essencialment a la constitució de la subjectivitat moderna», els quals, malgrat les grans diferències, posen de manifest que «el subjecte modern no sorgeix en contacte immediat amb el món, sinó en una apartada habitació en la qual el pensador està sol amb ell mateix».[53] Com comenta P. Berger, la torre de Montaigne i la poêle [habitació encalentida] de Descartes recorden la cel·la monàstica.

L'afirmació de l'individu que fa el cristianisme no és solament una aportació social de primer rang, sinó també una condició indispensable per a la seva pròpia existència. Recordem que el cristianisme no és una religió lligada a cap ètnia, ni tampoc a un costum[54] o cultura. En aquest sentit és clarament universal; universalitat, però, que s'assoleix per la convocació de tots i cada un dels éssers humans. Al cristianisme s'hi entra per un procés de conversió i de fe personal, és a dir, d'adhesió personal a Jesús i al seu Evangeli. Per això la propagació del cristianisme només es pot fer apel·lant al cor de cada individu. Kierkegaard ho accentuarà afirmant que individu o individual «és la categoria del missioner dins la mateixa cristiandat que pretén introduir cristianisme en la cristiandat».[55]

7. Conclusió

Les patologies –que porten les dues tendències socials esmentades: individualisme i massificació i la disgregació de l'individu– sembla que poden tenir una certa correcció reforçant l'individu, tant en el sentit que la seva individualització sigui una humanització plena, evitant tot empobriment de la seva humanitat, com també en el sentit que es vegi capacitat per a la seva participació en la construcció del conjunt social. Recuperar la seva condició de subjecte apunta que pugui prendre seriosament el seu ésser subjecte moral, amb una identitat pròpia que no es vegi aplanada amb el contacte amb els altres ni amb altres cultures, de manera que el pluralisme no degeneri en prescindir de les diferències, en uniformització ni tampoc a una reducció de la subjectivitat a un «jo mínim» i fragmentat, incapaç per això mateix de deliberar, perquè no té referents, ni de decidir perquè no veu més enllà del moment instantani.

L'aportació de la religió en la constitució del ser subjecte de tots se situa en l'àmbit dels pressupòsits de l'acció comunicativa, tenint cura de l'existència de subjectes capaços de parla i acció, capacitat per a la participació i cooperació socials, aportant opinions i arguments i també mans per a la construcció social.

Situar la intervenció de la religió no directament en el manteniment del conjunt o del vincle social sinó en l'afirmació de l'individu com a subjecte de cap manera significa retornar a un plantejament individual i espiritualista de la religió, en el sentit que tota ella estigui orientada a la «salvació de la meva ànima», sinó que es tracta més tost de la capacitació dels individus per a la participació i cooperació socials, perquè deixin de ser objectes, i puguin exercir el seu ser subjectes. L'aportació de la religió és tant més valuosa com que fa que la identitat única i singular de l'individu no depengui solament dels altres, del seu reconeixement social.

[53] Bürger, Christa i Peter, *La desaparición del Sujeto. Una Historia de la Subjetividad de Montaigne a Blanchot*. Madrid: Akal 2001, p. 37.
[54] Ratzinger, Joseph, *Introducción al cristianismo*. Salamanca: Sígueme 2005, p. 120, on cita la cèlebre afirmació de Tertulià: «Crist no s'anomenà a ell mateix costum, sinó veritat».
[55] Kierkegaard, *Mi punto de vista*, p. 149.

ORIGINAL SIN AND *AKRASIA*. AN ARISTOTELIAN ANALYSIS OF GEN 3:1-6

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RESUM: Aquest article analitza diverses implicacions psicològiques del relat del pecat original a Gn 3: 1-6 aplicant algunes idees emprades per Aristòtil en la seva descripció de l'*akrasia*. En particular, utilitza el concepte d'thos per estudiar l'harmonia interior original de la naturalesa humana i el de *prohairesis* per analitzar la possibilitat del pecat i la naturalesa de la temptació que condueix al pecat original.

MOTS CLAU: *akrasia*, pecat original, Aristòtil, do de la integritat, *prohairesis.*

ABSTRACT: This paper analyses several psychological implications of the account of original sin in Gen 3:1-6 applying some ideas employed by Aristotle in his description of *akrasia*. In particular, it uses the concept of *ēthos* to study the original inner harmony of human nature, and that of *prohairesis* to discuss the possibility of sin and the nature of the temptation leading to original sin.

KEY WORDS: *akrasia*, original sin, Aristotle, gift of integrity, *prohairesis*.

1. Introduction

The dogma of original sin is perhaps the doctrine of the Catholic faith in starkest contrast with contemporary intellectual and cultural paradigms. Scientific developments in the fields of evolutionary biology and paleontology have brought up difficulties with some aspects of the dogma. Affirming personal rights and choices as key ethical values seems incompatible with holding a doctrine of a sin inherited with no fault on the person's part. The contemporary movements seeking liberation from political oppression and social discrimination see in the dogma of original sin yet another example of patriarchal impositions leading to the injustices that they are fighting against. Original sin is for many a mythological story from a religion now superseded by science, while for others it is an example of Christian fundamentalism at odds with modernity.

However, the concept of original sin, and the account of the Book of Genesis chapter 3 to which it is connected, has fascinated authors through the centuries and still does so now. The experience of internal tensions in the human psyche, and the ever-actual presence of moral evil in the world, offer an intellectual challenge to the narratives claiming a continuous historical progress fuelled by scientific and technological advances. The agonising admission of St Paul, "I do not do the good that I want but the evil I do not want"[1], continues to be a shared human experience today as it was 2,000 years ago, and

[1] Rom 7:19. Note that for all scriptural quotes we will follow the *Revised Standard Version Second Catholic Edition* as published

the psychological and neurological advances over the last century have done little to explain its causes or provide remedies. Among some sectors of contemporary 'counterculture' there is a resurgence of interest in the topic of original sin, thanks to a renewal in the interest of the Biblical narratives by both Christian and non-Christian authors. Jordan Peterson, although ambivalent towards Christianity, gives great importance to the story of Gen 3 as an allegorical explanation of the deeper psychological drives in human behaviour[2]. The doctrine of original sin remains surprisingly resilient and continues to capture the popular imagination: it is for many an expression of a profound reality in human beings. As Pascal put it, "certainly nothing offends us more rudely than this doctrine, and yet without this mystery, the most incomprehensible of all, we are incomprehensible to ourselves"[3].

Original sin has also become a contentious topic in the sphere of Western Christian theology. This may seem surprising, given its importance in Catholic teaching and its centrality in Lutheran thought. Chesterton comments in his characteristic style that "certain new theologians dispute original sin, which is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved"[4]. But as Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr explains, there are good reasons why some would struggle with this teaching: "The Christian doctrine of sin in its classical form offends both rationalists and moralists by maintaining the seemingly absurd position that man sins inevitably and by a fateful necessity but that he is nevertheless to be held responsible for actions which are prompted by an ineluctable fate."[5]

This paper attempts to open new avenues for understanding some of the implications of the passage concerning original sin described in Gen 3:1-6. It does so by making use of the Aristotelian analysis of *akrasia*, which in the last decades has experienced a revival not only among academic philosophers but also among experimental psychologists and neuroscientists. The paper will mainly focus on the historical event of original sin as narrated in Gen 3:1-6. Although Catholic teaching does not propose that Gen 3 provides a strictly historical account of original sin, an Aristotelian analysis of the narrative indicates that the account is psychologically accurate, describing the choice 'as it must have been' in its inner content, whatever the external form might have been.

For the description of the doctrine of original sin we will use the carefully crafted synthesis presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*[6], points 355-418, together with magisterial texts from popes St John Paul II and Benedict XVI[7], and some texts from the *Summa Theologica* of St Thomas Aquinas[8].

2. The meaning of *akrasia* in Greek philosophy

Akrasia is a Greek noun, deriving from the adjective *'akratēs'* which literally means a person 'without strength', 'lacking mastery' or 'not in command'[9]. Since the time of Socrates it has been used as a technical word referring to the common experience of acting against reason moved by passion.

The translation of *akrasia* into English is not straightforward and has changed throughout the years[10]. In more recent times, it has been translated as 'moral weakness', 'weakness of will', 'unrestraint', 'psychological weakness', 'powerlessness', 'not in command', and even 'backsliding'[11].

Aristotle illustrates what *akrasia* is with a rather familiar example: he talks about eating sweets because they are pleasant to the taste against a norm of reason not to do so[12]. Aristotle does not elaborate on what that norm of reason is, but we could imagine something like a serious medical advice, a religious prescription or a social norm.

On a more technical level, Aristotle explains that the *akratēs* is the person who, on the onset of passion, lacks sufficient self-mastery to act according to his moral conviction:

> There is a sort of man who is carried away as a result of passion and contrary to 'right reason' –a man whom passion masters so that he does not act according to 'right reason', but does not master to the extent of making him ready to believe that he ought to pursue such pleasure without reserve; this is the *akratēs*.[13]

For Aristotle, *akrasia* in the strict sense refers only to actions contrary to 'right reason' connected with the pleasures of touch and taste, such as those concerned with food, drink or sexual intercourse[14]. However, he explains that the term *akrasia* can also be applied in an analogous way to actions against reason moved by anger or by an inordinate desire for honour, money, or some other particular gain[15]. Therefore, *akrasia* in a wider sense covers all actions carried out following the felt emotion of a desire against the dictates of reason, be it a concupiscible desire or *epithumia* (such as the desire for physical pleasure), an irascible desire or *thumos* (such as a fit of anger), or a rational desire or *boulēsis* (such as yearning for a spiritual good like honour).

Enkrateia is the opposite concept to *akrasia*, referring to the strength to overcome one's disordered passion and follow one's reason. Aristotle describes the *enkratēs* precisely in contrast with the *akratēs*: "The *akratēs*, knowing that what he does is bad, does it as a result of passion, the *enkratēs*, knowing that his appetites are bad, does not follow them because of his reason."[16]

Enkrateia, as a philosophical term, is nowadays commonly translated as 'moral strength', 'strength of will', 'willpower', 'self-mastery', 'strength of character', or 'self-restraint'[17].

by Ignatius Press in 2006.

[2] Cf. J. Peterson, *12 Rules for Life. An Antidote to Chaos*, London: Allen Lane 2018, pp. 31-64.

[3] B. Pascal, *Pascal's Pensées*, translated by W. F. Trotter, New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. 1958, n. 434.

[4] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, New York: Cossimo Classics, 2007, p. 7.

[5] R. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 1996, p. 241.

[6] We will refer to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as 'CCC' and we will use the English text as it appeared on https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM when accessed on 20th September 2020.

[7] We will use the translations that appeared in the English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano.*

[8] We will refer to the *Summa Theologica* as 'STh' and use the English translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province published by Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd (London) in 1920.

[9] Cf. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon, revised and augmented edition...* New York and Oxford: Clarendon Press 1940, entries *'akratēs'* and *'kratos'*.

[10] The term 'incontinence' was traditionally used to translate '*akrasia'* following the Latin '*incontinentia*'. The term still appears in some important translations of the works of Aristotle (such as the one we are using in this paper), but given the contemporary connotation of the term it is less used nowadays.

[11] Cf. T. D. Chappell, *Aristotle and Augustine on Freedom: Two Theories of Freedom, Voluntary Action and Akrasia*, New York: St Martin Press 1995, pp. 89–90; and A. O. Rorty, 'Akrasia and Pleasure: Nicomachean Ethics Book 7', in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 1980, p. 283, fn. 1.

[12] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1147a32–35. Note that unless otherwise stated we will quote Aristotle using the Revised Oxford Translation as appears in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* edited by Robert Barnes and published by Princeton University Press in 1995, and we will use Bekker numbers for reference to the text. Similarly, we will quote Plato following *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns and published by Princeton University Press in 1994, and we will use Henricus Stephanus numbers for reference to the text.

[13] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1151a20-23.

[14] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1147b24-1148a11.

[15] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1147b31-1147b36 and 1148b5-14.

[16] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1145b11-13.

[17] Cf. M. Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005, p. 233; and S. L. Brock, "Weakness of Will", *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Supplement 2012-2013: Ethics and Philosophy*, 2013, p. 1643. Traditionally,

3. The terms *akrasia* and *enkrateia* in the bible

The terms '*akrasia'* and '*enkrateia'* appear a number of times in different books of the New Testament[18]. In the ancient Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek, they do not appear, although there is an instance of a verb that derives from *'enkratēs'*[19].

Many of the instances of the New Testament use of the terms appear in the letters of St Paul. In his letter to the Galatians, he lists *enkrateia* among the fruits of the Holy Spirit[20]. In his second letter to Timothy he mentions the *akrateis* among those people living in vice[21], and in his letter to Titus he mentions that the presbyter has to be *enkratēs*[22]. In his first letter to the Corinthians he writes "lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control *(dia tēn akrasian*)"[23] and adds that those who cannot exert self-control (*de ouk enkrateuontai*) in sexual matters should marry[24].

From these examples, we can see that the use of the terms in St Paul is very similar to that in Greek philosophy, and that they are connected with the concept of sin. In fact, St James in his letter defines sin precisely as acting against one's own knowledge of what is right: "whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin (*hamartia*)"[25]. *Hamartia* is the commonest and most generic word in Greek referring to sin in the New Testament. It sometimes indicates moral failing in general, but at other times refers to the explicit disobedience to God's commandments[26].

Aristotle himself defines *akrasia* as *hamartia* of a particular type: "*akrasia* (...) is blamed not only as a fault (*hamartia*) but as a kind of vice"[27], although it should be clarified that the word *hamartia* in Aristotle's work does not have the religious connotations of explicit disobedience to God that it has in St Paul or St James, but only the sense of moral iniquity.

4. Aristotle's analysis of *akrasia*[28]

In book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle embarks on an ambitious analysis of the phenomenon of *akrasia*. He does so, to a great extent, in order to resolve an academic problem regarding a key Socratic thesis. Socrates held that "there is no such thing as *akrasia;* no one (...) acts against what he believes best – people act so only by reason of ignorance"[29]. And yet, this view of Socrates seems to contradict the common experience of knowingly acting against reason[30]. So, how can the highly respected opinion of Socrates be reconciled with the phenomenon of *akrasia*? Aristotle sets himself the task of solving this puzzle, and in doing so he brings in Plato's ideas of the conflict of desires in the human person.

For Plato, there is an inherent tension in human beings because the union of body and soul is something unnatural and accidental, a sort of punishment that can be traced to a primordial fall. Plato illustrates this through the well-known myth of the winged chariot[31]. Aristotle, without commenting on Plato's ideas on anthropogenesis, accepts that there is a tension of desires within the human person and builds on Plato's concepts.

In the *Republic,* Plato explains that the human soul is divided into three parts: the reasoning or rational, the spirited or irascible, and the appetitive or concupiscible part[32]. The Finnish philosopher Knuuttila explains that for Plato, "the reasoning part is able to love knowledge and wisdom" and adds that "ideally, it should govern the entire soul"; on the other hand, "the appetitive part pursues immediate sensual pleasure and avoids suffering, whereas the intermediate, spirited part is the seat of emotions connected with self-assurance and self-affirmation"[33].

For Plato, *akrasia* occurs when each of the parts of the soul do "the work of some other [part] and interfere and meddle with one another"[34], thus disrupting the harmony required for correct human action. Harmony, according to Plato, can only occur when reason –or more precisely the excellence of reason which is wisdom– presides over conduct, ruling over the lower parts[35]. In this way, there emerges "one man instead of many, self-controlled and in unison"[36].

But using Plato's idea of the conflict of desires to resolve Socrates's puzzle of *akrasia* presents a major problem. Plato's framework is psychological and mythological, describing a situation of a conflict of desires caused by an initial fall, while Socrates's position is presented as a pure epistemological principle that leaves no room for psychological elements[37]. Aristotle attempts to find a way of bringing together both paradigms, and he does so through his theory of moral states of character and through his ideas of choice and action.

the term has been translated as 'continence' following the usual Latin *'continentia'*.

[18] The terms appear in the following passages: Acts 24:25, 1 Cor 7:5, Gal 5:23, 2 Tim 3:3, Tit 1:8, and 2 Pet 1:6. They also appear in 1 Cor 7:9 and 1 Cor 9:25 in a verb form.

[19] This instance refers to the episode of the patriarch Joseph meeting his brothers. Joseph does not want to show immediately his great emotion at the reencounter, and we are told that "he washed his face and came out; and controlling himself (*enkrateusato*) he said, 'Let food be served'"(Gen 43:41).

[20] Cf. Gal 5:23.

[21] Cf. 2 Tim 3:3.

[22] Cf. Tit 1:8.

[23] 1 Cor 7:5.

[24] Cf. 1 Cor 7:9.

[25] Jas 4:17.

[26] It should be noted that the word *'parabasis'* is also used by St Paul on some occasions to refer to the transgression of a commandment explicitly given by God (e.g. in Rom 2:23 *'parabasis'* refers to breaking the Law of Moses, and 1 Tim 2:14 to breaking the commandment given to Adam and Eve).

[27] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1148a3.

[28] This section is based on the author's detailed study *The question of Akrasia in Aristotle*, Rome: EDUSC 2018.

[29] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1145b25-26.

[30] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1145b27. Aristotle mentions that Socrates's position "contradicts the plain phenomena".

[31] Plato compares the soul of gods and men to a charioteer who controls a chariot pulled by two winged horses. In the case of the gods, the two horses are equally good, but for men, "one of them is noble and good, and of good stock, while the other has the opposite character and his stock is opposite" (Plato, *Phaedrus,* 246b). Using this example, Plato presents a bipartite conception of the soul with two principles, each pulling in different directions and thus generating an internal tension. Plato also uses the simile of the chariot to explain the origin of the union between the body and the soul. Human souls follow the gods flying through the pathways of heaven, towards the "plain of Truth" where they can contemplate the "Being", but for humans this is a difficult task, due to the presence of the evil horse that pulls them downwards. Consequently, some souls do not manage to climb up the steep cliff that leads to the summit of heaven, and instead they "trample and tread upon one another (...) whereupon with their charioteers powerless, many are lamed, and many have their wings all broken" (*Plato, Phaedrus, 248a–b*). And having lost their wings, these souls eventually fall to the earth and enter into a human body. Thus, the myth in the *Phaedrus* presents the source of conflict in man as something preceding the body-soul union and rooted in a constitutive duality of good and evil within the human soul.

[32] Cf. F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy. Greece and Rome*, London and New York: Continuum 2003, p. 209.

[33] S. Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, New York and Oxford: Clarendon Press 2004, p. 7.

[34] Plato, *Republic*, 443e.

[35] Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 443e.

[36] Plato, *Republic*, 443e.

[37] For Socrates nothing is stronger or better than knowledge, "and wherever it is found it always has the mastery over pleasure and everything else" (Plato, *Protagoras*, 357c).

5. *Akrasia* and states of character

Aristotle describes the moral state of character (*ēthos*) as one of the three kinds of things that we find in the soul (the other two being passions and faculties), and he defines it as the thing "in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions"[38]. By standing well or badly he means two things. The first is whether we feel the passions according to 'right reason' or not, as he illustrates with the example of anger: "we stand badly if we feel it violently or too weakly, and well if we feel it moderately"[39]. The second is whether, when we feel them badly, we react according to reason or against it[40]. Therefore, for Aristotle, *ēthos* is a state that has a certain stability over time and connects the correct rational principles (*ortho logos*) with passion (*pathos)*.

Akrasia and *enkrateia* represent sorts of mid-states between the states of virtue (*aret*) and vice (*kakia*). While *akrasia* shows that *pathos* can move the person to act regardless of his rational ends, *enkrateia* illustrates how the development of the correct dispositions of character (the *hexis* or habits that make up the *ēthos*) can help to overcome one's inordinate *pathos* and follow what is good in view of one's whole life.

Through correct habituation to acting according to reason, the person progressively approaches virtue, which for Aristotle represents the ideal state of harmonious integration of *ortho logos*, *ēthos* and *pathos* that brings with it connaturality with the good, the real good rather than the apparent good. The virtuous person not only *does* what is right according to reason but also *feels* right[41].

The *kakos* is different from all the other states of character. While in virtue, *akrasia* and *enkrateia, logos* is *ortho logos*, in *kakia, logos* has been perverted and reason is no longer 'right reason'. We could say that in the *kakos* there is a perverse identification between *ēthos*, *pathos* and a 'non-*ortho logos'*.

Aristotle acknowledges the responsibility of the *akratēs* for his state of character, since character is forged through voluntary actions; but he also recognises the influence of the person's psychosomatic constitution: some people have innate dispositions to resist the pull of passion more easily than others[42]. He also explains that virtue is not the common state of humans and that it requires effort and guidance[43]. In addition, he points out that certain transitory psychosomatic states also affect the process leading to human action, and can therefore contribute to causing an akratic event[44].

6. *Akrasia* and *prohairesis*

The term '*prohairesis'* in the works of Aristotle is normally translated as 'choice', but it is often used with a technical nuance that the English term 'choice' does not have[45]. We could say that for Aristotle, *prohairesis* is a "deliberated desire"[46] connected to a choice of practical means to achieve a goal in line with living a good life[47].

Aristotle's definition of *prohairesis* as a deliberated desire implies that it has nothing to do with *epithumia* or *thumos*[48]. *Epitumia* and *thumos* are not deliberated desires, even if deliberation is often needed to reach the object of these desires. *Epithumia* and *thumos* arise from the irrational powers of the human person, and while they can be subject to reason through virtue, they do not originate from deliberation. In contrast, *prohairesis* is a desire that arises from a rational process of deliberation. At this point we could think that *prohairesis* is the same as rational or spiritual desire (*boulēsis*), but Aristotle is very careful to distinguish them. He explains that one can have a *boulēsis* for the impossible (for example one may wish to become God), but cannot make a *prohairesis* involving the impossible (one cannot choose to become God if that is impossible in practice). Aristotle further clarifies that *boulēsis* is related to the end, while *prohairesis* is related to what contributes to the end[49].

Prohairesis does not refer to all kinds of deliberated decision about means, but only to one that includes in the deliberation process the bigger picture: the goal of leading a good and happy life[50]. A random choice is not *prohairesis*, and neither is *prohairesis* a choice of means regarding how to carry out a technical task. We can say that *prohairesis* is connected with choices with ethical relevance, choices that shape our *ēthos*[51].

Aristotle uses the concept of *prohairesis* to distinguish between the *akratēs* and the *enkratēs*. The difference between them is whether action follows *prohairesis* or the lower desires: "The *akratēs* acts with appetite (*epithumōn*) but not with choice (*prohairoumenos*); while the *enkratēs* on the contrary acts with choice (*prohairesei*), but not with appetite (*epithumia*)."[52]

The *akratēs* acts 'against *prohairesis*'[53] because he acts according to irrational desires which are opposed to what he knows is in line with a good life. This is different from what happens to the *kakos*,

[38] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105b25-26.
[39] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105b27-28.
[40] That Aristotle includes this element as part of his understanding of states of character can be seen in many passages dealing with *akrasia* and *enkrateia* (which Aristotle explicitly defines as states of character in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1145a15-16). Perhaps the following passage is particularly clear: it compares the *enkrates* with the virtuous (in this case the man who possesses the virtue of temperance): "Both the continent man and the temperate man are such as to do nothing contrary to reason for the sake of the bodily pleasures, but the former has and the latter has not bad appetites, and the latter is such as not to feel pleasure contrary to reason, while the former is such as to feel pleasure but not to be led by it" (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1151b33-1152a3).
[41] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1151b33-1152a3.
[42] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1152a27-30.
[43] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103b21-25, 1104b12-13 and 1179b32-1180a1.
[44] Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 403a16-30.
[45] The word is also translated into English terms such as 'decision', 'intention' or 'deliberated purpose' (Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, p.130), and some commentators on Aristotle employ other terms: Hardie uses 'preferential choice', Kenny 'purposive choice', Broadie 'rational choice' and Sorabji 'deliberate choice' (cf. K. M. Nielsen, "Aristotle's Theory of Decision (*prohairesis*) – The Moral Problem", Paper from the *Colloquia at University of Massachusetts Amherst,* 18/1/2011, p. 7, fn. 24).
[46] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139a23-26: "Moral virtue is a state concerned with choice *(hē ēthikē aretē hexis prohairetikē*), and choice is deliberated desire (*hē prohairesis orexis bouleutikē*), therefore both the reasoning must be true (*ton logon alēthēn*) and the desire right (*kai tēn orexin orthēn*), if the choice is to be good *(eiper hē prohairesis spoudaia)*, and the latter must pursue what the former asserts".
[47] Cf. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1214b5-11: "Taking note of these things, everyone who can live according to his own choice (*prohairesis*) should adopt some goal for the fine life, whether it be honour or reputation or wealth or cultivation – an aim that he will have in view in all his actions; for not to have ordered one's life in relation to some end is a mark of extreme folly". This translation is taken from M. Woods, *Eudemian Ethics Books I, II and VII*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
[48] According to Anscombe, *prohairesis* –in the specific technical meaning given to it by Aristotle – refers to "something determined not just by any deliberation, but by deliberation about how to obtain an object of one's will (*boulesis*) rather than merely of one's desire (*epithumia*)" (G. E. M. Anscombe, "Thought and Action in Aristotle", in *Articles on Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield and Richard Sorabji, vol. 2, London: Duckworth 1977, p. 61).
[49] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1111b26.
[50] Cf. Anscombe, "Thought and Action in Aristotle", p. 63.
[51] Using technical terms, *prohairesis* in the sense discussed in Aristotle here is connected with *praxis* (immanent activity where the end coincides with the activity itself) and not with *poiesis* (the exercise of an art or another productive activity where the end does not coincide with the activity itself).
[52] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1111b13-14.
[53] I borrow the notions action 'on *prohairesis*' and 'against *prohairesis*' from Chappell, *Aristotle and Augustine on Freedom: Two Theories of Freedom, Voluntary Action and Akrasia*, p. 68.

who acts according to the wrong conception of what a good life is: the action of the *kakos* is action 'on *prohairesis*' (in the sense of following the *prohairesis* reached), but his *prohairesis* is mistaken.

The *enkrates* acts 'on *prohairesis'*, since he follows the result of the deliberation in view of his end in life, even if his felt tendency is to follow his irrational desires that are opposed to it. This is different from the case of the virtuous person, as not only does he act 'on *prohairesis*', but his irrational desires also coincide with the good *prohairesis* reached.

We will shortly see how Aristotle's notions of *ēthos* and *prohairesis* can be used to analyse the original sin episode recounted in Gen 3:1-6. But before we do this, let us first study the condition of human beings before the fall.

7. The state of human nature before original sin

As is well known, there are two accounts of the creation of human beings in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. The first one, comprising Gen 1:1-2:3, is polished in style and commonly attributed to a priestly tradition. In this account, we are told that God made human beings in his image and likeness[54], and that he entrusted to them the mission of multiplying and filling the earth and having dominion over the material creation[55]. The second account, more vivid and simpler in style, tells us that God modelled Adam out of the dust of the earth and breathed life into his nostrils[56], and that he placed him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it[57]. The garden of Eden is described as a place of close relationship with God, with nature and a state of absence of pain, suffering and death[58]. We are also told that God gave a commandment to Adam: "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."[59] The text then mentions how God looked after Adam by finding him companions to overcome his loneliness. Explicit mention is also made of the nuptial meaning of the human body[60], and the original harmony between man and woman[61]. The narrative of this second account continues with the story of original sin in Gen 3:1-6, which we will analyse below in more detail.

From a reading of these two accounts of Genesis[62], the Magisterium of the Catholic Church has arrived at a few characteristics of the condition of human beings before original sin. The first characteristic is theological and is the root of all the others: Adam and Eve were elevated by God to a share in the divine life and established in an intimate relationship with God[63]. This is technically called the state of original holiness[64].

[54] Cf. Gen 1:26-27.
[55] Cf. Gen 1:26 and 1:28.
[56] Cf. Gen 2:7.
[57] Cf. Gen 2:15.
[58] Cf. Gen 2:17; 3:8; 3:16 and 3:19.
[59] Gen 2:16-17.
[60] Cf. Gen 2:18-24. Note verse 24: "therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh".
[61] Cf. Gen 2:25: "And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed".
[62] The Church, already from the first Fathers, has interpreted these passages of Scripture as recounting a primeval event in the history of humanity using figurative language (cf. CCC 390).
[63] Cf. CCC 374. This state has also been called supernatural elevation or supernatural gift, and the Council of Trent says that Adam was constituted in holiness and justice (cf. *Decree on Original Sin*, DS 1511).
[64] Cf. CCC 375.

Together with this state of original holiness, and congruent with it, Adam and Eve were also given a set of special anthropological conditions comprising what is called the state of original justice[65]. These gifts perfected the first humans beyond their natural condition in a manner that suited the dignity of their bestowed share of divine life[66]. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* mentions the following gifts as part of this original justice: immortality, impassibility, and inner harmony of the human person or integrity[67]. It also mentions, as part of that original justice, the harmony of the relationships between man and woman, and between the first humans and creation[68].

Let us consider in more detail the gift of integrity, as it is particularly relevant to our analysis. According to the text in the *Catechism*, this gift is connected with the original task of dominion over creation given by God to the first human beings. Together with the command to "fill the earth and subdue it"[69], God granted Adam and Eve power of mastery over all material creatures, including self-mastery[70]. What does this self-mastery refer to? St John Paul II explains that "man was intact and well-ordered in all his being"[71]. The *Catechism* further teaches that "the first man was unimpaired and ordered in his whole being because he was free from the triple concupiscence that subjugates him to the pleasures of the the senses, covetousness for earthly goods, and self-assertion contrary to the dictates of reason"[72].

This description of the original gift of integrity implies a harmony of reason, feelings and desires. Original justice involved a moral state resulting not from human endeavour but from a divine gift, by which all the natural powers (intelligence, will, concupiscible and irascible desires) were perfectly ordered to 'right reason'. In other words, Adam and Eve were originally endowed with the virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude –which perfected their nature and aligned it to 'right reason'– without the need for any effort of repetition of virtuous acts on their part.

Following Aristotle's ideas of states of character discussed above, we could say that the gift of integrity implied that our first parents had a virtuous state of character (a virtuous *ēthos*) in full harmony with reason (*logos*), not because they had the strength of will to follow what is right against their desires to do otherwise (which is what characterises the *enkratēs* but not the virtuous person) but because they 'felt' doing what is right as the most attractive thing to do. This represents a full integration of *logos* not only with *ēthos* but also with *pathos* (the emotions and feelings connected with human desires).

For St Thomas Aquinas, original justice also brought some additional gifts related to the gift of integrity: "As a result of original justice, reason had perfect hold over the lower parts of the soul, while

[65] The Council of Trent teaches that the first man Adam lost the holiness and justice in which he had been constituted: "*Primum hominem Adam... sanctitatem et iustitiam, in qua constitutus fuerat, amisisse*" (*Decree on Original Sin*, DS 1511). St John Paul II commenting on this passage of Trent explains that it means that "before sin, man possessed sanctifying grace with all the supernatural gifts that make him righteous before God. We may sum all this up by saying that man was in friendship with God at the beginning" (St John Paul II, *General Audience*, Wednesday, 3rd September 1986, n. 4).
[66] These gifts have also been known traditionally as 'preternatural' to distinguish them from the supernatural gift of the share in God's grace. The name preternatural comes from the Latin *praeter naturam* (beyond nature) and indicates that they are gifts beyond man's nature, but not beyond that of some higher creatures (like that of the angels), and therefore not 'supernatural' in the sense of 'divine' (Cf. T. Scannell, "Supernatural Gift", in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. Retrieved 15th September 2020 from New Advent: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06553a.htm).
[67] Cf. CCC 376.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Gen 1:26.
[70] Cf. CCC 377.
[71] St John Paul II, *General Audience,* Wednesday, 3rd September 1986, n. 5.
[72] CCC 377.

reason itself was perfected by God, and was subject to Him."[73] The perfection of the reason by God (sometimes called infused knowledge) meant that the *logos* in Adam and Eve was *ortho logos*. In some ways this is a requirement of integrity and is parallel to it. In the same way that the gift of integrity establishes the perfection of the state of virtue (the ruling of reason over the lower parts) without any effort on the part of humans, so the gift of infused knowledge perfects the reason, equipping it with all the necessary knowledge required for reaching the end of human life without the effort involved in gradually acquiring it.

It is important to clarify that the gifts of infused knowledge and integrity refer to perfections that are naturally attainable by humans, and not to perfections that are beyond human nature.[74] What was beyond the powers of human nature was not the actual virtue and knowledge as such, but the immediate acquisition of that virtue and knowledge.

Aquinas also speaks of subjection to God connected to the gifts of integrity and infused knowledge. This needs to be understood as a necessary consequence of the two gifts. Moral virtue removes obstacles from our relationship to God, and perfected reason is wise to recognise the superior wisdom of God, to which it therefore submits. The *logos* in Adam and Eve, we could say, was not only *ortho logos* but subject to the divine *Logos.*

At this point we can summarise the state of Adam and Eve as a perfect integration of *ēthos, pathos* and *ortho logos* in perfect subjection to the *Logos*. But if this is how things were in paradise, how could Adam and Eve sin? How could sin possibly enter into this state of human nature?

8. The possibility of sinning

Indeed, this question has greatly troubled some people, St Augustine among others[75], and not without reason. Clearly, sin could not come as a result of a momentary slip, or from succumbing to pleasure. An implicit disobedience to God by momentarily choosing something against 'right reason' on the basis of being pulled by a strong desire is not possible in a state of integration of *ēthos, pathos* and *ortho logos.* A sin of weakness in the state of original justice is simply inconceivable.

The alternative to a sin of weakness is a sin involving a more explicit –and rational– disobedience to God's commandment, in the form of preferring an alternative spiritual good to the one that God offers. At first sight, this alternative is also difficult to conceive. Human nature had been endowed with infused knowledge, and human reason was subjected to God, in the sense that humans had full trust that God's commandments truly pointed to what was good for their lives.

[73] STh I-II, q. 85 a. 3 co.

[74] Aquinas explains this with great clarity: "Moreover, in order to direct his own life and that of others, man needs to know not only those things which can be naturally known, but also things surpassing natural knowledge; because the life of man is directed to a supernatural end: just as it is necessary for us to know the truths of faith in order to direct our own lives. Wherefore the first man was endowed with such a knowledge of these supernatural truths as was necessary for the direction of human life in that state. But those things which cannot be known by merely human effort, and which are not necessary for the direction of human life, were not known by the first man; such as the thoughts of men, future contingent events, and some individual facts, as for instance the number of pebbles in a stream; and the like." (STh I, q. 94, a. 3 co.)

[75] Oakes succinctly describes the problem that faced Augustine: "Indeed so glowing was his portrayal of this putative historical 'paradise' that, in his debates with the Pelagians, he was hard put to come up with a motivation for the sin of Adam and Eve: what would ever prompt such a fateful sin in such a pleasant environment and in beings created so free of evil tendencies? So he was finally forced to posit at least a smidgen of 'concupiscence', a small but appreciable amount of an inclination toward evil in our first parents, to explain their enticement by the Serpent –a concession which might seem rather to undermine the whole point of the doctrine." (E. T. Oakes, "Original Sin: A Disputation", in *First Things* 87 (November 1998) 16-24).

At this point, it is worth bringing in an important distinction. The situation of the humans in paradise was one of integrity of faculties but not of absolute human perfection: paradise was not heaven, and Adam and Eve, even though they enjoyed a close relationship with God, did not possess the beatific vision granted in glory. Aquinas explains this difference in terms of Aristotelian happiness: "Man was happy in paradise, but not with that perfect happiness to which he was destined, which consists in the vision of the Divine Essence"[76].

The perfect happiness of contemplating God face to face and loving him in full union can only be obtained as a special gift of God[77], and this was not granted as part of the original justice for a very good reason: it would had forced the first humans to be united with God, thereby making their love of God –which in a spiritual being must be free– impossible[78]. While their reason was subjected to God, their will was free.

This lack of perfect happiness means that there was something they did not yet have, and as a consequence they were open to both growth and corruption. Adam and Eve did not have to grow, either in virtue or in the natural knowledge required to reach union with God, but they did need to grow in the knowledge and love of God.

Adam and Eve could sin, because they were not forced to love God above all things: it was possible for them to attempt to achieve a greater happiness by disobeying God, but only if this were to present itself as a rational possibility that did not contradict the end of their life. And if the end of their lives is to know and love God, that leaves two possibilities: either they grow in knowledge and love of God through submission to God's will, or they themselves become like God –in the sense of equal to Him in intelligence and power– and having become so, satisfy themselves with knowing and loving their own will.

At this point, the question could be posed of whether becoming like God is a desire leading to action that could ever arise spontaneously in the human person. It seems very unlikely. The wish to become like God is not something that comes from *epithumia* or *thumos* but from reason: it is a *boulēsis*. As we have explained, *boulēsis* does not lead to action as it deals only with the end and not the means; for action we need *prohairesis*. But *prohairesis* can only arise if we reason that there is a real possibility of achieving the desire in practice or at least there is not an absolute impossibility. For example, the desire to play the piano may lead someone to act and take piano classes; and even the desire to grow orange grass may move someone to act by experimenting with genetically modified seeds, but a wish that 2+2=5 will not lead to any action. Humans could only form the *prohairesis* of becoming like God if they thought that becoming like God was not an absolute impossibility, but it is difficult to see how this could ever arise in a virtuous human being with a perfected reason that acknowledges his or her subjection to God.

Therefore it seems more logical that the possibility of becoming like God had to be posed by something external to the first human beings. And this is what the account of original sin in Genesis tells us.

[76] STh I, q. 94, a. 1, ad. 1. The connection of this to the thought of Aristotle is something that St Thomas explicitly acknowledges elsewhere: "Hence Aristotle (Ethic. X) says that man's ultimate happiness consists in his most perfect contemplation, whereby in this life he can behold the best intelligible object; and that is God. Above this happiness there is still another, which we look forward to in the future, whereby we shall see God as he is (1 Jn 3:2)" (STh I, q. 62, a. 1, co.).

[77] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* precisely explains that "because of his transcendence, God cannot be seen as he is, unless he himself opens up his mystery to man's immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it" (CCC 1028).

[78] Cf. CCC 396: "God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature, man can live this friendship only in free submission to God."

9. The account of original sin in Gen 3:1-6

The Book of Genesis uses the image of the serpent to represent the tempter who leads Eve –and through her, Adam– to disobey the original command from God. In the context of the whole of Scripture and the Church's Tradition, it is clear that the serpent does not refer to a god-like principle of evil in the cosmos or to a source of evil in human nature, but to a created being that has turned away from the goodness of God: the devil[79]. The choice of a serpent to characterise the devil is very appropriate since serpents are traditionally known for their subtlety and cunning, and the devil will precisely use a subtle and cunning ploy to deceive Eve.

The story of Gen 3:1-6 is well known. The devil suggests to Eve that God's commandment is simply a way to repress their potential growth, and that in the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil they will find liberation from their state of mere creatures[80]. The devil promises that eating from the tree will make them "like God, knowing good and evil"[81], that is creators of the laws of the natural world and of morality[82]. Eve is seduced by this prospect, and looks at the tree with new eyes: "the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise"[83]. Before the conversation with the devil, when she looked at the tree, she simply observed that it looked pleasant and that the fruit seemed edible, but none of this elicited in her a desire contrary to God's commandment. After the conversation with the devil, she looked at the fruit of the tree with desire because of the spiritual good she saw in it. With this new desire she turned to action, and in disobedience to God, approached the tree, "took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate"[84].

It is significant that the devil does not tempt Eve to eat of the tree by focusing her attention on its looks and its potentially pleasurable taste. The inner unity of *ēthos*, *ortho logos*, and *pathos* in Adam and Eve cannot be broken in this way. They have the gift of integrity and therefore perfect mastery over themselves; their rational desires will always be in command and they cannot act *akratically* or act against their *prohairesis*. Their idea of a good life is a life of harmony with God's will, and each *prohairesis* they make is always in line with it.

But there is one option open for the tempter. If Adam and Eve cannot act against their *prohairesis*, what about changing their idea of what a good life is so they are led to act with a mistaken *prohairesis*? Knowing the constitution of human beings, the devil attempts this avenue and presents a possibility up to now unthinkable to Adam and Eve: what if there is a higher good than union with God? And what if that good is potentially achievable?

We could say that in theory –and according to human logic– there is indeed a good higher than that of union with God, and that is to become like God. This thought is within the possibilities of human reason, and its consideration could lead to a *boulēsis* for that good. However, to an upright human intellect the act of becoming like God will appear as impossible as 2+2=5, and therefore no *prohairesis* can be formed in that direction and disobedience to God remains impossible.

The devil argues that while becoming like God may seem impossible to the human reason, perhaps there is a way for that to happen that cannot be known naturally by the human reason, but one that God knows about: "for God knows that when you eat of it [the fruit of the tree] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"[85]. With this argument the devil has opened the possibility of becoming like God, and if that is the case humans can now not only wish, but choose to become like God: they can form a *prohairesis* that involves disobedience to God. Of course, the devil is lying about the possibility, but to spot the lie is beyond the grasp of humans since it cannot be contrasted with any form of reality available to human reason.

The devil has shifted the question from the realm of reason to the realm of trust, and at that point he works to undermine their trust in God. What if, after all, God does not want your good, but is deceiving you? What if God is only pretending to be a loving father who has opened his life to you, but is in fact a slave master who is using you to look after material creation?[86] What if there is more to the tree of knowledge of good and evil than meets the eye and God does not want you to know?

The choice becomes either trusting in God, and remaining forever a creature, or trusting in the devil in the hope of a higher spiritual good[87]. Adam and Eve, attracted by the desire of the new possibility opened to them, chose to believe the devil and change their view of what a good life is and consequently how to be happy: happiness is no longer to do God's will but to become like God. Their new conception of what a good new life is leads them to form a *prohairesis* involving disobedience to God, and to act on it since there is no other desire that can impede it. Moreover, the *epithumetic* attraction of the fruit of the tree ("good for food" and "a delight to the eyes"[88]) further reinforces their decision. They do not act 'against *prohairesis'*, they act 'on *prohairesis*', but one that is disordered: their *logos*, once they have been deceived by the devil, is no longer *ortho logos* but a mistaken *logos* misaligned from *Logos*. And this will have woeful consequences for them.

Adam and Eve chose to trust the devil because of the attraction of a potentially higher spiritual good of becoming like God, rather than to trust God in accord with the facts. The facts were that God had shown them sufficient motives for credibility in his goodness. In chapter 2 of Genesis, we are told how God provided Adam with a garden to live in, food to eat, animals to relieve his loneliness and even a female human companion, Eve. God elevated them to a state of friendship with Him and opened His life to them. He has shown Himself a father, while the devil has shown nothing, but provided only empty promises. And yet Adam and Eve do not trust God: there lies the full malice of their sin. As St John Paul II explains this "insane and evil act acquires its full negative meaning only when it is seen against the background of man's relationship with God"[89].

[79] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called 'Satan' or the 'devil'. The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: the devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing." (CCC 391).

[80] Cf. Gen 3:1-4.

[81] Gen 3:5.

[82] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains the symbolism of the tree: "The 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil' symbolically evokes the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust. Man is dependent on his Creator, and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom." (CCC 396)

[83] Gen 3:6.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Gen 3:5.

[86] In this respect it is interesting to note the comment from St John Paul II: "Original sin attempts, then, to abolish fatherhood, destroying its rays which permeate the created world, placing in doubt the truth about God who is Love and leaving man with only a sense of the master-slave relationship." (St John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, London: Jonathan Cape 1994, p. 228)

[87] St Thomas Aquinas explains the nature of original sin in the following way: "Wherefore it was not possible for the first inordinateness in the human appetite to result from his coveting a sensible good, to which the concupiscence of the flesh tends against the order of reason. It remains therefore that the first inordinateness of the human appetite resulted from his coveting inordinately some spiritual good. Now he would not have coveted it inordinately, by desiring it according to his measure as established by the Divine rule. Hence it follows that man's first sin consisted in his coveting some spiritual good above his measure: and this pertains to pride. Therefore it is evident that man's first sin was pride." (STh II-II, q. 163 a. 1 co.)

[88] Gen 3:6.

[89] St John Paul II, *General Audience*, Wednesday, 3rd September 1986, n.1.

10. The consequences of original sin and akrasia

A detailed analysis of the events following original sin, as described in Gen 3:7-23, will take us too far and should be left for a future study. In addition, original sin and its consequences cannot be properly considered in isolation from the doctrine of redemption by Christ, since human nature is not only fallen but has been redeemed by Christ[90].

But some considerations of the consequence of original sin can be mentioned here. After original sin, Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden. This symbolises the loss of their state of original holiness, and represents the most devastating consequence of original sin. In addition they also lost their state of original justice. The gifts of impassibility, immortality, and harmony between man and woman and with creation are lost, and likewise the gift of integrity: the inner harmony of the human person is destroyed and "the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered"[91].

The fallen state of Adam and Eve is transmitted to all their descendants[92]. The Catholic Church teaches that human nature suffers the consequences of original sin, although our nature is not totally corrupted but only wounded[93]. St John Paul II further clarifies that one should speak "of a darkening of the intellect and of a weakening of the will, of 'wounds' of the spiritual and sensitive faculties, and not of a loss of their essential capacities even in relation to the knowledge and love of God"[94].

As part of the wounds of human nature, the Church mentions "an inclination to evil that is called concupiscence"[95]. In Catholic theology concupiscence has the particular meaning of "the movement of the sensitive appetite contrary to the operation of the human reason"[96]. This definition is in line with that conflict between *ortho logos* and *pathos* that Aristotle discovers in the *akratēs* and the *enkratēs*. Therefore, we can say that *akrasia* (and similarly *enkrateia*) is a new *ēthos* that appears as a consequence of the wounds inflicted in nature by original sin.

But while the states of *akrasia* and *enkrateia* characterise human nature after the fall, the state of virtue is still possible –since human nature is not totally corrupted– although not without personal effort and external help[97]. However, even if virtue can be achieved progressively through correct habituation (and humans can thus gain a stable *ēthos* that integrates *pathos* and *ortho logos* and is once more aligned with *Logos*), it can never achieve in this life the stability it had in the garden of Eden. This is so because human nature in its present condition is not impassible but limited by psychosomatic pathologies and environmental factors which affect behaviour and remain outside the control of reason.

[90] St John Paul II explains that "based on revelation, human nature is not only 'fallen' but also 'redeemed' in Jesus Christ, so that 'where sin increased, grace abounded all the more' (Rom 5:20). This is the real context in which original sin and its consequences must be considered." (St John Paul II, *General Audience*, Wednesday, 8th October 1986, n. 9)

[91] Cf. CCC 400: "The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject 'to its bondage to decay'. Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will 'return to the ground', for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history."

[92] Cf. CCC 403-404.

[93] Cf. CCC 405.

[94] St John Paul II, *General Audience*, Wednesday, 8th October 1986, n. 7. In this text we can appreciate a significant difference from the position of Luther. For Luther, original sin "is not merely the privation of quality in the will, indeed, not merely the loss of light in the intellect or of strength in the memory, but, in a word, the loss of all uprightness and of the power of all our faculties of body and soul and of the whole inner and outer man" (M. Luther, *Lectures on Romans,* edited and translated by W. Pauck, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2006, p. 167).

[95] CCC 405.

[96] CCC 2515.

[97] The teaching of the Church concurs with this: "Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God's help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good." (CCC 1810).

11. Conclusion

For Plato, *akrasia* is a punishment inflicted on human nature. He sees the commonly observed situation of conflict between passion and reason as a consequence of an original fall that corrupted human nature completely, turning it into a composite of two substances forever in tension.

The Catholic doctrine of original sin superficially resembles Plato's mythical fall, but differs in some essential points. Concupiscence, a concept closely related to *akrasia*, is also considered as the consequence of an original fall, although resulting not from a constitutional change in human nature but from the wounding of the human faculties. In addition, while for Plato the original fall was itself the result of a pre-existing inner conflict in the human soul, the doctrine of original sin speaks of an initial harmony of the human person which was disturbed by an external tempter.

We have seen how Aristotle's analysis of *akrasia*, although not referring to an original fall, provides us with some important concepts to understand better the state of original justice of our first parents, and some of the psychological processes involved in the temptation leading to original sin. The original inner harmony of Adam and Eve can be described in Aristotelian terms as a virtuous state characterised by the integration of *ēthos*, *pathos* and *ortho logos* and guided by a submission to divine *Logos*. The possibility of Adam and Eve's sinning can be explained using Aristotle's theory of action by showing how, even in the original state of holiness and justice, it was possible to elicit a *prohairesis* that involved disobedience to God. Finally, the role of the tempter in the events leading to the original sin can be elucidated using Aristotle's distinction between *boulēsis* and *prohairesis* since, in the original state of Adam and Eve, an external input was needed to turn a *boulēsis*, that of becoming like God, into a *prohairesis* leading to acting against God's commandment.

But while this analysis gives us some insights into the mystery of original sin, it does not explain it completely. There is something irrational and mysterious about Adam and Eve's evil choice to disobey God, something mysterious because original sin does not follow a clear logic that we can explain but is enveloped in an illogical darkness that is difficult to penetrate:

> Evil comes from a freedom created, from a freedom abused. How was it possible, how did it happen? This remains obscure. Evil is not logical. Only God and good are logical, are light. Evil remains mysterious. It is presented as such in great images, as it is in chapter 3 of Genesis, with that scene of the two trees, of the serpent, of sinful man: a great image that makes us guess but cannot explain what is itself illogical[98].

[98] Benedict XVI, *General Audience*, Wednesday, 3rd December 2008.