Ricoeurean Hermeneutics of Māra as the Theravāda Buddhist Symbol of Evil[1]

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Abstract

In this research paper, we applied Ricoeurean hermeneutics in The Symbolism of Evil, a philosophical process that he employed to address the issue of evil through the phenomenology of confession, which considered the human fault, and the hermeneutics of symbols and myths of evil to explain the issue. Our analysis indicates that Māra remains in the mythological narrative in Buddhist studies, which caused the question of whether the Ricoeurean method will result in a more precise interpretation of Māra in certain respects. The results of the interpretation indicate that the evil that is already there is the one that leads to death. Humans are contaminated toward-death and transmit it to the world by residing in the world of the senses, which is confirmed through their fear. Nevertheless, human beings retain the authority to choose whether their course leads to life or death.

Keywords: Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics, Māra, Symbol, Evil

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Introduction

The question of evil represents a contentious and prominent subject within philosophical discourse, tracing its roots to antiquity. Notably, the challenge posed to the existence of God, epitomized by the problem of evil, has been a persistent issue for philosophers throughout history. Contemporary philosophical inquiries into evil, whether approached from theological or secular viewpoints, have increasingly concentrated on identifying the fundamental traits or criteria that define malevolent behavior. It is evident that philosophical investigations into evil are bolstered by a variety of arguments, including those that examine evil from a religious standpoint. While this religious approach may not dominate the prevailing methodologies for studying evil—especially in the context of the post-World War II era (Nys & Wijze, 2019, pp. 1-4)—it continues to hold significance within academic discussions, particularly in the analysis of the nature of evil, which remains a focal point of research in this domain. This study seeks to address inquiries regarding evil through an examination of the symbol of evil in Theravada Buddhism, commonly referred to as Māra.

Māra is a prominent figure in Buddhist texts, often depicted as an antagonist to the Buddha. Some scholars from Western traditions liken him to a Satanic figure within Buddhism (Nichols, 2019, p. 10). He is referred to as the embodiment of sin, the one with dark karma, and the ultimate destroyer, among other names. This has led to the suggestion that Māra represents evil in Buddhism (Ling, 1962, p. 81). From this perspective, it becomes a topic for studying the concept of evil and remains a subject of ongoing debate in academic circles. Nevertheless, a review of the existing literature reveals lingering uncertainties. In particular, while there are assertions regarding the study of evil through symbolic representation, there appears to be a lack of application of this symbol through philosophical methodologies such as hermeneutics, which could effectively engage with the concept of evil.

The exploration of philosophical methodologies through hermeneutic processes for the interpretation of symbols and myths prominently features the work of Jean-Paul Gustave Ricoeur (1913-2005), a distinguished scholar who dedicated much of his intellectual pursuit to the inquiry of evil. Jérôme Porée highlights that the theme of evil was a persistent concern for Ricoeur, permeating both his scholarly endeavors and personal reflections (Porée, 2020, pp. 3-5). Richard Kearney categorizes Ricoeur's examination of evil into three distinct phases, each aligned with his major publications: 1) The Symbolism of Evil, 2) Evil, A Challenge to Philosophy

and Theology, and 3) Memory, History, Forgetting (Kearney, 2006). This study will concentrate on The Symbolism of Evil, which represents Ricoeur's foundational exploration of the question of evil through the lens of symbols and myths. Graham Ward emphasizes that this work not only seeks to address the issue of evil but also marks a pivotal shift in Ricoeur's methodological approach, profoundly impacting his later writings (Ricoeur, 2004/2007, pp. 10-18).

Ricoeur's use of symbols and myths is a wager that both hold significant value in the study of human existence (Ricoeur, 1960/1969, p. 355). This research does not seek to challenge this assertion; instead, it embraces Ricoeur's viewpoint, leading to the research question of whether it is possible to apply Ricoeurean hermeneutics method as he proposed and employed in his work, The Symbolism of Evil, to interpret Māra as the symbol of evil in Theravada Buddhism and address the question of evil.

Research Objective

The objectives of this research are:

1) to study Ricoeurean hermeneutics methodology in The Symbolism of Evil,

2) to study Māra as the Theravada Buddhist symbol of evil, and

3) to interpret Māra as the Theravada Buddhist symbol of evil through the Ricoeurean hermeneutics method in The Symbolism of Evil.

Research Method

The method of this research is a philosophical process with hermeneutics methodology. The primary resources for the study of Ricoeurean hermeneutics methodology in The Symbolism of Evil are The Symbolism of Evil (1969) and other Paul Ricoeur's writings that relate to the main issue. The primary resources for the study of Māra as the Theravada Buddhist symbol of evil are The Theravada Tipiṭaka (Thai), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya edition, and the interlinear Greek-Hebrew-English Bible edited by Jame Green. The secondary resources for this research are related books, articles, and research documents.

Research Results

1.   The argument for justified suitability of the myth of Māra as one of the myths of the beginning and the end of evil

The myths of the beginning and the end of evil, presented by Ricoeur in his work, *The Symbolism of Evil*, arise from his intention to elucidate primary symbols—defilement, sin, and guilt as an explanation of evil. These primary symbols, however, do not possess a medium that fulfills a linguistic role (Ricoeur, 1960/1969, p. 161). Consequently, he introduced the group of myths as the type of myths—Creation myth, Tragic myth, Adamic myth and the myth of the exiled soul that function through narrative related to the beginning and the end of evil, which has developed into Western culture (Ricoeur, 1960/1969, pp. 171-174). The fundamental prerequisite for Ricoeur's categorization of myths is the context of Western culture, which allows him to correlate with the primary symbols that he obtained through the phenomenology of confession in the first part of his work. When considering the issue raises the inquiry of whether Māra, as the symbol of evil in Theravada Buddhism, might be categorized alongside myths that pertain to the beginning and the end of evil. Ricoeur also addressed that his study drew upon his cultural affiliations, which were more aligned with Jewish and Greek philosophical traditions than with the more remote Eastern cultures of China or India (Ricoeur, 1960/1969, pp. 22-24). Therefore, Māra could be considered far in this context as well.

However, we have raised objections to this context. In the literature review of the study of Māra as the Buddhist Symbol of Evil, we classified the approaches to this concept into four perspectives: theological perspective, anti-theological perspective, skeptical perspective, and secular perspective. The theological perspective was proposed by Trevor O. Ling in his work *Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil: A Study in Theravāda Buddhism*, which posits an intersection between Māra in Theravāda Buddhism and Satan in Christianity (Ling, 1962). If this perspective is defended, then there is a possibility to study the overlapping parts of Māra and Satan that are in line with the cultural similarity context mentioned by Ricoeur.

The argument from the anti-theological perspective according to James W. Boyd's study, there are two key arguments: the first addresses the plurality of māra and the other considers the differing notions of evil within the two religions (Boyd, 1975). The argument of plurality concerning the multiplicity of māra in Buddhist doctrine, which can be divided into

skandhamāra, *kleśamāra*, *maraṇamāra*, and *devaputramāra* in some commentary added *abhisaṃkhāramāra* which differ from Satan in Christianity (Boyd, 1975, pp. 159-160). Nevertheless, when examining the search result of māra in Theravāda *Tipiṭaka*, we categorized māra into two types: the interlocutor māra and the non-interlocutor māra. The interlocutor māra includes Māra the evil one (*māro pāpimā*), Māra's daughters, and māra a puppeteer, which in *Tipiṭaka* gives more emphasis to the first one. The non-interlocutor māra such as *skandhamāra* "Rādha form is māra, sensation is māra, perception is māra, mental activity is māra, discernment is māra. . .form is māra's dhamma, sensation is māra's dhamma, perception is māra's dhamma, mental activity is māra's dhamma, discernment is māra's dhamma" (S.Kh. 17/170-171/262) considered with Māra the evil one said in the *Kassakasuttaṃ* "ascetic cakkhu (eye) is mine, rūpā (form) is mine, the sense-fields, which is raised from the perception of vision, is mine. Where do you think you're going to escape to? . . . sotaṃ (ear) . . . ghānaṃ (nose) . . . jivhā (tongue) . . . kāyo (body). . . mano (mind) . . ." (S.S. 15/155/197) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019). Therefore, it can be seen that *skandha* is depicted as an instrument of Māra. Similarly, *kleśa* is also portrayed in the same manner as in the *Arahantasuttaṃ* (S.S. 15/25/29) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019) and the *Attadaṇḍasuttaniddeso* (Kh.M. 29/183/520) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019), including *maraṇa*, death is something that he leads the living to (Kh.M. 29/202/501). Based on the analysis, māra have plural forms, but considering the context in the Pali Canon, the non-interlocutor māra is usually depicted in the form of the evil one's tools then the theological perspective will be able to clarify these counterarguments, which refer only to the non-interlocutor māra as a tool possessed by evil beings, potentially even the tools of Satan. The overlap between these two entities remains unchanged.

The second argument regarding the differing concepts of evil in both religions concerns *pāpa* in Buddhism and *ponēros* in Christianity. Boyd emphasizes the ethical distinctions that influence the definitions of evil within each faith. In Buddhism, the ultimate goal is Nirvana, whereas in Christianity is God (Boyd, 1975, pp. 157-158). This discussion culminates in the conclusion of the anti-theological perspective, asserting that the role of Māra and the role of Satan are distinct from one another, which can be articulated in the argument as follows:

a) Māra is evil because of *pāpa*.
b) Satan is evil because of *ponēros*.

Therefore

    c) The role of Māra and the role of Satan are distinct from one another.

We argue against the conclusion that there are specific viewpoints in which both *pāpa* and *ponēros* exhibit similarities. We noticed that Boyd's citation of Ernst Windisch's study suggests that the term māra is derived from the Pali word maccu or the Sanskrit mṛtyu, both of which signify death, and anchored in the notion of mārayati, which describes a causal relationship where death is the resultant effect, therefore Māra can be understood as the one who causes death or the killer (Boyd, 1975, p. 74). This aligns with the information presented in *Kappamāṇavakapañhāniddeso*— "the word māra refers to māra the one who has black karma, which is the greatest one who leads a living being toward death and prohibits them from liberation, which is a species of the careless." (Kh.Cū. 30/64/243). (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019) This also reflects Satan in the Gospel, as Jesus said, "You are of the devil as father. . .That one was a murder [ἀνϑρωποκτόνος] from the beginning, and he not stood in the truth because there is no truth in him" (*The Interlinear Bible*, 2023, John. 8:13) mirror to *Dvedhāvitakkasuttaṃ* "the phrase, the man who desires destruction does not want to help and does not wish for safety of anyone, is the name of Māra the evil one [*mārassetaṃ pāpimato adhivacanaṃ*]" (M.Mū. 12/215/224) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019) aligns with the book of Job, Satan said "put out Your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." (*The Interlinear Bible*, 2023, Job. 2:5) and YHWH replied "Behold, He is in your hand; but keep his life." (*The Interlinear Bible*, 2023, Job. 2:6) then Satan and Māra are the murderer. The concept of murder is categorized as both *pāpa* and *ponēros*, which can be articulated in the argument as follows:

    d) Māra and Satan are the murderers.
    e) The murderer is categorized as both *pāpa* and *ponēros*.

Therefore

    f) Māra and Satan are categorized as both *pāpa* and *ponēros*.

The theological perspective can argue, against the argument of differentiation of evil, that, from the statement c), the moral judgment criteria of both religions have different references, even so, the statement d) which noticed from the study of Boyd himself pointed that both Māra and Satan engage in actions deemed evil by both religious frameworks, the act of

murder, which is a prominent issue that overlaps with the identities of both, allowing for the study of the theological perspective to continue.

The skeptical perspective is derived from Martin Southwold's study, which suggests that the English word "evil" carries greater linguistic intensity than the concept of *pāpa*. Within this framework, Buddhism is perceived as lacking a concept of evil, instead recognizing only badness (Southwold, 1986, p. 131). This argument indicates that the skeptical perspective integrates the contemporary concept of evil to develop their argument, paralleling Michael D. Nichols' secular perspective, which argues against other perspectives by referencing Māra's evil action (Nichols, 2019, p. 37). Both perspectives still have the potential to be criticized, some of which is discussed elsewhere (Puttarakitvorakul, 2023). Despite this, the purpose of this research is to interpret by relying on the Ricoeurean hermeneutic approach as presented in the work, *The Symbolism of Evil*, which studies within the scope of religious consciousness. Therefore, the critique of contemporary evil issues exceeds the scope of this study.

Based on the defense of theological perspective, Satan is the one who desires destruction and leads someone toward death, then we propose the statement:

g) Māra is the murderous predication of Satan

The meaning of the murderous predication of Satan is the murderous action that relate to Satanic activity regardless of agent, which is corelate to the note by Fr. Carlos Martin in *The Exorcist Files*, He noted that Exorcists frequently utilize the term the Devil to denote a general demon, not due to an absence of distinction between Satan and his subordinate demons, but rather because all demonic actions occur under Satan's jurisdiction, irrespective of his direct involvement. (Martin, 2024: ix). According to g), the myth of Māra is comparable to an extension of the event like the confrontation with the snake in Adamic myth and Satan tempted Jesus, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13, and Mark 1:12-13. Therefore, it can be considered as one of the cultural familiarities and this narrative can function as a myth of the beginning and the end of evil, which is the second-order symbol regarding Ricoeur's definition (Ricoeur, 1960/1969, pp. 151-152).

2.	**The interpretation of Māra as the myth of the conversation with the evil**

The analysis of the myth of Māra in Theravāda Buddhist Tipiṭaka reveals it to be a narrative centered on dialogue, characterized by interactions between a sutra's main

character, which is a human figure, and Māra the evil one. This structure renders it more straightforward in the re-enactment compared to other myths of the beginning and the end of evil. The creation myth takes place before human existence. It involves the recollection of divine experiences by humans, a task that appears entirely implausible. The tragic myth featuring human protagonists faces the peril of being overshadowed by fate and wicked gods, making their repetition to understand the experience unfeasible. Additionally, the myth of the exiled soul remains a debatable philosophical argument and a myth that reflects human beings' situation. Then The myth of Māra is the myth of conversation with the evil that is already there. We suggest that the conversation with Māra can be likened to the encounter with the snake in the Adamic myth, representing a confrontation with the one who leads toward death. However, in the story of Adam, there is a mention of the conversation limited to just two sentences in Genesis 3:1-5. So, we suggest that in interpreting the myth of Māra similar to the approach taken by Ricoeur in the cycle of myth, which is the re-affirmation of the other myths with Adamic myth (Ricoeur, 1960/1969, pp. 151-152). The study of Māra the evil one in Theravāda Tipiṭaka indicated three roles of him, the one who deceives, the one who instills fear, and the one who pleads for the death of whose interlocutor. The hermeneutics be applied as follows:

2.1. The one who deceives

Engaging in dialogue with the evil one in this role, as considered from the scripture, is recognized as a manifestation of temptation that promotes a focus on materialistic pursuits. As it is depicted in Sambahulasuttaṃ, Māra said "You venerable monks, who are still young and vigorous with dark hair, are in the prime of life. However, do not indulge in sensual pleasures. Instead, let you all consume the earthly desires of mankind. Do not sacrifice the pleasures that are right in front of you to pursue the timely heavenly pleasure." (S.S. 15/157/201) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019) It is pleased to live because "those who have children are happy because of their children, and those who have oxen are happy because of their oxen, just like anyone who has the essentials of existence [upadhi] is happy Therefore, those without the essentials of existence are not happy." (S.S. 15/144/183) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019). Inviting a bhikkhunī to savor the pleasure of sensory indulgence— "You're still a beautiful young woman, and I'm still a strong young man. Come on, my dear, let's play a lively tune on the five instruments together and have a joyful time" (S.S. 15/165/221) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019).

From the previously mentioned sutras, if we set aside the Buddhist perspective on deception, The Māra's suggestion serves to underscore the advantages of engaging in a life rich with sensory experiences in the material world rather than subjecting oneself to the torment of religious practice aimed at an ambiguous and unprovable objective as he further emphasized "In this world, there is no remover (from suffering), so what will you do with your seclusion? Indulge in sensual pleasures and delight in them. Don't regret it later." (S.S. 15/162/217) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019). He affirmed, backing up his claim with his authoritative power as "the ruler of this world [ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου]" (The Interlinear Bible, 2023, John. 12:31) —the owner of the six senses (S.S. 15/155/197-198) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019), who possessed "the authority of the air [ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀερος]" (The Interlinear Bible, 2023, Eph. 2:2) — "this snare travels through the air, residing in the heart. It wanders around. I will bind you with that snare. Ascetic, you will not be able to escape from me." (S.S. 15/151/192) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019).

What we have inferred from the interpretation is that the conversation between the protagonist and the interlocutor, the evil one, raises questions about the value of living, which is the same issue as in William James' writing— Is Life Worth Living? He proposed the idea of the visible world and the unseen world (the world that cannot be perceived by the senses), highlighting that both the scientific world and the spiritual world are uncertain, and only living individuals can have faith in certain matters (Jame, 1895). It is evident that Māra the evil one is part of the group that supported living in the world of sensual indulgence that is right in front of humans. Conversely, the protagonists who are ascetic will present counterarguments to advocate for the existence of the unseen world, in order to justify the justification of their living as a monk within that particular context such as Buddha replied "Those who have children are sorrowful because of their children. Those who have oxen are sorrowful because of their oxen, just like anyone who has the essentials of existence is sorrowful. Therefore, those without the essentials of existence are not sorrowful." (S.S. 15/144/184) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019).

2.2. The one who instills fear

In this role, the evil one often takes on a form that poses a threat to the main character, such as the danger from a ferocious beast like the great elephant in Nāgasuttaṃ "On that occasion, Māra the evil one desired to instill fear, trembling, and revulsion in the Buddha.

He transformed himself into the great elephant and approached the Buddha at his residence. The elephant had a head resembling a large, black boulder, its tusks gleamed like polished silver, and its trunk was like a large plowshare" (S.S. 15/138/176) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019), the great serpent in Sappasuttaṃ "On that occasion, Māra the evil one desired to instill fear, trembling, and revulsion in the Buddha. He transformed himself into the great serpent and approached the Buddha at his residence. The great serpent's body resembled a large boat hollowed out from a giant tree trunk, its hood was like an enormous bamboo mat used to dry pastry sheets by a brewer, its eyes shone like the large bronze plates of the king of Kosala, its tongue darted in and out of its mouth like flashes of lightning amidst rumbling thunderclouds, and its breathing sounded like the hissing of a goldsmith's bellows exhaling air" (S.S. 15/142/181) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019), the human threats in Uppalavaṇṇāsuttaṃ "Bhikkhunī, you approached the sāla tree, its flowers reaching up to the top. Standing alone at the base of that sāla tree. Your skin is unparalleled. You're not afraid of the plotting of those womanizing scoundrels, are you?" (S.S. 15/166/222) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019), the fearful sound in Samiddhisuttaṃ "On that occasion, Māra the evil one knew Samiddhi's thoughts and contemplated them with his heart, then approached Samiddhi at his residence and made a terrifying, frightening sound, as if the earth would shake near Samiddhi." (S.S. 15/158/203) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019), and the disaster in Pāsāṇasuttaṃ "On that occasion, Māra the evil one desired to instill fear, trembling, and revulsion in the Buddha, then approached the Buddha at his residence and rolled a large stone down to the place near the Buddha" (S.S. 15/147/187) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019).

When discussing about fear, Lars Svendsen noted that fear always has an object, which is to say it always takes the form of fearing something (Svendsen, 2007/2011, p.36). According to the mentioned sutras, the transformation of Māra—the murderer, is in the form of that kind of object. Then if we re-enactment and interpret the situation, it reveals that entities such as beasts, dangerous humans, disasters, and frightening sounds collectively pose significant threats to the life of a protagonist. We posit that the experience occurring is fear of death. Michael Cholbi found that the emotion most potentially candidate related to death is fear (Cholbi, 2023, pp. 9-10). When confronted with fear, it is instinctive to look for a place of safety, according to Ernest Becker views the fear of death as the primary driving force behind the

development of human civilization, serving as a refuge from this fear (Becker, 1975, pp. 125-126).

Based on the information, I realized from this interpretation is that engaging in dialogue with Māra in this role is a debate of the rationality to fear of death. The evil one proposed himself in the form of object (x), which reflects the end of sensual pleasure. According to O. H. Green argues that the same reasoning that justifies the rationality of the desire to persist in life also indicates that it is reasonable to fear death (Green, 1982, pp. 104-105). The counterargument presented by an interlocutor would entail a dismissal of the assertion that I do not fear x. In the case of Jesus, he said "You should not fear the ones killing the body [σῶμα], but not being able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him being able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (The Interlinear Bible, 2023, Matt. 10:28) and "But I will warn you whom you should fear; fear the one who after the killing have authority to cast into Hell; yea, I say to you fear that One!" (The Interlinear Bible, 2023, Luke. 12:5). Timothy Chappell concluded that the non-believer has a valid fear of death, unlike the believer. For Christians, this fear is replaced by the fear of the Lord (Chappell, 2009, pp. 422-423). Thus, the fear that arises from one's experiences of encountering the evil one, which is reflected in the happiness of life through the senses, occurs in human civilization. However, it is undeniable that this happiness can come to an end.

2.3 The one who pleads for the death of whose interlocutor

In this role, Māra the evil one requested the Buddha to pass into Nibbāna (parinibbāna), as mentioned in the scripture: "Honorable one, May the Blessed One pass into Nibbāna this very moment, May the Holy One pass into Nibbāna, this is the time for the parinibbāna of the Blessed One." (D.M. 10/168/113) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019). In our perspective, encountering someone who pleads for the death of whose interlocutor is equivalent to realizing the capability to shorten one's own life, which is the most serious philosophical question, as seen from Albert Camus' perspective, namely, suicide (Camus, 1942/2005, pp. 1-2) despite the ethical debates surrounding the issue. Instead, what was found is the emphasis on the freedom to die, Jean-Paul Sartre said "We are left alone and without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free" (Sartre, 1996/2007, p. 29). This mirrors the book of Genesis when the woman encountered the snake, which Ricoeur said is already there (Ricoeur, 1960/1969, pp. 257), in the Garden of Eden. It offered the woman a choice, leaving her with only two options: to eat (p) or not to eat (~p), under the

implication that the consequence could be either death (q) or not death (~q). This was different from the situation with God, where the proposition was that eating would result in death, which is p→q. The snake presented the possibility of ~q, assigning a value of true (T) and false (F) to the choice. The woman then took this option and presented it to Adam (The Interlinear Bible, 2023, Gen. 3:1-6).

An interesting interpretation of the Mahāparinibbānasuttaṃ is the possibility of both q and ~q, representing the duality of the paths of death and life. This concept is illustrated through the Ānanda, to whom the Buddha presented the option of choosing the path of life (D.M. 10/166-167/112-113) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2019). Similarly, Saint Paul pointed "For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace" (The Interlinear Bible, 2023, Rom. 8:6), underscoring the significance of choice. In this context, the evil one is depicted as one who can only plead for the selection of the path leading to death. The result of this interpretation allows for a response to Nichols' observation of why Māra the evil one in this role holds a subordinate status. (Nichols, 2019, p. 99)

3.   Reviewing of the Interpretation

When considering the result from the interpretation of the three roles, we realized that Māra suggested that

1) Life has value only when lived in the sensual world.
2) Fear serves as a confirmation of life in the sensual world.
3) Choosing the path toward death.

What's interesting is that both 1) and 2) are considered ordinary and mundane in their daily lives as humans. However, when examined through philosophical processes, it seems to serve as a notifier of 3). We are in a state of being notified and in *The Consolation of Philosophy* (2009), Lady Philosophy appeared to be a consolator but, in this article, she acts like a one who notifies. Considering the biblical verse "But while the men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed darnel in the midst of the wheat, and went away" (*The Interlinear Bible*, 2023, Matt. 13:25) and "And the enemy who sowed is the Devil [διάβολος]" (*The Interlinear Bible*, 2023, Rom. 13:39), The evil one is the one who contaminates thoughts 1) and 2) leading to a choice 3). It can be said that the confrontation with the one who leads toward death contaminates the notion of mortality into one's consciousness, making it interesting to consider

whether being notified or aware through philosophy shows that we are already defiled even before. But the question of when we were corrupted is like the fate like in the Tragic that has predetermined that humans have found inconceivable. Consequently, the most striking result is that the evil is not only already there but also frightening close.

The interpretation of Māra as the myth of the conversation with the evil revealed that the evil that is already there, is the one who leads toward death. Humans are contaminated toward-death and transmit it to the world by residing in the world of the senses, which is confirmed through their fear. Nevertheless, human beings retain the authority to choose whether their course leads to life or death.

Conclusion

In this paper, we applied Ricoeurean hermeneutic in The Symbolism of Evil to interpret Māra as the Buddhist symbol of evil, providing reasons from the theological perspective to support the notion that Māra can be one of the myths of the beginning and the of evil according to Ricoeur's classification. The interpretation of Māra as the myth of the conversation with the evil is elucidated through the three roles of Māra the evil one depicted in the sutras is the one who deceives, the one who instills fear, and the one who pleads for the death of whose interlocutor. The result indicated that the evil that is already there, is the one who leads toward death. Humans are contaminated toward-death and transmit it to the world by residing in the world of the senses, which is confirmed through their fear. Nevertheless, human beings retain the authority to choose whether their course leads to life or death.

Abbreviations

In this article, the in-text citation of *Tipiṭaka* uses the addition of reference style from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, which mentions a volume, item(s), and page(s) for example, S.S. 15/142/181 reading as *Suttanta Piṭaka Saṃyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga*, volume 15, item 142, page 181.

The Theravāda Buddhist *Tipiṭaka* texts are abbreviated as follows:

D.M. = *Suttanta Piṭaka Dīghanikāya Mahāvagga*

M.Mū. = *Suttanta Piṭaka Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsaka*

S.S. = *Suttanta Piṭaka Saṃyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga*

S.Kh. = *Suttanta Piṭaka Saṃyuttanikāya Khandhavāravagga*

Kh.M. = *Suttanta Piṭaka Khuddakanikāya Mahānidesa*

Kh.Cū. = *Suttanta Piṭaka Khuddakanikāya Cūlanidesa*

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