Ricœur’s *Symbolism of Evil*

Dr. C. Don Keyes

PHIL 571/471W
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Wednesday 12:15–2:55
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*This course fulfills a requirement in contemporary philosophy.*

This course in phenomenology consists of lectures and seminar reports on texts by Ricœur and sources he examines. It will show how his method is based on Kant’s critical philosophy, especially that pertaining to the aesthetic quality of religious knowledge, and on Heidegger’s hermeneutic circle. Ricœur’s demythologizing does not eliminate, but interprets, the existential meaning of myths. Special attention will be given to the symbol of defilement as the concept of the servile will.

The major part of the course is a study of the symbols that give rise to four myths of the beginning and end of evil: the drama of creation and the ‘ritual’ vision of the world, the wicked god and the ‘tragic’ vision of existence, the ‘Adamic’ myth and the ‘eschatological’ vision of history, and the myth of the exiled soul and salvation through knowledge. These are respectively: the Babylonian creation epic, Greek tragedy, the Bible, and Platonic Orphism. An underlying question of the course is whether it is possible to reconcile belief in God with the evil of innocent suffering.