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Human Freedom: The Finite Quest for the Infinite[1]

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It is obvious that human nature comes "naturally" to us. In this paper I intend to show that freedom too comes "naturally" to us. The dream of a free world, of a liberated life, has always fascinated us. But this human quest has been both made possible and difficult by our own nature. So the tension between freedom and nature, similar to that between "nature and nurture," has remained a provocative and fascinating theme from the beginning of human inquiry

In this paper a modest attempt is made to find answers to some of the fundamental questions regarding human freedom and its relation to human nature. We ask: What is there in human nature that makes freedom possible? How do we understand human freedom which is vulnerable, fragile and, at the same time, precious and unique? How do we cope with the fragile nature of freedom, where the infinite quest has been bound by the finite structure of our being? Or more philosophically: What are the transcendental conditions for the possibility of human freedom? So, in this paper, we deal basically with the anthropological presuppositions and implications of freedom.

In the first part, I situate freedom in our human nature, i.e., in our human will. Here freedom is seen in its dynamic and tensional relation to human nature, i.e., the voluntary in the involuntary. Then in the second part, I go on to examine the types of consent or responses that can be given to our bound nature. The freedom that follows from these types of consent is also discussed. The issue to be tackled here is: How can we humans respond to the "givenness" (or facticity) in our human nature and how can freedom be actualised in this "givenness." Finally, in the third section, human freedom is related to fallibility. Here the vulnerability and fragility of human freedom comes to the fore. The frail, fallible and precious freedom that we humans possess is perceived in terms of a mediation. So in the disproportion or "in-betweeness" that exists in the human being freedom is actualised. This leads me to locate human freedom dynamically in our bound nature (i.e., in the human will) and to appreciate the unending quest that freedom is.

In this paper I draw abundantly on Paul Ricœur's philosophy of the human will. Basing myself on some key insights of Ricœur, I develop my own understanding of freedom. So the following reflections may not be seen as a summary of Ricœur's understanding of freedom, but rather as my understanding of freedom derived from and developed on the basis of Ricœurian phenomenology.[2]

1. Will to Freedom[3]

For a phenomenological perspective on human freedom I look into Ricœur's profound notion of human nature and human will. In *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary (Le volontaire et l'involontair)* Ricœur deals with an eidetic of the will – a description of its basic structure. Influenced by Spinoza, Ricœur takes up the problem of necessity (nature) in connection with that of the will.

Ricœur examines the structure of the will at three levels: *Decision, Human Action* and *Consent to Necessity.* This is derived from his own introduction of a three-fold schema. A simple sentence "I will" can have different meanings depending on the context and intention. It can mean, for instance,

· "I decide" (implying a motive, and a choice to execute the motive).

· "I move my body" (implying a human action where the voluntary and involuntary nature of my body is involved).

· "I consent" (implying an agreement of the subject to an outside force)

By means of these diverse meanings Ricœur tries to explore the mutuality and interdependency of the polar concepts of willing and non-willing, freedom and necessity. He further tries to work out these paradoxes as clearly as possible preserving at the same time the bond between the voluntary and the non-voluntary in human nature. Wherever Ricœur begins his reflections, it becomes evident to him that in each of these three levels, *objective* and *subjective* ways of looking at the will is possible, both of which refer to the same region. In the presence of this tension, when one asks about the unity of the human being, one is led to the inevitable conclusion that the human person is basically a mystery.

This process leads Ricœur to the following conclusions about freedom found in the human will:

· At the level of *decision,* the body appears to be the source of motive. The freedom experienced by us is therefore a *motivated freedom (motivierte Freiheit).*

· At the level of *action,* the body appears to be the object or initiator of action, a positive factor. Thus freedom is an *indebted freedom (verdankte Freiheit),* and is therefore further determined by the body. Hence the freedom here has a capacity for action.

· At the level of the *consent to necessity,* the body appears as an insurmountable limitation, a negative factor. Thus freedom is a *bound freedom (gebundene Freiheit),* further limited by the body in particular and human nature in general.

To each of these levels, there corresponds a *dream of innocence. By* "dream of innocence" I mean the orientation to the unlimited freedom which humans long for. Though in itself unattainable, these dreams point to the unlimited aspect of human willing and longing.[4] To motivated freedom corresponds the dream of a *transparent* freedom, in which the motive is clear: to indebted freedom, the dream of a *graceful* freedom, which leads a submissive body to an easy, flowing action; to bound freedom, the dream of a

boundless freedom, which is *limitlessly* tied up with the nature. The various aspects of freedom and their corresponding polarities are illustrated below:

Structure of Will	Freedom Experienced	Dream of Innocence
Decision	Motivated Freedom	Transparent Freedom
Action	Indebted Freedom	Graceful Freedom
Consent to Necessity	Bound Freedom	Boundless Freedom

A lower limit corresponding to each of these three levels constitutes an existential limitation to the aim, capacity and nature of the will. These limits require the will to accept unwilled positions. This can happen in different ways, each of which corresponds to a mythological response:[5]

- a. Human being can rebel against his/her own basic limited constitution or deny his own finiteness. This corresponds to *Promethean Denial.*[6]

- b. He or she can identify himself/herself with his or her own limited constitution and attempt to accept the inevitable, which would be equated with *Orphic Identification.*[7]

- c. He or she can distance himself/herself from his or her own constitution and be an indifferent and passive observer and then he or she would be modelled on the *Stoic Duality.*

- d. Finally, he or she can, with reservation, consent to an Eschatology, to a future in hope, which would correspond to an *Eschatological Hope.*

So this phenomenological analysis of the *eidetic* of the human will, leads to a paradox of tension between willing and non-willing, to a *freedom* which is *bound* through its very nature. This double character of the human will lets itself be shown at every level of our inquiry. This paradox, which crystalises itself in this way, cannot be totally eliminated.[8] A freedom in which *creativity* and *necessity* are fully reconciled in itself would not any more be a *creative* freedom. Such a freedom, though imaginable, cannot in fact be realized. It is actually a *limit-idea.*[9]

2 Types of Freedom

The reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary is maintained throughout our description of the structure of the will. In relation to human freedom the will could be studied in its two basic aspects, which are ultimately seen as existence as *received* (i.e. a gift) and existence as *a task* (i.e. a challenge). This implies that the involuntary is *for* the voluntary just as the voluntary is *by reason of* the involuntary.[10] This tension between the voluntary and the involuntary reaches its limit in relation to that which is absolutely involuntary. It is in this context that Ricœur develops and points to the "secret conciliation",[11] attainable in a paradoxical philosophy. Thus, the study of the will could also be undertaken with reference to the

tension between *Decision, Consent* and *Necessity.*[12] Ricœur undertakes such a study using the following categories:

a. Refusal of Necessity: Consent is, after all, not the only possible movement of the will confronting necessity. Freedom can here appear as a negation or as a refusal to accept the necessity. Moreover, freedom has a privileged position, since it is through freedom that necessity is recognised.

So the desire, which is expressed in the refusal of necessity, is the desire for aseity. Such a desire is precisely closed to an unlimited freedom and bound to the necessity of a finite situation. Ultimately, the final act of refusal (like rebellion against the nature of finite being) might well be self-annihilation.

b. From Refusal to Consent: After having arrived at the juncture of freedom and necessity, Ricœur maintains that it is at this juncture that the "secret conciliation" could occur. This "secret conciliation" and hidden relationship are to be uncovered by an understanding of the movement of consent.[13] Thus, Ricœur hopes to transcend necessity, without negating it, through consent.

Again, it is precisely at this juncture of freedom and necessity that the limit of *descriptions* is arrived at.[14] Here pure phenomenology may be transcended. In any case, it is clear that the unity of the human being with him/herself and with his world cannot be integrally included within the limits of a description of the *cogito.* For this to be the case phenomenology must go beyond itself into metaphysics. Thus, the world and the others become the horizon of the *cogito.* So one realises that philosophical anthropology without ontology is empty. According to Ricœur, this insight is also a central Cartesian insight, that the *cogito* has a necessary relationship to ontology and transcendence. But we must also be careful not to reify subjectivity[15] into an ontology and refuse to return to the "reign of the object" which reduces the fullness of the subjective experience.

It is here that the movement from the 'refusal of nature' to 'consent to nature' takes on additional significance. At the same time, the way in which consent is made is extremely important. Ricœur indicates that there are three major alternatives in the movement from refusal to consent: The imperfect consent, the hyperbolic consent and the paradoxical consent.

In the *Imperfect Consent,* as in the case of the Stoics, the relationship of the subject to the whole (transcendence) is grasped as a relation of part to whole. This type of consent or affirmation is imperfect because this is actually a *detachment* rather than a reconciliation of freedom and necessity. In Stoicism, therefore, the body is reduced to the "already dead" and feeling to "opinion". Hence, subjectivity is reduced and the subjective recovery of incarnate existence is not made.[16]

In the *Hyperbolic Consent*[17] found in Orphic tradition (e.g., Goethe and Rilke) the relation of the subject to transcendence is to be found in a poetic admiration of transcendence. The Orphic act of consent is not to choose,

not to move, not to act, but to contemplate. Here again consent in this sense fails to preserve the fullness of subjectivity. Here subjectivity is lost in a vague metaphor and nature is idolized. Subject and subjectivity are annihilated by losing oneself in the act of admiration. For, in the act of admiration identity is achieved!

Only in *Paradoxical Consent* can we preserve the necessary tension between the fullness of subjectivity and the sense of the transcendent as the source of subjectivity. Although both the above types of consent avoid the extreme of refusal of necessity, they do so at the cost of curtailing the fullness of subjectivity. This refusal of necessity is avoided in *paradoxical consent.* Here to refuse necessity is seen as the defiance of transcendence – the refusal is perceived to be at the heart of the rupture in human beings. At the same time, nature is also not totally surrendered to. Here the relationship between the subject and transcendence is a paradoxical one. In refusing total surrender to necessity the self reaches its limit, the absolute limit which breaks the possibility for the self to make a complete circle with itself.[18] *Paradoxical consent* is the movement of the will which affirms necessity as the source of its being. It is the acceptance which affirms character, unconsciousness and vital organisation of human nature and in which their finitude or finiteness is affirmed.[19] This affirmation implies also its transcendence. Thus, it is a consent of hope. Here the affirmation of hopeful consent makes possible an engagement in life which does not reduce subjectivity and which does not refuse transcendence.

c. Limits of Pure Human Freedom: In the incarnate existence of human beings, the problem of freedom remains a structure of reciprocity between the voluntary and the involuntary. Since all willing is both *reception* and *initiative,* existence is also both received (as a gift) and is accomplished (as a task). Freedom in this context is a "dependent independence",[20] a bound freedom. Such a freedom is limited. In its limitedness it is open beyond its limits. This constitutes the essence of purely human freedom and human will.

The above phenomenological description of the fundamental structures of the will has shown that the human being can neither dispose of him/herself at will, nor can he/she fully see through himself/herself. The body, with its freedom and necessity, presents itself as an insurmountable limit. In view of this, both an objective analysis of oneself, as in natural sciences, and a subjective examination of oneself, as in reflective philosophies, are possible and justified. Freedom and nature stand against each other and side by side with each other, independent of each other and limited by each other. This makes it possible to go back into the inner human nature from the external expressions of self. This return to human nature is done by a mediating factor (like intentionality in the case of Husserl) which is also open to an objective external observation.

As already noted, the paradox that human freedom is bound by nature is unavoidable. In the human person there exists a non-agreement within the self. The synthesis is in any case a *"limit-idea,"* which can only be dreamt of. This enables the emergence of a sym-

bolic speech in the anthropological frame. On the other hand, in the region of necessity (where one does not dream of possibility), the symbolic area suggests itself. What the human being actually is cannot be fully expressed in a uniform and univocal language. We are dependent on a language which is open to different types of interpretations or readings. The total reality is accessible to us only through such languages and interpretations. Therefore, it is not surprising that these various levels are correspondingly present, even in the mythic answers to the necessary conditions of human life. Language expresses the human condition in its limitations. When one confronts these limitations, a previously non-available region is opened to one. The human being can thus express his or her total reality (both the *free* and the *bound* nature of his or her being) not in a bound system, but only in and through an *open* symbol.

3. Fallible, Fragile Freedom[21]

Description of Human Fallibility

A human person can be observed from different perspectives; all of which may be justified but not always compatible with each other though they all refer to the same person. This fact presents a crisis to the self-understanding of the subject. The analysis of the fundamental possibility of human will in *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* shows that there is a break, a wound, a non-agreement within the human person. This non-agreement makes it impossible for one to see oneself transparently. Ricœur is not satisfied with just this analysis. The fundamental structure of the will, which he has traced out, is only a preliminary result in view of the fact of human failures and fallibility. Since it is an absurd fallibility, it cannot be captured though the description of its own nature. Furthermore, since fallibility is an alien object it can be philosophically approached only through concrete experiences rather than rational analysis.

As such, fallibility is a term not totally grasped by pure reflection. It can also be enriched by the concrete experiences of evil.This is human fallibility that provides us with an understanding of the possibility (not necessity) of evil in the context of human freedom. Fallibility, as the possibility for evil, is taken as a primary characteristic of human existence. With this understanding of fallibility, human existence becomes the place of or the possibility for the manifestation of evil.[22]

In two different ways Ricœur tries to capture and describe this *fallibility.* The transition from innocence to guilt can be understood only in concrete expressions of human experiences, i.e., through the act of confession (or avowal – *Bekenntnis),* which later leads a person to take responsibility for his or her actions. In *The Symbolism of Evil,*[23] Ricœur examines the symbolic language of the experiences of guilt. But before that he studies the breaking point of evil. He continues his description of the fundamental human possibilities, which he had begun in a preliminary and abstract form in *Freedom and Nature* by interpreting the structures of the will as fallible. Because of the opaque and absurd characteristic of guilt, its description (which emerges mainly out of a convergence of concrete signs) could only

be an "*empiric*"[24] (a confession) and not an "*eidetic*" (a description) of it. The fallibility describes a weakness which makes evil possible. It is seen to lie in the "structure of mediation between the poles of finite and infinite nature of man".[25] The necessity and structure of this mediation is shown by Ricœur in three ways: as transcendental synthesis, as practical synthesis and as an affective synthesis (or a theory of feeling).

a. The Transcendental Synthesis: The human situation of being in between the finite and the infinite has been expressed in the realms of philosophy in terms of rhetoric and myth, but in order to become fully philosophical this *in-betweenness* or *disproportion* must be brought into the area of pure reflection so that it can be further clarified.[26] This clarification, however, is gained at the cost of losing the irreducible *depth* of its existential significance. Hence, clarification by means of transcendental synthesis can only provide a *formal synthesis.*

Therefore, we examine first how the finite and the infinite in the human being could be mediated in the epistemological realm. He begins with a transcendental reflection – an examination of the possibility of knowledge. The mediation at this level is the "transcendental synthesis". Its elements are the *finite perspective* and *the infinite verb,* both of which synthesise to give *the pure imagination.*

In considering the relation of the body to the world, it is seen that *openness* to the world is body's first characteristic. For us the body basically mediates the world. Through it we feel our needs and suffer from them. More considerations show that the openness of the body brings, at the same time, a *finite perspective* with it, since the body is itself the unsurpassable (nonreplaceable) starting point of mediation. For example, through the body we "feel" objects in a definite way, from a particular perspective. This mediation *through* the body is certainly of a finite perspective and therefore limited.

We have not just this finite perspective. For instance, we can overcome the finite perspective through the *infinite verb* in the process of speaking. By means of both noun and verb, we describe a thing. The noun, through which we denote a thing, indicates just an object, independent of its perspective. Through the verb we affirm or negate and thus judge and transcend the determined or the limited aspect of the noun or the state of affairs. By means of the verb, we produce a relation of statements to the being as well as to the self as determining, as judging.

There is also a relationship of *tension* or "disproportion" (or "*in-betweenness*") between the *finite perception* through the body and the *infinite* intention of the words. This provokes the question of the third mediating element. This mediation is made possible through *"pure imagination"* and is given in an *object* through consciousness. Such a "consciousness disappears itself in establishing a unity between the being and the presence".[27] The human person is the mediator between the finite and the infinite in the objects. This synthesis is for him or her the consciousness leading to freedom, but not yet the self-consciousness. This could be summed up as:

Finite Perception	Consciousness	Infinite Intention
Finite Perspective (Noun)	Pure Imagination (Object)	Infinite Orientation (Verb)

b. The Practical Synthesis: The next stage Ricœur examines is that of the practical synthesis, which is actually parallel to the transcendental synthesis. The finite perspective in perception and knowledge corresponds to the notion of *character* in the practical synthesis; the infinite in statements and judgements correspond to the notion of *well-being* or blissfulness. The mediation between them, i.e., the constitution of objects (through a projected destiny) corresponds to the constitution of a person, i.e. *respect (Achtung).* Here we outline the steps which Ricœur takes in the level of practical synthesis.

Ricœur approaches the notion of *character* through an analysis of desire, the *affective perspective* of life. As in perception, so also in desire, an openness of the body to the world and at the same time a necessary limitation is evident. Desire means openness, in so far as we (in and through desire) seek its fulfilment and outline the possibility of its fulfilment. At the same time desire implies a limitedness in so far as one seeks the other only for one's own sake. The seeking subject limits the scope of fulfilment. Therefore, the body here has not just a mediative function, but also a limiting function, a limit to the openness. One more characteristic of finitude is to be paid attention to. In learning, for example, we try to acquire new possibilities and knowledge, and at the same time learning is also a fixing or a determining process. These points of view of the finitude (the perspective, the original self-love, persistence, indolence) constitute the notion of character, not as a sum total of the individual characteristics, but as one totality or individuality.[28]

This finite openness of the human being is opposed to an infinite orientation – the *well-being* as the explicit goal of all perfection, in which the human being surpasses himself or herself. Well-being is the horizon for all possible concerns. The terminus of this infinity of possibilities is the existential project or the totality of human destiny.[29] As the infinite goal, which desire yearns for, *happiness* is not given in any particular experience. There is only a consciousness of the direction in which we have to seek this happiness. There is also a feeling of our belonging to the being as a whole in this search for happiness. Because there is a longing for the whole in us, we can perceive this sign which indicates to us the totality. This is a happening where the horizon expands itself towards the immeasurable.

The synthesis of *well-being* and *character* is the *person.* Standing between finite character and infinite well-being, all that can be gasped is only a *direction.* But in giving form to direction (through reason)[30] in an existential project the idea of a person is formed. Person, in this sense, is a projected destiny, a representation of an idea of the self. There is no complete experience of the person in oneself and for oneself. So we can have only an outline of him

or her. The person constitutes itself in respect, which leads one to consider the other, not as a means to be made use of, but as an end in himself or herself. In the very process of doing this, he or she takes back his or her claim for his or her own perspective and desire. Just as in the level of the transcendental synthesis, it is *pure imagination* that constitutes a thing, so too in the practical synthesis it is *respect* that constitutes a person. This could be summed up as:

Affective Perspective (Desire)	Projected Destiny	Infinite Orientation
Character	Person (Respect)	Well-being

c. Affective Synthesis: The examination of the fallibility of humans in the preceding section has enabled us to grasp the vulnerability of the unity of infinite orientation and finite fulfilment in objects and in the person.[31] While the synthesis and the vulnerability of the objects are manifested there, the incongruity of the innermost aspect of the human person in the affective realm is ignored. Affectivity is one point where we are most vulnerable.

The feelings are the place of the most intimate appearance of *in-betweenness* and the place of its most fragile tension between finitude and infinitude. Here all disproportion is "interiorised".[32] At the same time feelings are intimately related to objects outside of us. Feeling indicates my response to the qualities and objects in the world and how "I" can be affected by them. As opposed to distanced thinking, one begins to realise that one is fully interwoven in the things of the world, in what is happening in the world through feelings. This feeling produces a belongingness, which is deeper than any opposition between the subject and object.

Feeling or affection displays two directions or dimensions. The finite pole is to be found in *pleasure* which terminates in finite acts.[33] Pleasure is the movement of feeling towards the object fulfilled in an instant. As such it is precarious and perishable. Its focus is upon its boundness to bodily life. The fulfilment of pleasure is an existential condition for bodily life. In this pleasure stands at the level of the *condition for* all other good things for bodily beings.[34] In itself pleasure has its own type of totality and non-reducibility. It has an "innocence", but it is a "menaced innocence" in that the potential for conflict is present with that for happiness.

The pole of infinitude in the feeling is *happiness (bonheur).* Happiness or blissfulness is that dimension of feeling which revolves around the need for unity or wholeness in human life. It terminates in the existential project which is *destiny.* The feeling of happiness is intimately connected to the idea of well-being. It is more than an idea, since it is the "fulfilment of this direction in beatitude."[35]

These two tendencies appear side by side in affectivity also: the sensible desire for *pleasure (epithymia)* and the spiritual longing for *happiness (eros).* The mediating factor is the *mind (Gemüt, thymos).* The two tendencies allow themselves to be classified through

their orientations. The *pleasure* as the goal of sensible desire completes a limited act, while the *mind*, in contrast, aims at *blissfulness* or happiness as completion of the totality of the human being. The tension between the two tendencies (longings) results in a "dissatisfaction in mere pleasure, which would not be sign and promise and guarantee of happiness".[36] Here pleasure may not be seen as the diametrically opposing pole of *blissfulness*. Both aim in the same direction, but pleasure brings with it the danger of shutting of the affective realm to blissfulness. So blissfulness as completion or perfection of pleasure has a regulative function in the fulfilment of pleasure through finite goals.

In the mind, which is the mediating agent in affectivity, we can see (following Kant) three basic longings at work: *Having (avoir), Ruling (pouvoir)* and *Valuation or Esteem (valoir).* These three drives (or passions) determine the relation of things to person. In the desire of *having,* the relationship of things determines the relationship to persons. In the desire for power *(ruling)* the relationship to things recedes back to the relationship to person. In the desire for *valuation* there is the need to be recognised by the others. Each of these drives has its own vulnerability. The most vulnerable among them is the drive for valuation (or validation) by others. An existence which is dependent on others for recognition is easily susceptible to hurt.

The affective vulnerability has its location in the mind, which has to mediate between the finitude of pleasure and the infinitude of happiness. In each of these passions, we strive after the infinite, without being able to reach it. This produces an enduring conflict. These drives have an undetermined goal: *a limited goal is unlimitedly desired.* Herein lies the danger: "Only a being, which desires the whole and which can be schematised in the objects of human desires can mistake itself, i.e., forget its goal for the absolute, the symbol character of happiness with a goal of desires: this forgetting makes an *idol* out of a symbol...".[37]

It is the function of the *mind* to establish a relationship between the human being and the world, to open up an enduring connection between them. The relationship of "I" to the world is internalised through the mind. This, in turn, brings about a division in us. The human duality goes intentionally over itself into an object of synthesis and spiritualises the conflicts of the subjectivity in the affective realm.[38] If the division between the infinite orientation and the finite fulfilment in things (or in persons) finds a mediation through an *object,* then the innermost core of the person would experience this conflict within himself/herself. Herein we see the vulnerability of human nature as well as human freedom.

Interpretation of Fallibility[39]

We seek to show the situation of the human being as being in between the finite and the infinite, as having a certain *in-betweenness* or *disproportion,* which is constitutive of his/her fallibility (or the possibility of the rupture). Thus, in relation to knowledge, there is a disproportion of *finite perspective* and *infinite word;* in the relation to willing there is a disproportion between finite

character and infinite *well-being* and in the relation to feeling there is a disproportion between *pleasure* and *happiness*. This could be illustrated as follows:

	Infinite Orientation	**Finite Fulfilment**	**Mediation**
Knowing	Infinite Word (Verb)	Finite Perspective (Noun)	Pure Imagination (Object)
Willing	Well-being	Character	Respect
Feeling	Happiness	Pleasure	Mind
	Original Affirmation	Existential Difference	Human Mediation

For the human being to be fallible means that the possibility of the moral evil is present in our constitution. This fallibility emerges from the tension between the finite and the infinite in him/her. Analogous to Kant's categories of qualities (Reality-Negation-Limitation), we can differentiate three categories in the human constitution, which are characterised through tension: *the original affirmation, the existential difference* and *the human mediation.* The moments of the infinite, which we have seen in three levels, (namely the Verb, the idea of Blissfulness and the Mind seeking happiness) are the very moments through which the original affirmation is enriched, perfected and spiritualised. The original affirmation may be trampled upon by the existential negation, which presents to us as a perspective, as character and as feeling. "Human being is the joy of Yes in the sadness of the finite".[40] Thus there is the second aspect of the existential difference. In spite of it humans are capable of joy, joy through fear and in overcoming fear, which is the basic reason for all disproportion in the affective region and the source of affective vulnerability. So the notion of human mediation is evident here.

Fallibility is exposed through evil. Human fallibility does not remain merely as the the potential for evil. Fallibility has a double sense. It is the breaking-point of evil, so to say, the weakest point in the chain. In this sense fallibility is the original situation, from which evil emerges. Evil in fact points to an original situation of innocence. The *depravity* of human beings indicates a longing for a non-guaranteed perfection. The original situation of innocence is nowhere present. It can be imagined through the existing situation determined by evil and set apart from it. So one can imagine this original situation of innocence, as it happens in myths. Thus the myths of fall (original sin) are always connected with myths of creation (original blessing) and those of innocence.

Over and above, fallibility means not just the breaking-point of the evil,

but also the capability to sin and to commit evil. It requires only one step to move from the vulnerability to the *actuality* of evil. "To say that man is fallible is to affirm at once that the limitation of being, that does not fall with itself, is the original weakness out of which evil emerges. Further, evil can emerge out of this weakness only because it dares."[41] This daring, this mediation makes human freedom possible.

4. Conclusion

So far we have seen the human will and its two dynamic polarities: the urge to the infinite which is bound by the finiteness of the very urge and of the very self. We remain always open to the horizon of the infinite. At the same time we are rooted in the finite. The swing between the two makes us the unique creatures that we are. This swing calls for a mediation. The swing makes human freedom possible. This disproportionality is the possibility for the precious and perilous human freedom. It is in this unique "in-betweenness" that we can situate and understand our own freedom: a fragile, precious freedom!

As one seeking to be an infinite "god" and at the same time bound to finite matter, human situation is paradoxical. As finite beings who reach out to the unlimited we lead a "tensional existence." It is in this "tensional existence" that our precious freedom emerges and can flourish. This makes our freedom vulnerable and fragile! It is precisely in its fragility that the beauty and uniqueness of the human shines forth!

Given such a human situation, where the voluntary is in the involuntary, the quest for freedom and liberation will always remain with us. The urge to reach out to the infinite will enable us to remain human. If this quest is stifled we cease to be human. So by our very nature, we will always retain this quest for the infinite in and through the finite. Thus, freedom is the most "natural" thing for humans. For us our human nature becomes the mediating factor of the infinite longing and the finite fulfilment leading to the uniqueness of human freedom.

If this approach to freedom is true, it has profound implications. Freedom comes "naturally" to us and can never be completely curtailed. Freedom becomes constitutive of the human. Understood thus, humans cannot be but free. Freedom becomes more than a "birth-right": it is seen as the very being of the humans. No ideology, no dogma, no system, no religion can ever contain this endless quest. No one can demand absolute submission and conformity from humans. They always remain open to the infinite!

Such a vision of freedom as a quest makes us ever open to the more and sensitive to our tensional existence. This view of human freedom enables us to live in the horizon of the infinity bound by the limits of the finite! It does justice both to our bound and free human nature! Such a way of living out human freedom is well expressed in the ancient prayer:

God,
Grant me the serenity to accept the things
I cannot change,
The courage to change the things
I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.

Notes

1. The title is ambiguous! And we intend to show that only in such an ambiguity can human freedom flourish! Further, we want to imply that human freedom remains always a quest for the infinite and thus human freedom always goes ahead of itself!
2. For Ricœur's own excellent summary of his understanding of freedom see P. Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*. E. V. Kohák (tr.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966. (From now on abridged as PV), 482-486 which is entitled "An Only Human Freedom!," i.e., "une liberté seulement humaine."
3. The title is purposely kept ambiguous! For the purpose of elaborating on Ricœurian will, I base myself on Ricœur's *Philosophie de la volonté: Le volontaire et l'involontaire (Philosophie de l'spirit)* published in 1950 which together with *Philosophie de la volonté: Finitude et culpabilité*, Livre I: *L'homme faillible*. Livre ll: *La symbolique du mal (Philosophie de l'spirit*, 1960) form his total philosophy of the will. Then we go on to extend his ideas for our purpose of understanding human freedom! See also K. Pandikattu, *Idols must Die so that Symbols might Live,* Innsbruck: University of Innsbruck, 1996.
4. Details about the dreams of innocence are beyond the scope of this article. Suffice is to say that they are approximately the polar opposite of experienced freedom, their fulfilment.
5. See. J.Thorer, *Die Liturgische Symbolik im Lichte der Symboltheorie Paul Ricœurs: Ein interdisziplinäres Gespräch zum Verständnis der Symbole im Blick auf die christliche Initiation* (Ph. D. Dissert.). Innsbruck: University of Innsbruck, 1984, 28. We understand "mythology" here in a broad sense.
6. Nothing is of greater importance or more mysterious to nature than fire. The emblem of life, extinction and vigor, fire wa in the close keeping of the gods. Zeus refused to transmit any portion of it to the humans fearing the arrogance that the fire would make in the humans. Prometheus, the son of Tital Japetos, who had always stood for humans, snatched some fire from the hearth of Zeus and handed it to the humans. As a punishment, he was condemned to be chained alive to a rock in the remove caucasus mountains, and to submit while every day a vulture came to graw away his liver, which daily grew afresh. He would never have been released but for the secret which he possessed concerning the ultimate fate of the dominion of Zeus. To obtain this secret Zeus allowed Herakles to shoot the vulture, to free Prometheus and bring him back to Olympos.
7. Orpheus, the son of the muse Kallipo and god Appolo had the fascinating power to play lyre that the birds of the air and the fish of streams and all animals would gather around him to lisen. He loved the beautiful Eurydike and she was the subject of his song. Eurydike died of snake bite when she tried to escape from her another lover Aristaeos. Orpeheus, along with Eurydike's sister nymphs, wandered over the hills and valleys trying to call her back. He even went to the lower world where his sweet music soothened the monsters and wicked spirits. Even the hardened hearts of Persephone and merciless Erinys were touched by his passionate grief. So it was permitted that Eurydike should be returned to earth on condition that he sould not look on her face on the way back. But Orpheus' patience failed him and so Eurydike must instantly retrace her steps and be lost forever. Because of this Orpheus sat for seven months in dolefu mood by the baks of the river Strymon refusing food or drink. Then we withdrew into the mountains to nurse his sorrow. There he was discovered and he was torn into pieces limb by limb. Pieces of his body were even carried to the sea and there the lyre sounde sweetly with the swell and fall of the waves!

8. See. K. E. Reagan and Stewart D. *The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur: An Anthology of His Works*, Boston: 1978, 17.
9. A limit-idea is a possibility for thought which cannot be fully actualised and which surpasses the human condition. See Pandikattu, 45.
10. See. D. Ihde, *Paul Ricœur's Phenomenological Methodology and Philosophical Anthropology* (Ph. D. Dissertation). Boston: Boston University Graduate School, 1964. 102ff. (Hereafter referred to as Ihde).
11. Ihde, 102. This notion is similar to the paradoxical consent we shall be discussing later on.
12. See the third part of PV, 339ff.
13. Ihde, 104.
14. This would be the ideal starting point for a philosophy of symbol and understanding freedom as a "symbolic" human phenomenon.
15. Subjectivity has a long philosophical (phenomenological) tradition. We simplify this profound notion here to mean the "subject" not merely of our thinking (*cogito*) but also our actions, feelings and being. It implies a more dynamic and non-objective understanding than "subject".
16. See PV, 469-472. Also see Ihde, 107.
17. The poem quoted by Ricœur is insightful. PV, 473. "Tell it to no other wise man /For the crowd is quick to rail; /I sing the praise of the living / who aspires to death in flame."
18. See PV, 479-480.
19. See PV, 480. See also Ihde, 108.
20. PV, 482-486. It is in here that the limit ideas could be traced. As a motivated freedom, the limit idea is that of a perfectly rational and transparent motivation. A second limit idea would be that of a perfectly docile body capable of totally gracious movements. The third idea related to the absolutely involuntary would be of a human freedom in which resistance of the involuntary is absent and pure initiatives are possible. None of these limit ideas are actually realized in fullness. See also Ihde, 110-111.
21. Again an ambiguous title! What is meant is not primarily that freedom is fallible and fragile, but that freedom emerges from the same human structure as that of fallibility. Only in this secondary sense does freedom and fallibility go together. In this section we shall be dealing elaborately with fallibility and later briefly with its implication for freedom.
22. See also, Ihde, 113. See also Ricœur, P., *Philosophie de la volonté*. Vol. 2. *Finitude et culpabilité*. Livre 1: *L'homme faillible*. Paris: Aubier, 1960 Reprint 1988, 14. (Abridged as FC: my own translation).
23. P. Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Emerson Buchanan (tr.). Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
24. By "empiric" we mean an intuitive, sudden encounter with the empirical in contrast to the reflective, thinking of "eidectic". So the "empiric" would be the result of a first encounter with the concrete and often takes the spontaneous form of exclamations or confessions.
25. P. Ricœur, *Die Fehlbarkeit des Menschen. Phänomenologie der Schuld* II. M. Otto (tr.). Freiburg/Br: 1971, 9. (Abridged as FM; my own translation into English.)
26. See Thorer, 35. Ihde, 118.
27. FM, 68. Note the relationship and distinction between finite perception and finite perspective.
28. See Pandikattu, 56.

29. FC, 82. See Ihde, 127.
30. See FC, 84-85.
31. For this section, please see Ihde, 129f.
32. FC, 93.
33. See FC, 109. See Ihde, 132.
34. FC, 110.
35. See FC, 109.
36. FM, 125, Pandikatu, 67.
37. FC, 147. See also, Thorer, 36.
38. FM, 172.
39. For this section see the concluding part of FM and Thorer, 36-37.
40. FM, 140.
41. FM, 189, See K. Pandikattu, *When Idols Die*, New Delhi, Intercultural Pub., 1999, 56ff.