Paul Ricœur's Interpretation of the Stories of Creation in Chapters 1-11 of Genesis

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In this study, I present the meanings of the stories of Creation in chapters 1-11 of Genesis according to Paul Ricœur. Ricœur interprets these meanings in his article "Penser la creation". This article is in the book *Penser la Bible*, which was published 1998, both in French and translated into English, titled *Thinking Biblically.*[1]

It should not be a surprise that for Ricœur, biblical Creation is the act of a personal, theistic God.[2] In "Penser la creation", Ricœur analyzes five subjects of the stories of Creation. The first of them is (1) a primordial beginning time of Creation, also including some other subjects related to it. The second subject is (2) Creation as separation. Ricœur divides Creation itself into three separate subjects. They are: (3) the Creation of the world, (4) the Creation of humanity, and (5) the anti-Creation/de-Creation of Evil.[3] In "Penser la creation", these five subjects overlap and mix with each other, forming a many-faceted and complex composition. I will shortly give a brief account of each of these five subjects, and after that I shall concentrate on analyzing, in a more detailed fashion, two of these subjects: the beginning time of Creation and the de-Creation of Evil. I have chosen to concentrate on these two subjects, instead of the remaining three, for the following reasons. According to Björn Vikström, biblically based faith in Creation has a key role in Ricœur's thinking, whether theological or philosophical.[4] But how does Ricœur then explicitly interpret biblical Creation, this key issue in his thinking? As an example of this I present how Ricœur constructs the idea of the beginning time of Creation, arguing that it is specifically in the biblical-Hebraic sense of the texts.[5] And why the anti-Crea-

[1] Ricœur and André LaCocque, *Penser la Bible* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998). André LaCocque and Paul Ricœur. *Thinking Biblically. Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies.* (Chicago and London: Chicago UP, 1998). This book, simultaneously published both in French and English editions, was authored according to a process in which LaCocque originally first wrote his exegetical articles in English and then Ricœur commented them hermeneutically in his articles, originally written in French. When needed, I also use some other sources, along with the main source "Penser la creation", to complement my analysis on the subject of this article. Ricœur's biblical interpretations are not treated as an explicit subject in the research literature which is also the reason for the lack of the use of literature in this paper. Ricœur's biblical interpretations lack comprehensive research, which is the reason why I have taken them as a subject in my doctoral work called – by working title – "Paul Ricœur's Biblical Interpretations". This study gives a short account of some of the subjects in the chapter "Thinking creation" of my dissertation-work on the stocks. Ricœur has written much on the methodology and theory of biblical interpretation and biblical hermeneutics. His explicit biblical interpretations are in two works*: Penser la Bible* (the interpretations of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible) and *Paul Ricœur on Biblical Hermeneutics*, Semeia, 4/1975 (ed. J. D. Crossan; Missoula: Scholars Press & Society of Biblical Literature, 1975) (covering the whole issue of the journal, including the interpretations of the sayings of Jesus in the New Testament).

[2] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 61; 64; 88-89, on the act of Creation as God's deed. Paul Ricœur, "Reply to David Detmer", 494-497 in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur* (ed. L. E. Hahn; Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1995), 495, on the personality of God and his "theistic schema".

[3] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 77.

[4] Björn Vikström, *Verkligheten öppnar sig. Läsning och uppenbarelse i Paul Ricœurs bibelhermeneutik* (Åbo: Åbo Academi UP, 2000), 290-291.

[5] Paul Ricœur, "Comments after Jeanrond's 'Hermeneutics and Revelation'", 58-62 in *Memory, Narrativi-*

tion/de-Creation of Evil? Ricœur's *Symbolique du mal* is basically a philosophical work.[6] In it Ricœur also analyzes the biblical symbolism of Evil in addition to its other symbolisms. Instead of explicit philosophy, *Penser la Bible* represents "theological philosophy or philosophical theology" as Ricœur himself describes it.[7] There is considerable research on *Symbolique du mal* and its philosophical analysis of biblical Evil. For a change, in this article I give a brief account of Ricœur's theological-philosophical interpretation of biblical Evil in "Penser la creation", and explain what he means by the de-Creation of it. But I feel that now I should give a short account of each of these five subjects.[8]

In the first subject, the primordial beginning time of Creation, Ricœur analyses how there are both temporal and atemporal qualities in Creation. In addition, in Creation the quality of time is different from any other, such as chronological, scientific or proper historical time. For example, the primordial time of Creation does not precede the proper historical time (documentary, dated or datable history) in a sense of chronological anteriority or temporal succession. Still, the primordial time of Creation constitutes the foundation of historical time. Ricœur explains

how this happens in terms of a certain kind of temporal *caesura*, which occurs between the time of Creation and historical time.[9] Ricœur also explains how the diverse events of Creation propagate their initiating (*inaugural*) power of beginning to proper historical time.[10]

The second subject, Creation as separation, is represented by the narrative discourses on Creation. The literary form of narrative has some specific features that can present Creation as separation in a suitable way. Creation as separation is an alternative to Creation *ex nihilo*. In the process of separation, God separates himself from his creation. The meaning of separation is that the creature is not the Creator. This is the minimum sense of the biblical Creation. The separation also means that God's word does not create out of nothing (versus *ex nihilo*) and that the creative principle is the personal will of God.[11]

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ty, Self and Challenge to Think God. The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricœur (eds M. Junker-Kenny and P. Kenny; New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 58-59.

[6] Paul Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté. Finitude et culpabilité II. La symbolique du mal* (Paris: Aubier, 1960). For the sake of clarity, because the *Finitude et culpabilite* has two separate parts, the first one entitled *Philosophie de la volonté. Finitude et culpabilité I. L'homme faillible*, I subsequently use for the first-mentioned second part the following reference: Ricœur, *La symbolique du mal*.

[7] Richard Kearney, *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 43.

[8] In a way, these five subjects function as titles in Ricœur's interpretative analysis of the stories of Creation in Genesis chapters 1-11. At least in some measure and sense, the first two of these subjects, or conceptual constructions; *primordial beginning time of Creation* and *Creation as separation*, are already interpreted meanings of the texts, formed with the philosophical-theological conceptualization, and are similar to the "classical" concept of Creation *ex nihilo*.

[9] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 58-60; 62; 76; 95-96. By historical time Ricœur means, e.g., the idea of the biblical writers that dated or datable history begins – in the Bible – from the times of the ancestors inaugurated by the call of Abraham. Biblically the sense of historical time ("actual" history) also includes the "[...] documentary history, which is elsewhere represented in the Bible by those narratives, manifestly inspired by royal archives, that have to do with the peripeteia of the Davidic and Solomonic monarchies." (Citation: LaCocque and Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically*, 35).

[10] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 77-80.

[11] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 61; 66-68; 79. Chapters 1-2 of Genesis do not present where the elements that God separates came from. The notion of creation *ex nihilo* is a subsequent idea. Paul Ricœur, *Figuring the Sacred. Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (ed. M. I. Wallace; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995): 132-133. "[...] the creative principle is a personal will. Whatever the mode of creation may be, it is God who creates." Paul Ricœur, *Sur l'exégèse de Genèse 1,1-2,4a*, 67-85 in *Exégèse et herméneutique* (ed. R. Barthes; Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971), 71-72 : "[...] le principe créateur est une volonté personnelle; quels que soient les modes de création, c'est Dieu qui crée. Mais le trait le plus décisif et qui atteste la relation interne entre le récit de création et la totalité de l'Hexateuque, c'est le caractère même du geste créateur: celui-ci est, en un sens, une parole de commandement; ce qui implique l'idée d'une action sans effort et en outre celle d'une distinction entre la parole

The third subject is the Creation of the whole of the heavens and the earth (the world). This is represented in the quasi-narrative poem of Creation in Genesis, chapter 1. In the Creation of the heavens and earth, they start to exist as creation *in themselves*, as distinct works with a distance from and exterior to God. This externalization is the meaning of the process of their Creation as separation.[12]

The fourth subject is the Creation of humanity, of man and his culture. The separation of humanity from God is different from the separation of the heavens and earth: when humanity is separated from God, it starts to exist *for itself*.[13] By this *for itself* Ricœur means some kind of state (condition) of humanity in its existence as a separate being in relation to the Creator (also to other creatures, perhaps), at least, as follows. The Creation of man by separation does not mean alienation, isolation or detachment, but quite the opposite: it creates the very circumstances for proximity and a relationship between the Creator and humanity. In this sense, the relationship between God and humanity is different from the relationship between God and his other creatures. Namely, when God sets a limit just for its own sake, "do not eat from this tree […]", this separating and distancing injunction as a limit, "far from excluding proximity between humanity and God, constitutes it." Man is the only creation to which God directly speaks in setting this limit, and "this intimacy in terms of

distance defines 'proximity', an unknown relation between God and the rest of creation."[14]

The fifth subject is the de-Creation of Evil in the so-called story of the Fall. In the Fall, the limit-injunction in the form of prohibition "do not eat from this tree […]" is transgressed by an incoherent, unexpected and illogical act on the part of the humans. The violation of that prohibition is the "realization" of human evil as the Fall, and this violation is a complete digression of the logical and physical connections of narrative succession. The prerequisite for the Transgression (the Fall, the violation of the prohibition) is the sudden mutation in human desire to want to transgress the limit.[15] I will explain what Ricœur means with this interesting mutation in human desire, in the last section of this article.

Ricœur interprets five main meanings (senses) for the biblical Creation. The first of these is that Creation is both a temporal and atemporal event.[16] The second is the one that Creation as separation explains: the creature is not the Creator.[17] The third is the initiating *beginning power* of the events of Creation. The fourth is that the creative principle of Creation is the personal will of God.[18] The fifth and prime meaning of the story of the Fall, and its anti-creation of Evil, is for Ricœur that "man is destined to good and is inclined to evil."[19]

The primordial beginning time of Creation

What does Creation mean as a beginning? Does this beginning have some kind of *moment*, a temporality and time of creation, or, on the contrary, does it have, a characteristically *atemporal* dimension? In Ricœur's analysis, Creation has both. The Hebrew word for the beginning, is *bereshit*, which means "in the beginning". It is

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et l'oeuvre; le sens procède ici du motif sotériologique vers le motif créationniste: c'est dans l'expérience du salut que s'articulent, à la fois distinctes et continues, la parole et l'oeuvre: ainsi peut être repris et en même temps corrigé le thème archaïque de la puissance magique de la parole [...]." The creative principle is in action in God's word (*la parole*) in the form of *command*, which, e.g., implies a distinction (separation) between the created work and the word that creates it, yet in a way that between the word and the work there is also a continuity. This continuity can be understood in terms of biblical salvation (the so-called soteriological motif), which also includes the power of God's word to command the created work into existence (to be).

[12] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 67-68.

[13] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 66; 68.

[14] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 69. Citations: LaCocque and Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically*, 41.

[15] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 72.

[16] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 95.

[17] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 67-68.

[18] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 79. Ricœur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 132-133. Ricœur, *Sur l'exégèse de Genèse 1,1-2,4a*, 71-72. See footnote 6.

[19] Ricœur, *La symbolique du mal*, 236.

translated in Greek *en arkhee* and in Latin *in principio*. But the Greek *arkhee* subordinates the temporal meaning of the original *bereshit* to its own atemporal meaning, and this "subordination" is translated also into the Latin *in principio* with its *principium*. Ricœur thinks that the original *bereshit* contains both the meanings of origin and beginning, when the origin refers to the atemporal and the beginning to the temporal dimension of Creation.[20] Ricœur writes:

> Whatever might be the case as regards this notion of founding events, the insurmountable difficulty is to combine within the idea of precedence the noncoordinatable character of primordial and historical time in terms of chronology and the *founding* function assigned to the primordial events.[21]

The constitutive events of Creation function as a foundation, in the sense of an origin, for proper history.[22] The primordial history of Creation initiates historical time, actual history *par excellence*. The temporal feature between primordial and actual history is that the primordial history of Creation *precedes* actual history. In other words, factual history is the outcome of the primordial history of Creation, which has the both atemporal and temporal dimensions as origin and beginning.[23] But the primordial time of Creation is something other than any other time: chronological, scientific or proper historical time. In addition, when the primordial time precedes proper historical time, this precedence has

no sense of chronological anteriority or temporal succession. There is a clear *caesura*, a discontinuity and continuity, between the primordial time of creation and historical time. However, it is exactly at the discontinuity and continuity of this *caesura* that the events of primordial history initiate historical time.[24] Next I will present how Ricœur explains this biblical initiation (*inauguration*).

The three initial events of Creation, the Creation of the world, Creation of humanity and de-Creation of Evil function as the absolute beginnings. These three beginnings overlap each other like three concentric circles in the narration of Creation. The "absolute beginning" of these beginnings means that nothing is recounted as beginning to be before them.[25]

These three absolute beginnings are not the only beginnings. In fact, there is a whole multiplicity of relative beginnings. Namely, the following eight chapters of Genesis present the coming into being of many other realities, situations, relations, institutions, and their beginnings. All of these constitute the picture of humanity in its beginnings, together with the absolute and initial Creation recounted in the first and second chapters of Genesis.[26]

What connects the absolute beginning and the relative beginnings is the one main meaning of Creation, the power of beginning. This power of beginning is recycled from the one beginning to the others, starting initially from the three abso-

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[20] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 95-96. Ricœur thinks that the understanding increases when the texts are translated into other languages. This is the case, e.g., of translating the Exodus 3:14 Hebrew revelation of the name *ehyeh asher ehyeh* to all possible other languages (he presents this in his *Penser la Bible*-chapter "De l'interprétation à la traduction" [pp. 335-371] on the interpretation of God's Name). Instead of this, concerning the original *bereshit* translation into Greek *en arkhee* he says that *en arkhee* tends to subordinate the temporal sense of the *bereshit* to its atemporal sense of foundation (origin).
[21] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 60. Citation: LaCocque and Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically*, 33-34. Italics in the citation are mine.
[22] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 60; 95.
[23] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 80; 82-83; 95-96.

[24] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 58-60; 95-96. Because the primordial time of creation cannot be coordinated with historical time – even in the thinking of the ancient Hebrews themselves – e.g., the so called literal reading of the texts (i.e. the use of the texts made particularly by the fundamentalists) is impossible in terms of intellectual honesty. Concerning this, Ricœur states, "It is liberating to admit that there is no call for trying to date the creation of Adam in relation to Pithecanthropus or Neanderthal man." (Citation: LaCocque and Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically*, 33.) The narratives of Genesis 2-3 universalize the description of the human condition in an archetypal and etiological sense. Still this universalizing does not exhaust the founding meaning (role) of the primordial events.
[25] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 76-77; 79.
[26] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 77-78.

lute beginnings of Creation.[27] This recycling (circulating) of the power of beginning has a special function: it gathers all diverse beginnings into the events of one whole Creation. Concerning this one whole Creation, Ricœur points out that to the culture of the ancient Near East, there is no distinction between the absolute and relative beginnings. The writers of the stories of Creation thought that "every beginning is absolute" and belongs to the initial events of Creation as a whole.[28]

Recycling of the power of beginning happens with the use of the symbolism of the three absolute beginnings.[29] This use of symbolism sets up an interpretative inter-signification between the absolute and relative beginnings. This inter-signification erases the distinction between relative and absolute beginnings when it serves as a vehicle for the recycling of the power of absolute beginnings to the relative ones. I shall provide one, but hopefully an illuminating, example of this recycling of symbolism. In Genesis 2:23, Adam meets his newly created companion, Eve, with his happy exclamation: "At last, this one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh!" In Genesis 4:1, Eve meets her firstborn with a *similar* exclamation: "I have produced a man with the help of Yhwh!"[30] Here the symbolism

of the happy exclamation refers to the "initial" creation of a previously non-existent human being and her/his existence, placing both the creation of Eve and the birth of her firstborn into the rank of absolute beginning.

The absolute and relative beginnings constitute one primordial beginning with its diverse founding events when they all together propagate their common energy of beginning to the one proper history that they initiate. Ricœur sums up the initiating function of primordial beginnings and their characteristic temporal-atemporal dimension, in a sense of origin, as follows: "[...] the notion of origin has itself its own temporal development along the line of founding events transmitting the energy of the origin."[31]

The anti-Creation of evil

The story of the Fall represents how human beings become responsible for themselves and for others. This responsibility is the very consequence of the so-called Fall.[32]

How is Evil anti-created (de-created) for Ricœur? To begin with, Evil is represented with the symbol of the serpent as having "always already been there." It does not have a beginning or origin as a created thing, but just the opposite. When Eve is looking at the tree, the speaking animal just shows up there, without any explication of why it appeared and where it came from. The same kind of inexplicability also concerns the so-called Fall (the Transgression). The prohibition "do not eat from this tree […]" is transgressed by an incoherent, unexpected and illogical act on the part of the humans. This violation against the prohibition is a total digression from the logical and physical connections of the narrative succession. The temptation is presented as

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[27] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 79-80. Paul Ricœur, "Ethics and Human Capability. A Response", 279-290 in *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought* (eds J. Wall, W. Schweiker and W. D, Hall; New York: Routledge, 2002), 283: "To underline the difference between origin and beginning, I tried to show that the notion of origin has itself its own temporal development along the line of founding events transmitting the energy of the origin."

[28] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 78-79. Ricœur, e.g., refers to Pierre Gibert's concept of relative beginnings and criticizes it. Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la* Bible, 88-89. Creation is an ordering and contingent *event* as an act (work, doing; *œuvre*) of God.

[29] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 77-79. The power of beginning is circulated with/by the symbolism of the absolute beginnings.

[30] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 77-78. "At last, this one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh!" is my modification – which could also possibly be an adequate and alternative translation of the original Hebrew sentence – of Genesis 2:23: "This is

now bone of my bones, and flesh from my flesh [...]." *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments. Authorized King James Version* (London and New York: Collins' Clear-Type Press, 1959). On the modification of Genesis 4:1, see LaCocque and Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically*, 47.

[31] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 79-80. See also Paul Ricœur, "Ethics and Human Capability. A Response", 283.

[32] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 76.

a sudden mutation in human desire to want to transgress the limit. Human desire is mutated into a desire for infinity, to transgress *all limits*.[33] And last but not least, the enigmatic "always already there" of Evil coheres with the historical experience of all of humanity and every one of us in the following sense: even though Evil is a part of our life, none of us can say whether he or she is the source of Evil.[34] We cannot find the starting point of Evil in humanity. In all these ways, the story tells that Evil is a de-created thing without a beginning.

Ricœur stresses that the so-called Fall does not make humans substantially Evil. Instead, Ricœur thinks that it makes humanity Evil *adjectivally* (attributively, "epithethically", *par épithète*).[35] All the capacities and abilities that make Adam and Eve humans are not lost, mutilated or destroyed. Human beings remain still the same blessed and revered creatures as before the Fall, and are not cursed by God. On the contrary, now the whole human condition includes more good things that did not exist before the Transgression. Some of these good things are, for example, the shame of nakedness as a considerable cultural acquisition, death as the end of suffering, the knowledge of Good and Evil, and the responsibility of humans for themselves and others. But the price and reason for these is also their "opposite": the inclination to Evil in the just mentioned adjectival sense of it.[36]

The term "Fall" is not biblical, and instead of it Ricœur uses the conception of *Transgression of the limit*. This limit is one set by God for the humans with his prohibition so that they should not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is not that something specific (to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and

Evil) is forbidden, but that the prohibition poses and functions as a limit for its own sake. The injunction creates a unique and intimate proximity between God and the humans, which is not on a par with any relation between any other creatures and God. In posing this limit, God establishes a proximity between himself as an Unlimited One and the human beings as the finite ones.[37] The trust of this proximity is questioned by humans with their transgressing act, in acting differently than God taught them with the injunction, "choose Good and you shall live". "Good" is the relationship of trust between God and the humans. The so called Fall – the Transgression – happens, when the humans choose instead of this good relationship of trust the distrust of God's injunction.[38]

The Transgression is an absolutely "non-coordinatable" and unexplainable act. It just diverges totally from all preexisting contexts and settings. However, the injunction itself poses the alternative of doing the opposite of what it prohibits. "For what is a prohibition that does not entail an alternative between obedience and disobedience", states Ricœur.[39] The start and precondition for Transgression (the Fall) is a sudden mutation in human *desire*. The desire here is for infinite wisdom, to know everything, like God.[40] The exact "moment" of the temptation to transgress the prohibition is in Genesis chapter 3 verse 6:

> And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat and gave it also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.[41]

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[33] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 72.

[34] Ricœur, *La symbolique du mal*, 241.

[35] Ricœur, *La symbolique du mal*, 241; 242.

[36] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 73-76. Ricœur notes, e.g., that the threat of death as the punishment for the violation of the prohibition is not carried out. Instead of this punishment, death is presented in Genesis 3:19 as the [relieving] end of the earthly sufferings of the humans. Ricœur asks whether death is not beyond all hope, in the sense of the greeting of it as a sister (alongside brother sun) by Francis of Assisi.

[37] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 68-69.

[38] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 69-72.

[39] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 90. Citation: LaCocque and Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically*, 58.

[40] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 69; 72.

[41] Citation of Genesis 3:6; *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments. Authorized King James Version*. The sense (*reference*) of the desire (which poetically functions in, or better; *through* the whole verse 6 and the semantics of it), is not sexual desire or any other, similar kind of *passion* for something. Everything depends here on the semantics of the Hebrew word חָמַד ($h^{aa}m^{e}d$) used in verse 6 for desire. The

Ricœur describes this as follows:

> We may admire here how in this composition the narrator has joined suspicion at the level of language and subversion at the level of desire. When the limit is suspect as a structure, the desire for unlimitedness flows through the breech thereby opened.[42]

In choosing disobedience instead of obedience, human beings end up knowing Good and Evil. In this sense they become like God, and the serpent spoke the truth: "you will become like God."[43]

To conclude, for Ricœur, instead of some bad consequence, the knowledge of Good and Evil as the likeness of God makes human beings responsible for themselves and for others. Because of their Transgression, the humans resign and are retired from their original proximity and relationship to their Creator, but, at the same time, achieve their independence as responsible beings. In the sense of responsibility, the likeness with God even gives the human beings a potential position of rivalry with God. In these ways, as a result of the Transgression, man has achieved his adulthood in humanity (as an image of God) by becoming responsible for himself and others.[44]

Ricœur sums up his thoughts on the human condition according to the story of the Fall with Immanuel Kant's words: "Man is destined to good and is inclined to evil." For Ricœur, this paradoxical and ambiguous constitution of the human condition distills the whole symbolic meaning of the Fall.[45]

In *Penser la Bible* Ricœur develops his interpretations of certain "strong" Old Testament texts, taking carefully into account the rich history of reception of the texts and the exegetic research on them.[46] Ricœur's exploration in *Penser la Bible* represents explicitly philosophical theology. In addition, Ricœur's biblical interpretations in the book belong, by their quality, to the most theological part of his work. Even he himself does not attribute *theological* to any other of his works but *Penser la Bible*.[47]

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word $h^{aa}m^ed$ means desire and want in the sense such as "*craving* for chocolate"; as the story explicitly says, "*the woman saw that the tree was good for food.*"

[42] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 69; 72. Citation: LaCocque and Ricœur, *Thinking Biblically*, 43. The desire for unlimitedness is the desire for the unlimitedness of God.

[43] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 74-75; 90.

[44] Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 72; 74-76. Ricœur, "Ethics and Human Capability. A Response", 59.

[45] Ricœur, *La symbolique du mal*, 236.

[46] Paul Ricœur, "Comments after Jeanrond's 'Hermeneutics and Revelation'", 58-59. Ricœur and LaCocque, *Penser la Bible,* 7-11; 14-17; 223; 335-336; 411-414. Vikström, 250.

[47] Kearney, 43. Ricœur says, "What I am exploring in Thinking Biblically [*Penser la Bible*] is a sort of philosophical theology or theological philosophy – not an easy task in a contemporary intellectual culture which still wants people to say whether they are 'philosophers' or 'theologians' and is uncomfortable with overlaps."