

Ivo Indjov

## The Fall

being human and the knowledge of good and evil

Bachelor's thesis in Philosophy

Supervisor: Roe Fremstedal

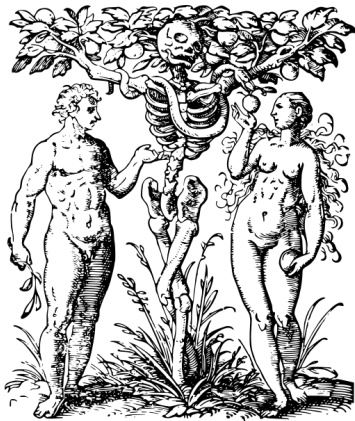
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Crawly: *I think it was a bit of an overreaction, to be honest. I mean, first offense and everything. I can't see what's so bad about knowing the difference between good and evil, anyway.*

Aziraphale: *It must be bad, otherwise you wouldn't have been involved.*

Crawly: *You've got to admit it's a bit of a pantomime, though. I mean, pointing out the Tree and saying 'Don't Touch' in big letters. Not very subtle, is it? I mean, why not put it on top of a high mountain or a long way off? Makes you wonder what He's really planning.*

Aziraphale: *Best not to speculate, really. You can't second-guess ineffability, I always say. There's Right, and there's Wrong. If you do Wrong when you're told to do Right, you deserve to be punished. Er<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> A fragment of the opening dialogue between the demon Crawly and the angel Aziraphale in Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's novel *Good Omens*.

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# 1. Introduction

The opening dialogue between Aziraphale and Crowley sparks a curiosity about the meaning of the story of the Fall<sup>2</sup>. What role does knowledge of good and evil play in shaping us as species? Could we claim that we are fully humans<sup>3</sup> if we are unable to make such judgments? Where does free will fit in the picture?

In this essay, I will explore these and other questions in the light of our modern understanding. More specifically, I will argue that humans (in particular Adam and Eve) before and after the Fall were distinct in nature. This, in turn, would inevitably suggest a different response and interpretation of the story and its consequences. The question of what it means to be unable to form and maintain moral values and standards is a difficult one to answer, but not impossible to do to a grade beyond mere speculations. My main argument is that the incapability of knowing good and evil<sup>4</sup> doesn't come alone, but has also an impact on other inference systems responsible for, among other things, decision making, emotions, and rationality. Some of these have long been seen as essential characteristics of being human and similar views are sustained to the present day. To defend my point, I will rely on the philosophical traditions concerning human nature and their connection to theological interpretations of the Biblical story of the Fall. The goal of my thesis is not to prove or disprove the scriptures, but to make an argumentative analysis of them with an approach compliant with the principle of charity that aims at objectivity. Additionally, I will support my claim with arguments from contemporary empirical studies on the functioning of the human brain. In conclusion, I will challenge the classical dependence of evil on free will, suggesting that it leads to a logical contradiction. Seen from this perspective, questions around the justification of the punishment emerge and are to be assessed thoroughly in the future.

I divide the paper into three main parts - introduction, exposition, and conclusion. The second one, which is also the longest, explores the story of the Fall, its significance, and relevant interpretations by Augustine, Aquinas, and Kant. It further presents and defends the

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<sup>2</sup> Which I would also refer to as the story of the first/primal/original sin. Moreover, Fall is to be understood as the first sin of humans (Adam and Eve), and not the Fall of the angels.

<sup>3</sup> I use the word *human* in a sense of being possessing human nature - see 2.5.

<sup>4</sup> In this thesis, I will understand good and evil as opposites, and their conscious awareness as fundamental for morality.

main argument, tying it up to the ideas of Aristotle, contemporary thinkers of human nature, as well as neuroscientific research.

All quotations of the *Bible* will refer to the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV, 1989). I picked this translation because it is considered to be one of the most reliable and correct ones, recognized by the Vatican in 2007, and the preferred choice of scholars like Bart Ehrman.

## 1.1. The framework

The story of the Fall can be read and interpreted in different ways. This itself creates a problem for further investigation and common ground is necessary. My aim is to broaden the scope of the interpretation without focusing on details that can lead to undesirable speculations. Therefore, I will avoid discussing if there really was a talking snake<sup>5</sup>, a special tree, a fruit, etc. I bracket all these details and see the Fall as an event with a particular consequence. In the *Bible*, it is manifested by the act of eating, and I will also use it when referring to the first sin. However, this will be done only tentatively, without implying any claim on the way the action was taken. Therefore, the framework of choice is based on two axioms that are not only in agreement with the story but are its highlights:

- The Fall is an event in a temporal world<sup>6</sup>. In other words, we can logically talk about a time *before* and *after*, and respectively a state *before* and *after* the Fall. In this thesis, I will refer to the former time and state as *prelapsarian*, and to the latter as *postlapsarian*<sup>7</sup>.
- The Fall transformed the first humans, making them capable of reflective moral judgments by consciously distinguishing between good and evil.

These two assumptions are not controversial and could be generally accepted. The first one is a kind of analytic truth - it is impossible to have a first sin if we don't consider temporality - "*The very notion of a primal sin implies that there was a time when creation was without sin.*" (Timple, 2021, para. 2.1). The second one is a more complex premise, which needs an elaboration - something I do in 2.2 after presenting, in short, the story itself.

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<sup>5</sup> *Serpent* and *snake* will be used as synonyms throughout the paper.

<sup>6</sup> This doesn't necessarily imply that the world in which the event took place was the same as our world today.

<sup>7</sup> Both terms are etymologically related to Latin "*lapsus*" which means "*Fall*". Together with the prefixes "*pre*" and "*post*", they express respectively a condition (state/time) before and after the Fall.



## 2. Exposition

The main part of my thesis follows a structure that builds upon each of the previous elements. I start with a short description of the story, followed by its significant elements. After that, I present the traditional theological and philosophical interpretations and argue that they come short in explaining the prelapsarian nature of Adam and Eve. Then the question “What is a human being?” shows to play a central role in my argument - something that I investigate with the help of classical and contemporary theories. To support my thesis, I turn to the empirical studies of the human brain and show the complex interdependence of mental processes. Further, I suggest an alternative view that plays a complementary role. Before the conclusion, I lay down the implications and possible further investigations relevant to the main claim, as well as some objections and discussion topics.

### 2.1. The Fall

The story of the Fall can be found in chapter 3 of the first book of the *Bible* - *Genesis*. It is directly connected to the creation narrative in the first two chapters and how the first people came to be. I will summarize it by highlighting chronologically the relevant points:

- God creates the first human being - Adam (NRSV, Genesis 2:7).
- God makes the Garden of Eden and puts the human there<sup>8</sup> (NRSV, Genesis 2:8).
- God makes all the trees, including the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (NRSV, Genesis 2:9).
- God commands Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, otherwise, he shall die (NRSV, Genesis 2:16-17)
- God creates the woman - Eve (NRSV, Genesis 2:22)
- The serpent tempts Eve to eat from the “forbidden tree”, and after that Eve gives to Adam (NRSV, Genesis 3:1-6)
- “*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked*” (NRSV, Genesis 3:7)
- God finds out what humans did and punish them (NRSV, Genesis 3:8-24)

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<sup>8</sup> Chronologically this can be disputed since in verse 15 it is explicitly stated again that God puts the man in the garden of Eden.

## 2.2. The significance of the story and its elements

But why is this short story in the first pages of the *Bible* so important? Well, it gives answers to questions like how people were first created, what God's intentions were, why people are miserable, why there is evil in the world, etc. Further on, it provides possibilities to establish certain religious doctrines and create an organization of specialized beliefs and behaviors, serving as a foundation of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Grace, redemption, sin, and obedience are just a fraction of the complex belief systems having their roots in this story.

The short representation from 2.1 misses some important points, regardless of whether one interprets the story as a real historical event or just as a moral allegory from an era when the distinction between *logos* and *mythos* wasn't so clear. One of them is the significance of the consequence of the event, which seems to be central to the plot - the relation to "*good and evil*" is present in the description of the tree, the warning, the prohibition of eating, the temptation, implicitly in Adam and Eve's admission, and in the final acknowledgment by God. To show this, I would like to focus on repetition as a way to "*evoke audience response*" (Leroux, 1995, p. 9). Despite varying depending on style, context, or genre, it is crucial for communicating and grasping the meaning.

Taking the relatively short text between *Genesis 2:9* and *Genesis 3:24*, the keyword density<sup>9</sup> of two consecutive words (how often two words appear in a text one after another), not including commons like "the", "and", "not" etc., shows the following results for phrases used more than three times:

<b>Words</b>	<b>Density</b>	
Lord God	16 times	6%
shall eat	8 times	3%
good evil	4 times	2%

While the first one is obvious considering the stylistics of the scriptures, the second and the third suggest the importance of action and some elements of ethics. These two are connected to the main issue in the story - eating from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of

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<sup>9</sup> <https://wordcounter.net/> is a great tool for such an analysis.

good and evil. One important detail is that the phrase “good and evil”, which is used entirely as a description and consequence of the Fall, is distributed relatively evenly in the text - something indicating a persistence and relatedness that wraps the story:



Same is true for the act of eating, which is stated on 10 occasions<sup>10</sup>.

This all implies a certain significance of an act (presented as eating from a special tree), which results in a change in a moral state (awareness of good and evil). This is the reason why I consider the already mentioned second axiom (see 1.1.) so fundamental. Regardless of the approach - literal or allegorical, we cannot ignore the overwhelming presence and repetitiveness of “good and evil” and the act of eating leading to the change of first humans’ moral states.

## 2.3. The interpretations

There are plenty of interpretations of the story from philosophers and theologians. Most of them emphasize the effect of the event, and more specifically how we can restore the relationship with God after the first alienation originating in the Fall. What is relevant for the purpose of this paper, however, is the prelapsarian nature of humans and what made them *sin* in the first place. I chose a selection of philosophers who wrote on this topic, and as I will show, they all express similar ideas - the Fall is a result of people’s free will<sup>11</sup>, combined with complex cognitive capabilities.

### 2.3.1. Augustine

Augustine introduces the idea of the inherited *original sin*, which until today serves as a doctrine in The Catholic (Catholic Church, 1994, p. 98) and other churches<sup>12</sup>. For the sake of consecutiveness, I will use the same term in this paper but only in the sense of designating the first sin (or the *primal sin* as quoted in 1.1), free from any sophisticated theological interpretations (like guilt, inheritance, etc.).

<sup>10</sup> If we don’t count the 5 times it is used in the context of punishment in Genesis 3:14-19.

<sup>11</sup> For Kant, though, fully unleashed prelapsarian free will is questionable - see 2.3.3.

<sup>12</sup> However, the division between Catholic, Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestantism, etc. didn’t exist in the IV-V century AD.

In *The City of God*, Augustine (1871) claims that death comes with the Fall. It is due to the disobedience of the first people and could have been avoided (Vol. 1, p. 521). He writes that God created the first human such that if he remains in subjection, keeping God's commands, he will be blessed and immortal. However, if Adam offends the Lord (as happened to be the case) "*by a proud and disobedient use of his free will, he should become subject to death*" (Vol. 1, p. 514). Further on he develops the idea that the original sin is inherited and we, as human beings, are not capable of saving ourselves or be fully moral but need divine grace (Vol. 2, pp. 1-2). What is important though, is that Augustine explicitly claims that Adam (and respectively Eve) possessed free will. This is also stated as a feature of their soul - "*for its own will was the originator of its evil*" (Vol. 1, p. 535). Moreover, the original sin was a "*voluntary defection from good; for good is not the cause of evil, but a defection from good is*" (Vol. 1, p. 493), which suggests intentionality.

As for the tree of good and evil - Augustine claims that it is not itself bad, but the prohibition of eating from it carried the idea of "*a pure and simple obedience, which is the great virtue of the rational creature*" (Vol. 1, p. 545). He agrees that the condition of Adam and Eve was "*different before the sin*" (Vol. 2, p. 32) - they could technically see that they are naked, or that there are good and beautiful things, but they couldn't reflectively recognize them as such. Only after the act of eating, the knowledge of good and evil was imparted to them (Vol. 2, p. 33). Moreover, Augustine argues that if the first humans didn't obtain this knowledge, "*they would have lived in blissful ignorance*" (Vol. 2, p. 34).

It is important to mention that although Augustine embraces a historical interpretation of the story, he shows that an allegorical understanding in a purely spiritual sense is compatible with it. There he refers to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as the will's free choice (Vol. 1, p. 546), which is ignoring God's will. Either way, his theology is based on the idea that humans were agents of free will, and the Fall, due to disobedience and pride, was followed by a just punishment. Not only this, but the will was "*truly free when it is not the slave of vices and sins.*" - the condition before the Fall, which was lost "*by its own fault*" (Vol. 2, p. 23).

### 2.3.2. Aquinas

To explore Aquinas' interpretation of the narrative, I turn to his best-known work - *Summa Theologica* (Aquinas, 1947). It is a complicated book, following a straight scholarly structure typical for the period, where Aquinas tries to reconcile the modern (at his time)

understanding of what human is, with the Biblical account. There are numerous passages where he explores if Adam had grace, how he saw God, did he see Angels, did he possessed all the virtues, etc. Even so, he doesn't focus very much on the part with the knowledge of good and evil. The view of Aquinas (1947) on this particular question is not so elaborated as the one of Augustine.

However, in the reply to the objection that paradise was not a corporeal place, he writes: “*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a material tree, [...] because, after eating of it, man was to learn [...] the difference between the good of obedience and the evil of rebellion. It may also be said to signify spiritually the free-will as some say.*” (I, Q. 102, Art. 1). The last sentence coincides with the view of Augustine when discussing the allegorical interpretation of the Fall. The emphasis here is the acknowledgment of the significance of understanding good and evil and the role that free will plays. This is inevitably bound to another important theme in Aquinas’s line of thought - rationality in human nature. Some of the examples are - God doesn’t love irrational creatures and cannot make friends with such (I, Q. 20, Art. 2), humans have rational souls<sup>13</sup> (I, Q. 21, Art. 4) and “*rational nature*” is an element in the definition of a human (I, Q. 29, Art. 1), etc.

Before the Fall, according to Aquinas, Adam possessed and advanced natural knowledge (I, Q. 94, Art. 3), but it was limited to a point, beyond which he could be deceived. This limitation can be found in the relation to good and evil, where evil “*was neither present nor imminent*”, while good existed, but without any reflective action towards it (I, Q. 95, Art. 2). In likeness to Augustine, he also claims that the original sin was due to pride and self-love. What is interesting, on the other hand, is that he admits that reason would have enabled the first people to judge the truth, and at the same time, nobody can be held accountable for actions if the reason is absent, giving example with a man in a sleep (I, Q. 94, Art. 4).

Moreover, Aquinas agrees that “*free-will is the faculty of the reason and will, by which good and evil are chosen*” (I, Q. 19, Art. 10) in explaining an objection to the claim that God has free will. It is important to mention that for him good and evil are not constitutive differences except in morals (I, Q. 48, Art. 1). He further argues that in this prelapsarian state, “*Adam had no passion with evil as its object; [...] neither had he passions in respect of good not possessed*” (I, Q. 95, Art. 2).

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<sup>13</sup> Aquinas writes “*The soul of Adam was of the same nature as ours*” (Aquinas, 1947, I, Q. 94, Art. 2), which suggests that Adam’s and his offspring’s rationality are of the same kind as they all possess a rational soul.

### 2.3.3. Kant

In a more modern take, although a bit non-conventional, Kant (1998) expresses his views regarding the story in *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason*. Before continuing, I would like to mention that here I will focus merely on the moral good and evil, and not on the prudential (personal happiness/unhappiness) or natural ones (sickness, good health).

What is important for our case is his idea that prior to the Fall, all that was created was good, there was no conflict between morality and selfishness. There were moral predispositions but it is not clear if they were fully realized. However, *an evil being is introduced*<sup>14</sup>, who “*seeks to establish dominion over minds by causing our first parents to rebel against their overlord*” (Ak. 6:79)<sup>15</sup>. After that, a kingdom of evil is set up on Earth and Kant’s explanation of why God didn’t intervene is because God was acting in accordance with the principle of first people’s freedom, regardless of the outcome (positive or negative). In other words, free will (the choice to rebel), despite being questionable in his interpretation<sup>16</sup>, again plays a crucial role in the actions of Adam and Eve and the following propensity towards evil<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, in this prelapsarian period, Kant admits that “*we have no cognition of how he*<sup>18</sup> *became so evil as to betray his master, for originally he was good*” (Ak. 6:78). This suggests a shift in the introduction of evil, moving it one step back - during the Fall of the angels.

The *problem of evil* then remains unsolved, mostly due to two factors. First, Kant presupposes radical evil - he takes immorality for granted and tries to explain how and why, reconstructing the Augustinian story of the Fall. Second, morality and freedom cannot be understood in the same causal (or Newtonian) sense. Freedom for Kant is the ability to be the first cause and free agents are those who are able to start a new causal chain. According to him, the traditional doctrine “*conflates a concept of nature (i.e. heredity) with a concept of freedom (i.e. sin)*” (Fremstedal, 2012, p. 215) - something that he rejects. This elucidates why for Kant there is a *logical-historical* dualism when it comes to the original sin and therefore morality should be understood in atemporal terms.

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<sup>14</sup> Here Kant is apparently talking about a fallen angel embodied in the serpent who tempts Eve, despite the evil being mentioned hardly seems to be central in his theory.

<sup>15</sup> References to Kant use the academic pagination in the German Academy edition of *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1900-) - e.g. Ak 6:23. The same model is utilized in Kant (1998).

<sup>16</sup> According to Kant, free power of choice is linked to the capacity of being moral (Kant, 1998, Ak. 6:37)

<sup>17</sup> which Kant calls *radical evil* (Ak 6:19).

<sup>18</sup> Talking again about the serpent/fallen angel.

Before the Fall, there wasn't a propensity toward evil, but the evil came into the world through the act of sin - the "*transgression of the moral law as divine command*" (Ak. 6:42). In the lines to come, Kant scrutinizes the way humans deviated from this first moral law presented as a prohibition in *Genesis 2:16-17*. His argument is that humans started downgrading their obedience by rationalizing and embracing a wrong maxim, giving place to sin (Ak. 6:42). However, due to the already mentioned dualism, the beginning of all evil is inconceivable to us (Ak. 6:43-44) - it is beyond the limits of our reason and thus unexplainable by causality.

To sum up - the humans before the Fall were capable of (proto-moral) judgment, giving preference to rebellion (Ak. 6:79). Yes, they were tempted to transgress, but temptation itself wasn't enough - the motive for them to choose sin rather than the moral law was their free will to prioritize (apparently in a wrong way). Kant's view is closer to the idea of this thesis, but it also has a weak point. Although he, admitting the issue with the origin of the first evil, agrees that prelapsarian Adam and Eve were innocent, he nevertheless claims that deep mental operations including reasoning, comparison, and deliberate disobedience were contributing to the process.

Despite their differences, all three philosophers share the view that in the prelapsarian state, there was a time when everything was good, and humans were dependent on their submission to God. They had free will<sup>19</sup> and executed it in a wrong way showing disobedience, pride, and probably self-love. This is in agreement with the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) - it took place at the beginning of the history of man (p. 98), the man was tempted by the devil and took a free choice to "*die in his heart*", abuse his freedom, disobey God's command, prefer himself to God, etc. (p. 100). Moreover, "*sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience*" of God (p. 453), which suggests that obedience is more of a virtue than a vice. This is an important detail, which made me think about an alternative explanation of the mechanism behind human actions in before the Fall (see 2.7).

## 2.4. Shortcomings and hypotheses

There are certain issues I have with the general theological interpretations of the story. They focus much more on the question of disobedience, pride, and inner desire to alienate from God, but does it *post factum* - e.g. through the contemporary perspective of cognitive

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<sup>19</sup> But, as mentioned, for Kant this is questionable.

and moral capabilities. It automatically assumes moral intentionality, while I argue that Adam and Eve were unable to possess such complex and elaborate mental processes.

Let us first consider God’s intention in creating the first humans. Well, there are two hypotheses - (1) either God wanted the existence of evil (it was his original plan) and it was inevitable to happen, or (2) it was just an unintended side effect of the development of human<sup>20</sup> nature - an undesirable outcome. The first one doesn’t make much sense, because if Adam and Eve were supposed to sin, then we wouldn’t rightly expect a punishment. The mere fact that God got angry and banned the first people from the Garden of Eden implies that something went wrong. The classical interpretations also reject such a *divine plan*, suggesting an opposite intention<sup>21</sup>. The second hypothesis is more plausible - people actively chose something (with the deliberate help of the snake), which had radical consequences in their life. This suggests an execution of a *will*, which according to Aquinas, Augustine, the Catholic Church, and possibly Kant was *free*.

I will accept for a moment the idea that Adam and Eve had free will and it was a necessary, even though not sufficient, condition for the existence of evil in the world (including committing original sin). This is also the mainstream position of the Catholic Church - “*we choose it and God allows it. [...] Evil exists because we - not God - do it. Free will makes it possible*” (Brugger, 2020). If evil entered our world through the first sin due to act upon free will, it means that there is evil in the world because people chose it this way - a willfully preferred path of alienation from God that started with the Fall. Its formal representation is as follows:

<p>I D: {things<sup>22</sup>}</p> <p>F: ... have a free will</p> <p>E: ... is evil</p> <p>H: ... is a human<sup>23</sup></p>	$\exists y[Ey] \rightarrow \exists x[Hx \ \& \ Fx]$
	<p><i>This reads: if there is a thing that is evil, then there is a thing that is both a human and possesses free will.</i></p>

<sup>20</sup> For a purpose of simplicity, I would like to avoid and therefore ignore theorizing on angel’s nature leading to a rebellion of some of them and their consecutive Fall.

<sup>21</sup> Augustine’s “blissful ignorance”; Aquinas’ theory that humans before the Fall possessed all the virtues, reason was directed by God, and by a gift of grace, everything was rightly ordered (Aquinas, 1947, I, Q. 95, Art. 3). The original sin is the privation of that ordered relationship that people were always intended to have.

<sup>22</sup> *Things* here is to be understood in a broader meaning - not only as physical objects but also events, thoughts, actions, etc.

<sup>23</sup> The predicates can look different if we include other creatures like angels for example. But, as stated in footnote 2 - I am focusing on the fall of humans. However, the logic remains the same if we include all agents that are not God (because God obviously has a free will).



I was at first tempted to represent the sentence as  $\exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}] \rightarrow \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$  but found out that we don't have the adequate ground to claim that free will is a sufficient premise too. This would be the case in hypothesis (1) when the truth of the antecedent must lead to truth in its consequent.

Applying Modus Tollens, we can transform it as:

$$\sim \exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}] \rightarrow \sim \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$$

*This reads: If there isn't a thing that is both human and has free will, then it is not the case that there is a thing that is evil.*

The consequent is exactly the state in which the garden of Eden is described to be - everything there was good, and nothing was evil<sup>24</sup>. This is repeatedly stated after almost every single day of the creation (NRSV, Genesis 1:4,10,12, 18, 25), with a conclusion “*God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.*” (NRSV, Genesis 1:31). Moreover it is also in agreement with the popular philosophical and theological traditions that I've just discussed in 2.3.1-2.3.3.

Here we have to be careful not to make a wrong conclusion - while  $\sim \exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}]$  is necessary for  $\sim \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$  to be true, we cannot automatically assert that it is sufficient too. In accordance with (2), we can conceive a state where  $\exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}]$  can lead to  $\sim \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$ . Therefore I would like to consider both cases regarding the prelapsarian state:

$$\mathbf{R1:} \ \sim \exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}] \rightarrow \sim \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$$

$$\mathbf{R2:} \ \exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}] \rightarrow \sim \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$$

I can agree that probably these conditions are not exhaustive and more predicates can be added to the antecedent. However, the logic will remain the same, and it will scarcely influence the conclusion of this thesis.

Both **R1** and **R2** imply that the meaning of “*human*” is of particular importance in order to assess the argument. In the next part, I will try to show that to be human is inevitably bound to certain mental traits, which are directly connected to at least apparent free will. For this purpose, I will rely on the philosophical traditions and will purposely avoid the idea of radical determinism, which would make the whole argument more or less meaningless.

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<sup>24</sup> However, historically the difficulty in reconciling the idea of one good God and the existence of evil in the world served as a foundation to a number of *heretic* religious movements such as Marcionism, Paulicianism, Bogomilism, Catharism etc.

## 2.5. What does it mean to be human?

There is something that separates us from other living and non-living objects. Even though we could have different approaches to finding a proper definition of it, we all agree that humans possess some unique set of properties. The question “*What is a human being?*” is an ancient one and I think a good starting point is Aristotle and his views on the matter. I will not elaborate in detail, since the topic is of magnitude beyond the scope of this paper, but the main idea is that certain capacities and qualities are inseparable from our postlapsarian understanding of human nature.

I acknowledge that there is a great deal of criticism among some modern philosophers when it comes to *human nature*. Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, explicitly states in a lecture given in 1946 that “*there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is.*” (Kaufmann, 1956, pp. 290-291). This is in connection with his famous “*existence precedes essence*” (Kaufmann, 1956, p. 290), which implies that man first exists, and therefore defines himself, without any presupposed nature. Also according to some thinkers, “*the concept of human nature is flawed and anachronistic*” (Heyes, 2018, p. 213). However, there is a general recognition of a “*set of mechanisms that underlie the manifestation of species-typical cognitive and behavioral regularities*” (Heyes, 2018, p. 215). In my analysis, I would not emphasize the physical, but rather mental human characteristics. I will neither focus on natural and cultural evolution that shaped us as species since it more or less contradicts the Biblical story. I will use the term *human nature* in a broader sense - as characteristic human properties in “*normal adult specimens of the species*” (Roughley, 2021, para. 3.1) which also includes mental capacities like reasoning and judging.

### 2.5.1. Aristotle

It is generally assumed that, according to Aristotle, rationality is essential for human nature. However, his views on the subject are scattered throughout all his writings. Christian Ketzmann even claims that “*There cannot be a unified definition that grasps everything in human essence*” (Keil et al., 2021, p. 42). His reason is that, according to Aristotle, there is a duality in how we can assess the question - a natural and intellectual domain. However, we can use Aristotelian ontology as a good starting point for our attempt to identify the unique human characteristics. In *Politics*, just after his famous definition of man as a *political animal*, we find a more specific set of characteristics - “*for in this particular man differs from other animals, that he alone has a perception of good and evil, of just and unjust*” (Aristotle,

2009, 1253a). Even though the context is in showing that people are social creatures, this is a very interesting notion since it is relevant to the Biblical story of the Fall. It makes a claim about moral traits, which are impossible to be present in the prelapsarian state. On several occasions, Aristotle connects human nature (or essence) with mental capacities. For example, when comparing humans to other animals in *De Anima*, he writes - “*in the other animals there is no process of thinking or reasoning*” (Aristotle, 1907, 433a11). In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, he explains that only humans have a rational soul, which he identifies with reason (Aristotle, 2003, book I, chapter XI).

Aristotle is important because his ideas of teleology and human nature were attempted to be reconciled with the Biblical account by medieval and later thinkers. For Christian Aristotelians such as Aquinas, humans are created with a purpose by God, and in order to flourish, they were given certain instructions - in our case the prohibition of eating from a particular tree. Eudaimonia (flourishing) is all about the performance of the essential functions of human beings (reason). But this intellectual approach isn't the only one - Aristotle introduces *a second degree of Happiness*, which is connected to certain moral virtues and feelings. However, these two - “*Practical Wisdom and Excellence of the Moral character are very closely united*”, and have to be in agreement with each other (Aristotle, 2003, book X, chapter VI). It means that a human being has to possess and act in accordance with qualities and/or traits (wisdom and virtues) that can enable him to flourish. This is a potent claim supported by the findings of empirical studies (see 2.6.1), but doesn't fully correspond to the prelapsarian human nature.

### 2.5.2. Contemporary views

It is clear that an essential part of being human, according to Aristotle, has to do with a certain kind of advanced mental capacities, which gives us the possibility to reason, think and act rationally, exercise our free will, understand good and evil, or just and unjust. Aquinas and Kant also embrace rationality as a necessary ingredient (Roughley, 2021, para. 1.4). This view is not unique to these philosophers. From Plato to contemporary thinkers, there is a similar line of thought about what a human being is. Despite the differences, they all ascribe a concept of rationality, which is “*fundamental to morality and to any general theory of value*” (Gert, 1990, p. 280). Indeed, the human capacity for reasoning has been a unique structural property for contemporary thinkers like MacIntyre, Hursthouse, Nussbaum, and others. Moreover, it is said to be unavoidable for members of the species without some

serious mental disabilities (Roughley, 2021, para. 5.3) and modern neuroscience reveals to us important connections between rationality, decision making, and moral judgments (see 2.6.1). Before that, I would like to get back to the basic human characteristics, which also involve moral capabilities, at least in Aristotelian terms.

Eudaimonia is a central topic in Nicomachean Ethics, which is also tightly connected to the *ergon*, or functional argument (Roughley, 2021, para. 5.3). This concept is further developed by some Neo-Aristotelians, like Nussbaum, who focus mainly on capacities including autonomy and practical reason. The theories are entirely dependent on certain mental conditions, which have to be present in order to achieve a good life. Others, like, Aikaterini Lefka, who embrace a more pluralistic view of what a human being is, also agree that in addition to the ontological aspect focusing traditionally on intellect, there are other characteristics that are essential - including the liberty to act in different degrees and the possibilities to make moral choices - “*In our free will resides our moral responsibility*” (TED, 2020). This correlation is not a new one, and there is an agreement in the historical and contemporary discussions that the most common understanding of moral responsibility involves *accountability* and relation to *judgment* regarding the outcome of the action (O’Connor et al., 2022, para. 2.1).

Moral philosophers usually incorporate the idea of (apparent) free will<sup>25</sup> and reason in their theories of human nature. Some even suggest the idea that free will is a consequence of rationality - a “*being that is rational, and therefore free*” (Bakhurst, 2021, p. 1029).

On the other hand, studies on developmental psychology show that necessary tendencies for advancing moral systems (like a sense of justice, capacity, willingness to judge actions of others, and responses to altruism and nastiness) are demonstrated by babies even before full exposure to culturally endorsed principles of ethics (White, 2021, p. 224). It implies that certain propensities and traits are inherited and their origin can be traced to our evolutionary development as species. This idea is further supported by numerous studies on animals<sup>26</sup>, showing that, despite not possessing such a well-developed sense of right and wrong, they “*demonstrate some of the traits necessary for morality to develop*” (White, 2021, p. 226). In other words - morality is a crucial element of the normal development of the representatives of the human species and cannot be separated from it. Moreover, it is a

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<sup>25</sup> I would ignore the idea of strong determinism because then the concept of moral responsibility becomes vague and even meaningless.

<sup>26</sup> Apes, dogs, elephants, dolphins, and whales.

complex product of biological predispositions, cognition, and cultural norms which underlie our judgments concerning right and wrong (White, 2021, p. 250).

This short overview of what characterizes postlapsarian human beings emphasizes the connection between rationality, morality, and free will. As it seems, these are mutually bound together and in most cases cannot exist independently. This is important to keep in mind when applying it to the prelapsarian Adam and Eve. Can we be rational without the possibility to evaluate, compare and make decisions based on our ability to know good and evil? Can we even claim that we have a will that is free, or it is based on other mechanisms?

### 2.5.3. The connection to the story of the Fall

As I showed, theological traditions ascribe free will, rationality, and some moral ambitiousness to Adam and Eve before the Fall. If we take for example *pride* - either considered as virtue or vice, it reinforces moral behavior and cannot be examined as something external to the mind. It is a part of a temporal inner state, and according to the tradition was one of the motivations behind the original sin. This, however, doesn't correspond fully to the Biblical account. The first humans were explicitly created without the possibility to make reflective judgments about good and evil (however a proto-normative moral understanding can be considered - see 2.8.3).

Moreover, we have good reasons to assume that God's intention was this state to remain as long as possible if not forever<sup>27</sup> - as already mentioned in 2.3.1. and 2.3.2. "*blissful ignorance*" and "*original justice*". I don't rule out the existence of good and evil before the Fall. The former is explicit in the story of the creation, while the situation with the latter was (and still is) a topic of discussion. I am eager to accept that at least the theoretical idea of moral evil could have existed. Either way, according to the story, there wasn't any moral awareness, which makes the conscious deliberation of virtues and vices based on contemporary ethical capacities and judgments impossible. This indeed has been an issue among thinkers - for example, Kant's claim that the origin of evil is inconceivable to us, and Aquinas' theory that Adam didn't have any preferences/passions towards either good or evil.

I argue that the traditional interpretations don't make an extensive and complete account of what it really means to not be able to *know good and evil*. As I stated in 2.4, the common views on the issue presuppose rationality and free will as essential human characteristics, separately and independently of morality. On the other hand, contemporary

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<sup>27</sup> At least, some concepts of Heaven suggest conditions similar to these in the time before the Fall. This, on the other hand, rejects the Platonic idea of the opposites, since God's plan didn't involve a necessity of evil.

theories increasingly embrace a more complex human nature, incorporating all of these elements<sup>28</sup>, looking at them as necessary and even dependent on each other. If this is true, we have to revise the prelapsarian perspectives, and then the antecedent of the **R2** case from 2.4 shows to be false. If our modern understanding of human nature necessarily includes moral capabilities and ties them up to free will and rationality, it seems infeasible for Adam and Eve to be fully human. Indeed, it would be infeasible to concede *a thing that is both human and has free will*, if “human” demands certain traits which were not present.

If **R2** is disregarded because of the inadequate antecedent, then the possibility **R1** remains the only solution to the issue - namely that Adam and Eve couldn't both be human (as outlined in this paper) and have free will. While we have a concept of beings that are not humans but have free will - for example, God and spirits, it is difficult to conceive a being that is human and doesn't have at least apparent free will - an autonomy to act in accordance with a choice grounded in moral and other subjective judgments. Even if we manage to conceptualize such a being, the idea that it would be deprived of any moral capabilities rules out the possibility of it fully possessing human nature. Then, before the Fall,  $\exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}] \rightarrow \sim \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$  seems impossible to be the case, and therefore  $\sim \exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}] \rightarrow \sim \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$  should be accepted.

In the next part of this exposition, I would like to turn to neuroscience in order to support my thesis with evidence for the connection between moral capacities, free will, and rationality. This would be an important supplement to the philosophical reasoning presented in this paper, which will help us better understand the type of mind Adam and Eve had before the Fall.

## 2.6. Empirical research

Numerous studies connect moral cognition to other human attributes like emotions, decision making, social cognition, and reason. The structural and functional complexity of the human brain shows a magnitude of dependence between different mental processes.

### 2.6.1. The complex function of ventromedial prefrontal cortex

Ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) is a “*brain region involved in value computation that has been researched extensively in decision-making studies, due to its role*

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<sup>28</sup> Even Aristotle understands the significance of awareness of good from evil when it comes to what a human being is (Aristotle, 2009, 1253a).

*in influencing the value one attaches to choices*” (Parkin, 2020, p. 106). An array of studies demonstrate that it plays a significant role in at least three broad domains of psychological function linked to psychopathology - *“the representation of reward- and value-based decision making”*, *“the generation and regulation of negative emotion”*, and shows important *“in multiple aspects of social cognition, such as facial emotion recognition, theory-of-mind ability, and processing self-relevant information”* (Hiser & Koenigs, 2018, p. 638). What this means in practice is that a defect in value processing is linked to a defect in decision making, moral judgments, emotion regulation, and even a deficit of empathy (Hiser & Koenigs, 2018, p. 640). In other words, evidence suggests that moral detachment is not possible without failing in other domains which are directly connected to reason and affections.

Another paper referring to studies of vmPFC suggests also a *“consistent association between brain areas involved in emotional processing and aspects of moral cognition.”* (Young & Koenigs, 2007, p. 72). The analysis of data shows again a dependence between processes, where *“deficits in moral behavior and cognition are typically associated with emotional dysfunction.”* (Young & Koenigs, 2007, p. 74). One of the important findings of the study suggests a necessity of social emotions mediated by vmPFC for certain kinds of moral judgment. This once again supports the view that normative thinking and emotions, like shame and guilt, are in an *“intimate relationship”* (Heyes, 2018, p. 215).

Koenigs’ sentimentalist perspective, which was dominant in the early stages of research, has been challenged by a more rationalistic one with an improved understanding of our brains. Recent studies reveal that the traditional schism between reason and emotions is questionable. While agreeing that emotions may *“play a robustly causal or perhaps even a constitutive role in moral cognition”*, Bryce Huebner suggests another approach to moral cognition *“that relies on predictive and evaluative mechanisms, rather than affective and cognitive mechanisms”* (Huebner, 2013, p. 427). In support of this thesis, vmPFC is found to be necessary for a variety of complex learnings regardless of whether they are conscious and deliberate or automatic and unconscious (May et al., 2020). Moral judgments are *“acquired through sophisticated learning mechanisms that are responsive to morally-relevant reasons”* (May et al., 2020, p.16). This makes the line separating emotions from reason blurred, which suggests a connection between affect and reasoning in the sense of overlap between the mechanisms responsible for moral and non-moral judgments. Results from three different experiments with over 1000 participants indicate that reasoning plays a greater and more consequential role in bringing about moral judgments and decisions (Stanley et al. 2019, p. 126).

Either sentimentalistic or rationalistic, both approaches show the mutual interdependence of mental mechanisms. The performance of one cannot be examined separately without interference with another. Evidentially, moral judgments are connected to other mechanisms, and regardless of what they are - reason, emotions, or something else, they are an integral part of a normal functioning brain. This is also in agreement with the already mentioned Aristotelian idea that humans characterize, among other things, by the perception of good and evil and of just and unjust. It means that we don't have any empirical grounds to claim that detachment of moral capabilities from a human being (like prelapsarian Adam and Eve) would remain other brain functions intact.

### 2.6.2. The prelapsarian human mind

The examples above are only a minor illustration of the complex field of study of the brain and don't declare any extensiveness. Their purpose is to sketch out contemporary findings that are also in agreement with my main thesis. They give support to the idea that *"knowing right from wrong may be as fundamental to human experience as language, vision or memory."* (Young & Koenigs, 2007, p. 69). Then a question to answer is concerned with the kind of human beings Adam and Eve originally were if they were stripped off of their ability to know good and evil. As it turns out, if we accept their similar physiological and psychological nature before and after the Fall, it seems implausible that these first humans were functioning *normally* in other fields and with other tasks. Cognition, emotions, decision-making, and even reason are to be expected to defect in such a condition. But if this is the case, Adam and Eve were not very different from the clinical populations from the empirical studies with particular mental deficits. Moreover, they didn't just have a decreased capacity for moral judgment - they were unable to make reflective moral judgments at all. Then we can only speculate about the magnitude of the defects in the mentioned mental processes, assuming the same or similar human nature.

However, I don't claim that the first humans suffered from major mental disorders. Indeed, it would be a naive exaggeration, since we are not aware of the initial position. God could have made them fully functioning beings in all other spheres except for morality. In any case, it is conceivable and not a logical contradiction. But this again rules out the  $\exists x[\mathbf{H}x \ \& \ \mathbf{F}x]$  antecedent in determining a realm without evil, because in this case at least the predicate "is a human being" (**H**) would be incompatible with what was originally suggested. In both



cases, the prelapsarian minds of Adam and Eve look very different from what we are used to and what we have evidence to accept.

## 2.7. What about free will?

Now, as we saw that both philosophical and empirical investigations on the subject make  $\exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}] \rightarrow \sim \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$  improbable for issues connected with human nature, I would like to propose a compatible complementary idea related to free will. It is in opposition to Augustine's view (see 2.3.1.) but can be connected to Kant's philosophy in which free power of choice is linked to the capacity of being moral (Kant, 1998, Ak. 6:37), and the absence (or a distorted version) of the former questions the existence of the latter. The emphasis is on the mechanism that Adam and Eve used in order to act on their own. When reflective moral judgments are not factors in autonomous decision-making processes, another strategy about what a person *ought* to do has to be adopted. I argue that a good candidate for such a mechanism is unconditional *order following*, which makes the question "*Where does will for evil originate in free agents?*" (Timple, 2021, para. 2.1) with a wrong presupposition since free will becomes practically non-existent.

According to the story, God gives certain apparent freedoms to Adam - for example, to name all the animals as he decides (NRSV, Genesis 2:19-20) and to be free to eat from every tree in the Garden (NRSV, Genesis 2:16). These, however, were in a form of commands, in the same sense as to be "*one flesh*" with Eve (NRSV, Genesis 2:24) and to take care of the Garden (NRSV, Genesis 2:15). The only prohibition was also a command - not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (NRSV, Genesis 2:17). Until chapter 3 in *Genesis*, everything seemed to be fine. But then the serpent came and started asking questions. Eve was responding as expected<sup>29</sup>, stating the consequence of death if the order is to be violated. After a short dialogue, where the snake arguably didn't explicitly say anything wrong<sup>30</sup> about the effect of eating, but even the truthfulness of its own words were later confirmed by God - "*the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil*" (NRSV, Genesis 3:22), Eve changed her view about the fruit and ate (NRSV, Genesis 3:17). After

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<sup>29</sup> Well, there is a minor flaw in her words, which sparked a number of discussions. She added to the command a prohibition of not only eating but also touching the tree. This is considered by some thinkers as an important clue of why the Fall happened.

<sup>30</sup> Yes, the serpent starts with the words "*You will not die*", which is considered by some as a lie, since we all know that Adam and Eve died eventually. But it could also be interpreted contrary to God's command that the death would happen on the same day. Well, the interpretation of what death means here (literal or metaphoric) is a complex issue, and I would not want to dig in, since this is not the topic of my thesis.

that, she gave it to Adam, and we all know what happened next. The interesting part, though, is in the same response they gave to God:

- Adam says that Eve gave him the fruit (NRSV, Genesis 3:12), suggesting he was following her instruction.
- Similarly, Eve blames the serpent (NRSV, Genesis 3:13). What is curious is that in her first sentence she admits understanding trickery from the side of the snake. But the trick is not something untrue the serpent said since the following events develop exactly according to its words. It is rather the change of the moral state that made Eve able to compare the snake's words to God's command and judge in accordance with their value, realizing she did something wrong.

In this story, an order following mechanism in navigating in the Garden of Eden is not only possible but also consistent. We read about the asymmetric interaction between God and the first humans (mostly Adam) since the beginning of their creation. It is entirely instruction based and there is not a single account of them showing any kind of disagreement. We shouldn't expect it, since Adam and Eve couldn't judge and prioritize on their own what is good, better, and best. They needed another kind of external guidance in order to calibrate their actions. The mechanism of following orders is at least not in disagreement with the story. It implies that the first humans were created with a will dependent on their creator. We can scarcely call it free since it was a function of other agents' commands (mostly God).

Obedience is also viewed as a good thing according to the traditional interpretations, and even as a virtue according to the Catholic Church (see the end of 2.3.). However, when a new set of instructions were introduced by the serpent, they overrode the previous order. This made Eve act in accordance with the most recent information since it was impossible for her to judge if it was good or bad. Moreover, she didn't have the capacity to know that temptation, lies (if we accept that the snake was a liar), and disobedience were bad things. In a similar manner, she gives to Adam and then the effect of this act reveals its full potential. A similar model is also widely used in computer programming - the possibility to run an operation until a condition is met, as well as the possibility of overriding the last command. Without such a mechanism, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for a software/AI to "know" how to prioritize the variety of given instructions.

This idea completely rules out the possibility of free will and makes **Fx** false, in addition to the already false **Hx**. I don't claim its truthfulness but aimed to present another possible view, which seems to be coherent with the story (although not with the traditional

interpretations involving free will). However, it is not necessary to prove the main thesis and have a supplementary function. Either way, we can surely dismiss  $\exists x[\mathbf{Hx} \ \& \ \mathbf{Fx}] \rightarrow \sim \exists y[\mathbf{Ey}]$  before the Fall, which leaves us with the conclusion that it was infeasible for Adam and Eve to have both been humans and possessed free will.

## 2.8. Objections and discussions

Several issues were pointed out during the development of my thesis. I would like to present and assess three of them. The first two directly address my approach and main idea, while the third is an alternative explanation of what kind of moral mechanism prelapsarian Adam and Eve were subjected to.

### 2.8.1. An extra predicate

The first one is concerning the formal representation in 2.4 and more specifically the inclusion of “*is a human*” (**H**) as a predicate. A simpler version of the solution to why it is evil in our world could rely only on free will:  $\exists y[\mathbf{Ey}] \rightarrow \exists x[\mathbf{Fx}]$ . I agree that such an approach is a correct one, but despite its simplicity, it is not clearly referring to the subject of this paper - human nature, and therefore needs further elaboration. If we accept this representation, we need to develop it further, and “*a thing that has free will*” (**Fx**) is to be identified. Well, God has free will, but he doesn’t bear responsibility for evil (Aquinas, 1947, I, Q. 49, Art. 1; Aquinas, 1947, I, Q. 49, Art. 2; Augustine, 1871, p. 493). Indeed, if we had a world where God was the only free agent, evil wouldn’t exist<sup>31</sup>. In other words - **Fx** that is a direct consequence of something that is evil (**Ey**) excludes God. Moreover, the story and the traditional interpretations explicitly state that the first humans were this “thing<sup>32</sup>”. Then in order to defend my point, I would have to examine the nature of **x**, which would inevitably lead to **H**. Then, for the purpose of convenience and clarity, **Hx** is to be inserted together with **Fx**. Nevertheless, it was Adam and Eve who chose to sin - they were the bearers of free will. I argue that my thesis doesn’t suffer from this detailed representation, but rather receives a more intelligible structure.

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<sup>31</sup> At least according to the Christian doctrine of God’s omnibenevolence.

<sup>32</sup> I am again reminding that I am not considering the idea of the transgression of the angels. But even if we accept it, it shows insufficient in justifying evil in the world. Humans played an active role in the process.

### 2.8.2. Rationality without morality

The second objection is a counterargument to the conclusion derived from empirical research. Adult psychopaths are examples of humans that have “*deficits in emotional processing and inhibitory control, engage in morally inappropriate behavior, and generally fail to distinguish moral from conventional violations.*” (Cima et al., 2010, p. 59). This can lead to reasoning that they lack an understanding of moral categories like right and wrong, good and evil, etc. If so, psychopaths could be examples that human beings can miss this specific *knowledge* - like prelapsarian Adam and Eve, and nevertheless remain rational agents with free will. This claim however has been challenged in recent years by numerous studies. Cima et al. (2010) explored these capabilities and found that psychopaths know right and wrong but simply don't care about either it or the consequences of their morally inappropriate behavior. It is interesting that the results are compared to the previous research on vmPFC patients and their connection to emotions, finding similarities and conflicts in different areas. An analogous claim is supported in a bigger study with 139 participants<sup>33</sup> - “*psychopathic offenders can demonstrate normal knowledge of wrongfulness*” (Aharoni et al., 2014, p.175). However, if we disregard these results and accept the argument that psychopaths lack knowledge of good and evil, we would face another problem. By using it as a counterexample to the reasoning in 2.6.2., it will be highly inappropriate to claim that Adam and Eve before the Fall were (close to) psychopaths. Besides undermining the whole concept of the Creation, it will suggest a completely different *human nature* with a great deviation from our contemporary understanding of the normal psyche.

### 2.8.3. Proto-normative moral understanding

An idea of proto-normative<sup>34</sup> prelapsarian moral understanding emerges from the dual-process hypothesis of Kahneman (2015) and more specifically System 1 processes, which, contrary to the reflective and effortful System 2 ones, operate “*automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control*” (p. 20). In other words, Adam and Eve could have had an automatic moral intuition expressed by “*spontaneous action, without need for conscious deliberation, decision, planning, or intention formation.*” (Railton, 2014, p. 815). This is an enticing view that eliminates the conflict between morality and selfishness, suggesting a human nature consisting of imperatives. Indeed Adam and Eve

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<sup>33</sup> 41 of whom psychopaths

<sup>34</sup> Moral normativity is not found before the Fall due to lack of reflective moral understanding. Morality in a strictly normative sense is to be found only after the Fall.

didn't have the proper knowledge of good and evil - a reflective System 2 process, and then the only alternative could be an innate mechanism "*based on information derived from [...] inheritance*" (Heyes, 2018, p. 66). This view harmonizes with Kant's prelapsarian philosophy at the point where the human moral predispositions exist but are not fully developed (see 2.3.3), as well as the Aquinas' limited natural knowledge (see 2.3.2.). However, there is an issue I want to address concerning the reflective System 2 which "*allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations*" (Kahneman, 2015, p. 21).

The hypothesis that the prelapsarian Adam and Eve weren't able to access System 2 processes<sup>35</sup> in order to make moral judgments creates challenges with the capacity of propositional thinking which demands "*conscious evaluation, deliberation, and choice*" (Railton, 2014, p. 838) and suggests a deviation from the postlapsarian human nature. Moreover, it doesn't give an explanation of how Adam and Eve made the choice to sin - something that requires reflective moral reasoning, bypassing the imperative proto-normative morality<sup>36</sup>. Either the mechanism itself had a major flaw, or it obeyed unknown to us rules, which were different from what recent empirical studies on human cognition show us.

On the other hand, despite the usefulness of System 1, it is known to be the source of various cognitive biases, which are to be suppressed/defeated by engaging System 2 (Kahneman, 2015, pp. 25-26). In other words, when it comes to analytical thinking and reflection, System 2 is superior to System 1, and by being "*in charge of self-control*", one of its tasks is "*to overcome the impulses of System 1*" (Kahneman, 2015, p. 26). Nevertheless, despite its superiority, it is not a perfect tool and we are to expect wrong judgments leading to undesired consequences. If we have to turn again to Kantian philosophy - by harnessing System 2, a conflict between morality and selfishness is in place and the preference for self-love "*corrupts the ground of all maxims*" (Kant, 1998, Ak. 6:37). Regardless, based on modern cognitive science, we can not claim that a mind with access to System 2 processes (reflection, reason, logic, etc.) is a more corrupted one, despite being, in a theological sense, directly connected to human moral deterioration.

Yes, it is possible that God could have created the minds of Adam and Eve unbiased while still obeying System 1 processes. However, this would again suggest a difference between pre- and postlapsarian human nature - which is my main thesis in this paper.

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<sup>35</sup> If such an adult human mind exist at all. Probably the closest we can get to is children, or (without being offensive) animals. But this wouldn't help us much in our quest for finding prelapsarian human nature.

<sup>36</sup> Even if the explanation lies in the act of the temptation by the snake, it still doesn't unravel how the the snake became evil and able to apply System 2 reasoning.

## 2.9. Implications and further studies

If my arguments hold ground, this will change the way we interpret the effect of the story. Indeed, if prelapsarian Adam and Eve didn't have free will and/or human nature (according to our modern understanding), later punishment would hardly be justified. At least not in the manner of our contemporary ethics<sup>37</sup>. Moreover, the knowledge of good and evil, which turned out to be an undesirable outcome, suggests that God didn't intend humans to be capable of such mental processes, at most not at that particular time. There is also a great mismatch between traditional theological and philosophical analysis and modern neuroscience. This makes the widespread claim of evil because of humans' free will questionable.

Another aspect of my interpretation, which I didn't have a place to develop in the current paper, is the role of God as a father figure. I started my thesis with the fictional dialogue between Crawly and Aziraphale who also touch upon this issue. Well, did God expect humans to never err? Didn't God know what could happen? Moreover, our modern understanding of parenting doesn't discriminate in the long run, and usually, the children are supposed to surpass their parents. In the Biblical account, on the other hand, there is a great asymmetry between God and humans, and even Adam and Eve were intentionally limited in their moral capabilities. Varieties of studies suggest the importance of curiosity, trial and error, learning, imitation, mind-reading, and much more for the proper development of the mind, especially in the first years of its existence (Heyes, 2018; Guthrie, 1995; Vince, 2020). A useful connection could be made between these and the prelapsarian state, where the only role model Adam and Eve had were God, and unfortunately the serpent.

The present thesis provokes a perspective, which I intend to develop in the future. It follows a reciprocal logic and explores the idea of the afterlife, judgment, punishment, reward, etc. If we are again talking about essentially different minds before and after death, then questions about post-mundane continuity, possession of a free will, and the relation between happiness and compassion towards another being (for example a close family member) are to be assessed.

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<sup>37</sup> This is also something Aquinas agrees on - see the example of a man in sleep in 2.3.2.

### 3. Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that post- and prelapsarian Adam and Eve differed in their nature. With the help of classical and modern philosophical theories supported by empirical studies, I demonstrated that both being human, according to our contemporary understanding, and having free will could not be possible at the same time before the Fall. The traditional interpretations of the Biblical story seem to fall short in their representation of Adam and Eve, not elaborating on the significant role moral capabilities play in shaping our nature. Despite agreeing with the effect of the original sin, philosophers mostly consider knowing good and evil as an independent feature of the human mind, disregarding its interconnectivity with and dependence on other mental processes like emotions, decision making, and reason. This fundamental shortfall shows a major flaw in the traditional theories and allows accepting the same or similar human nature of the first people before and after the Fall. I challenge this view, suggesting a new interpretation of the story, which even enables a scenario of nonexistent free will. If I have succeeded in proving my point through a sound argumentation, this would give grounds for the further development of other moral issues connected to the story. Themes like divine justice and punishment of Adam and Eve and even of human souls after death could be assessed in a completely different manner, questioning established core beliefs.

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