For the person suffering from the faults of another – and the other can be a person as well as a group – forgiveness is experienced as an appeal and a grasp, from outside as well as from inside. This experience is expressed by the two chains of symbols, of evil (stain, misery, desolation) and of forgiveness (purification, mercy, consolation): through these symbols, the person who was the victim is able to name forgiveness and its power over evil, then to accompany it through his or her own actions toward others. The first could be to forgive his or her repentant persecutor. This symbolism organizes itself according to a deepening of experience: from bodily and environmental exteriority, it passes through community mediation, and arrives at the person in respectful relation with others.

Each symbol deepens and takes up the preceding symbol. Desolation can be taken as an example, in order to show the chain of symbols. Desolation is first of all lived in the most intimate core of the self: but this lived experience is communal, as it is shown by those victims that continue

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<sup>10</sup> See Pons (2000), Lefranc (2002), Cassin (2004).

to belong to the community of those who have been killed and feel guilty remaining alive. And it is bodily, bespeaking a relationship to the world where nothing has taste, colour, or relief. It is a world that has become a desert.

After the detour through symbols, we return to freedom: welcoming and sustaining the appeal and support of forgiveness announced by the symbolism, it can traverse evil and find itself capable of accomplishing itself as human freedom. This could be by according it to someone who asks for it, or even – if the transgressor does not ask – of disposing oneself to announce it, in word and deed. Becoming such a witness of consolation, as a person or as a community (Ricoeur, 2016), freedom is not only faithful to itself, but deepens itself.

### *3. The Third Face of Forgiveness: Freedom Tested by Guilt and Supported by the Hope of Justification*

A final face of forgiveness must be explored: that which presents itself to freedom that is enslaved by doing evil. In returning, this face will help freedom resist its subjugation when temptation presents itself. This exploration will be more rapid because Ricoeur has preceded us already. We will content ourselves to recall his findings.

*The Symbolism of Evil* elaborates a symbolism of culpability, itself clarified by the symbolism of justification. In its most exterior dimension, evil is symbolized, as we have noted earlier, by the stain and forgiveness by purification. The point of view being that of the guilty party, the distinction between sacred and profane no longer passes the border between the real and the unreal but in the world itself, among things: it separates those who are at the disposition of others who will not be, being reserved to the Deity. It is possible only to touch what is profane: to touch a sacred thing is to make a stain, to affect the order of the world. Only a ritual of purification can allay divine anger while also re-establishing order. This dimension is visible in the ritual of marriage, in the *catharsis* in Greek tragedies or in the waiting, in a trial, for a just punishment.

A second symbol appears in taking account of the relational dimension of evil committed: to attack someone is also to attack the

confidence that grounds social relations. Here, evil is symbolized by sin, which is fundamentally the rupture of the covenantal relation between people and with the source of goodness from which emerges the possibility of living together. (Ricoeur, 1992, ninth study). Forgiveness is symbolized by redemption. The covenant was sealed between two partners: the sinner broke it, and the other partner maintains the covenant despite its rupture. Redemption is the return of the sinner to the covenant. One element must be underlined: the partner in a covenant is not a victim, but one or more representative members of the affected community. These members stand between the guilty party and the victim. We might think here of experiences of mediation, or of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.

The third symbol comes with the internalization of the evil committed: guilt is the realization of being held captive, of being diminished in the ability to be oneself, of being powerless to find once more one's lost freedom. This guilt is brought to light through justification: the revelation of being held in slavery comes into contrast with the hope of being justified. Justification is promised on the condition of allowing the light to occur by itself, for repentance to grow and the acknowledgement of wrongdoing to formulate itself.

Justification is the fact of being declared just by the person empowered to do so. Later, Ricoeur (2004) will make this explicit in terms of separation between the agent and his bad actions, the agent understanding that his confession gives value to this saying: "you are better than your actions" (p. 493). Ricoeur insists nevertheless on the fact that forgiveness, for the guilty, can only be promised: it cannot in any case be realized in the conscience by the conscience. This is why the symbolism of evil remains unachieved: the double symbolism of guilt and forgiveness remains open. This is also why there is neither a concept of "forgiven freedom", but only a semi-concept of "servile will".

On the side of the victim, we have not had the same difficulty: he or she is fully re-established in their freedom upon welcoming consolation. Freedom and forgiveness make a circle for the victim. Transmitting forgiveness presupposes that it is fully received, not as a state but as an urge coming from another and which goes towards others, not without having produced, in oneself, its work of deepening freedom.

The symbolism of guilt and of justification brings freedom to the point of repenting and of confessing. It can even be followed to the point of asking for forgiveness. Freedom in this situation is to recognize oneself as once again enslaved by the evil committed, but also to be placed partially in one's being thanks to this distancing from evil that is repenting and confession. From a phenomenological point of view, it is not possible to go further. The next step will be the possible event, but not the necessary event, of seeing oneself giving the forgiveness that is sought. This presupposes the intervention of another conscience, capable of forgiving, as well as have a forum capable of framing this exchange (Ricoeur, 2004, gives examples of this "ceremonies").

### *Conclusion*

Exploring the interplay between evil, forgiveness and freedom, we have described, at the intersection of phenomenology and of hermeneutics, the structure of freedom and its finitude, and brought to light the support that it receives from metaphysical forgiveness, in consenting to this finitude despite the contradiction that opposes it. Accepting this help, theoretical freedom advances toward an only human freedom.

For human freedom, the challenge of evil committed by human beings necessitates the description of forgiveness to branch out in two directions: the victim and the guilty party. Effective forgiveness thus has two faces: consolation and a hope of justification, as well as evil: desolation and guilt. As Ricoeur has elaborated the latter, we have done the same for the former. As for freedom, it becomes a freer will on one side, and a servile will on the other.

The relation between metaphysical and effective is first related with the relation between a theoretical point of view and a practical one. The metaphysical is linked to the theoretical description of the will. It qualifies a decision inside the theoretical description. The effective is related to a situation where a decision is already made. Between theoretical and metaphysical, as between metaphysical and effective, there is a leap, the one of a choice. This leap takes a different turn for forgiveness and for evil.

Metaphysical and effective forgiveness are in continuity with each other, related to an openness of freedom to a helpful otherness. On the other hand,

metaphysical evil is a rejection of any transcendence, and can be understood as the root of effective evil: stain and sin are two effective expressions of this rejection. Guilt, when recognized, is nevertheless already a turning point toward forgiveness. Finally, we could say that metaphysical evil is the root of effective evil as stain, sin and non-recognized guilt, and metaphysical forgiveness the origin of effective forgiveness and hope of justification.

We then have arrived at a new place where we await two people, and where the question is posed, within oneself, of the conjugation of this double experience: consolation and hope of justification. This place is as much a horizon as it is the symbol of a force that gives itself to freedom to persevere toward the unification between a freer will and servile will in hope of release.

The face to come is reconciliation. In returning, a question is posed: can forgiveness be accomplished if the meeting between the two is not possible, whether because the victim is dead, or because they cannot access consolation, or perhaps because the guilty party does not confess? And, within oneself, how to hold together the consolation by which being a victim recedes into the past, not in order to be forgotten but so that this will lose its charge of desolation, and the recognition of places of culpability for which no request for forgiveness seems to be able to extend?

This remains an open question, but it is not therefore a setback, for forgiveness is, more than a state, an urge for liberation: the absence of reconciliation is less an end of this movement and more its continuation under different forms. Here, we can only suggest ways forward: the multiple engagements before so many people haunted by desolation and guilt.

Another figure sketches itself next to reconciliation: leaning upon one's experience of consolation, the desire for another to have the same consolation can be born. This is true of a particular other that I have wronged, but also any other tormented by desolation. To act in and for consolation is a larger face of forgiveness. Freedom finds itself affirmed because it has been shared in friendship and in mutual respect, in a human community advancing in freedom.

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