



Roda da Fortuna

Revista Eletrônica sobre Antiguidade e Medieval
 Electronic Journal about Antiquity and Middle Ages
 Reche Ontillera, Alberto; Souza, Guilherme Queiroz de; Vianna, Luciano José (Eds.).

Lidia Raquel Miranda & Helga María Lell¹

Political and Moral Implications on Human Institutions according to Natural Law Paradigm in Two Ancient Christian Texts

Implicações Políticas e Morais sobre as Instituições Humanas conforme ao
 Paradigma da Lei Natural em dois Textos Cristãos Antigos

Abstract:

This work sets out to analyze the opposition between natural law and positive law that prevails as a relevant topic in several texts of Antiquity. It also intends to describe some of the implications that these paradigms have for human institutions, whether their effects are produced on political or moral issues. In order to do so, we will study two Christian texts of Antiquity. Firstly, we will examine the *Epistle to the Romans* to show Paul's conception of the Hebraic law as a superseded instance, equivalent in this way to sin and evil. St. Paul pretends to establish a new law to abolish ethnical differences and unite all Christians under the faith in God's law. Secondly, we will examine the homily *De Paradiso* by Ambrose of Milan to demonstrate the anthropological perspective that comes from the natural law as it is related with the history of salvation and the connection between the human soul and the Creator.

Keywords:

Natural law; *Epistle to the Romans*; *De Paradiso*.

Resumo:

Este artigo pretende analisar a oposição entre o direito natural e a lei positiva que prevalece como um tópico relevante em alguns textos da Antiguidade. Este trabalho também aspira a descrever algumas das implicações que estes paradigmas têm sobre as instituições humanas, sejam seus efeitos produzidos nas questões políticas ou morais. Para isso analisaremos dois textos cristãos da Antiguidade. Primeiro analisaremos a *Epístola aos Romanos* para mostrar a

¹ Lidia Raquel Miranda (Conicet/FCH-UNLPam) es Doctora en Letras (Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, Argentina), Especialista y Magíster en Estudios Sociales y Culturales (FCH-UNLPam, Argentina); Helga María Lell (Conicet/FCEyJ-UNLPam) es Abogada (FCEyJ-UNLPam, Argentina), Doctoranda en Derecho (FD-Universidad Austral, Argentina), Maestranda en Estudios Sociales y Culturales (FCH-UNLPam, Argentina).

concepção de Paulo da lei hebraica como uma instância superada, equivalente neste sentido ao pecado e ao mal. São Paulo quer estabelecer uma nova lei para abolir as diferenças étnicas e unir todos os Cristãos sob a fé na lei de Deus. Em segundo lugar, analisaremos a homilia *De Paraiso* de Ambrósio de Milão para mostrar a perspectiva antropológica que resulta da lei natural em sua relação com a história da salvação e a conexão entre a alma humana e o Criador.

Palavras-Chave:

Direito natural; *Epístola aos Romanos*; *De Paraiso*.

1. Brief justification

As Maes (1967) has documented, the very existence of a natural law is queried by many philosophers and theologians. From the philosophical point of view, the objections are made from an existentialist stance that discredits any concept of the essentialist law. According to the author, this situation has provoked an “*éthique de situation*”, which rejects, as a moral standard, a permanent and identical human nature both in its constitutive elements and the essential relations that it entails. For the supporters of this ethical position, only the unique and concrete state is applied, as a set of rules, to the morality of human acts, for it has emerged in opposition to a doctrine that accentuated the static and objective element of the natural law. In this sense, the current arguments oppose to the idea of a transhistorical invariant, such as the universal human 'nature' or the universal 'reason' (Dondeyne, 1960: 26). As for the theologians, the most important objections come from the Protestant sphere. For this line of thought, it is a vain effort to find in men an intact remnant of the primitive creation due to the fact that human nature is totally corrupted as a result of the original sin. According to Lhoir (1964: 226 - 24 l) what is important for the theologians in the natural order is the grace and the law of grace, although nowadays the positions of Protestant thought are not unanimous (Laurent and Refoulé, 1985: 235). For the Catholics, the authority of the law of nature has gained an increasing importance because its arguments offer Christians an area of dialogue with the non-believers, postulating a moral system which, beyond the Gospel, is based on human nature.

To deal with the objections, the ontological basis, which gives support to the natural law, tends to move from the concept of nature towards the concept of person, which is a more encompassing notion of all that is human and, in this sense, the natural law is based on an ideology of what man is as well as his relationship with the natural order. Such ideology is both historical

and philosophical and, therefore, inseparable from an ethical vision of the human existence; that is why a methodological retraining is necessary to analyze it, not from abstract and purely metaphysical categories, but in the context of contemporary philosophical and hermeneutical concerns dealing with cultural values in Western thought. The issue of natural law is, consequently, a current problem and a study of different authors will contribute to define the concept and justify its scope and limitations.

In this framework, this paper analyzes the contrast between natural law and positive law underlying two texts of Christian Antiquity as well as the implications that these two normative paradigms have for human institutions.

Firstly, in the *Epistle to the Romans*, we will study Paul's treatment of the topic of the Hebrew law as an instance surpassed by the Messianic event and, therefore, linked in that regard to the sin and the evil that have been left behind from the time of Jesus Christ, a perspective that strips the debate on the law of political connotations.

Then, we will focus on the treatise *Paradise* by Ambrose of Milan, from the anthropological perspective that arises from the law of nature by linking it to the history of salvation and the relationship of the human soul with the Creator.

Under this frame, in this work we interpret texts in order to describe the conception of natural law in two moments of the Ancient Christian thought. Accordingly, the selected literary texts constitute a delimited discursive body likely to be analyzed from the basic framework of legal philosophy since they reveal the concerns and representations of the social contexts under analysis from the point of view of the legal inquiries. This study also draws on other theoretical aspects of the field of history, literary theory and anthropology. From the methodological point of view, the texts have been analyzed in their original language (Greek and Latin) and we provide the quotations according to our own translations or others mentioned in the bibliography.

2. Natural law or natural right?

Although in this paper we will not use the distinction between natural law and natural right using both terms with the same meaning², it is necessary to delimit the scope of each term.

² For this methodological choice we follow the ideas by Ph. Delhaye, who in *Permanence du droit naturel* (1960: 9, n. 1) explains: "We often use these terms interchangeably. But properly

Throughout history, the meaning of natural right varies according to the school that defends its existence (cf. Aftalión *et al.* 1999: 177). However, there are three trends that are worth mentioning. First, for the voluntaristic sphere the natural right is based on the idea of a superior being with a divine/metaphysic character and the law coming from him is just, absolutely valid and superior to any positive disposition. In the second term, the naturalistic iusnaturalism finds the ultimate reason in human nature as its own instinct common to everyone. Finally, the rationalist trend derives the natural precepts from reason (Fassò, 1982).

Broadly speaking, natural law is a system whose essential normativity resides in previous and superior principles which exceed human legal creations and which are spatially and temporarily invariable. Natural law, for its part, constitutes a declarative and explicit manifestation of natural right. In this way, the law, that is a practical instrument, is the expressive tool that reveals the nature and content of the rules addressed to people.

To solve the difficulties in the distinction between natural law and natural right, we will highlight the pragmatic function of the former which is oriented to influence over the human behavior in order to reach the state proposed by natural right, a state that is linked to everything that is right.

3. Paul and the political scope of the law in the *Epistle to the Romans*

The Epistle to the Romans was written in the spring of 55 in Corinth, due to the existing problems with the followers of Christ in the Roman capital. As their leader, Paul intended to join and to keep together both sub-groups comprising the movement (Esler, 2006: 161-194): “The ‘*ecumenical*’ dimension is central in his letter: the epistle tries to bring the unity of all believers, over any barrier (especially that of Judaism) within the community” (Vidal, 1996: 370, our translation)³.

speaking, there is a difference of genus and species among them. The natural law studies the human acts, while natural right [...] does not consider more than the relative issues concerning the relations among men and, therefore, issues concerning, justice” (our translation).

³ The missive written to the Romans is an exceptional case in the author’s epistolary practice: this is the only letter written to a community that had not been founded by him and that was not known by him personally either. The cause of this epistle is explained at its conclusion (Rm 15, 14-33), where the Apostle points out that, once finished his mission at the Roman Empire’s East hemisphere, he projected a mission that would reach to the Far West —to

Some interpretations consider that this epistle is Paul's answer to the accusation against the behavior of those Christians who did not obey the Hebrew law. This idea deals with Paul's treatment of Hebrew law as an instance surpassed by the messianic event and, therefore, equivalent in this way to sin and evil.

This analysis marks a "before" (dominated by the law) and "after" (in the service of goodness and salvation), although it strips the debate of political connotations. In fact, Taubes (2007: 30; 37-38; 88-89) considers this letter as a declaration of a political war, for Paul gives the Roman community a text that would be read in public. The text begins with the words "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God"⁴ which involve a subversion of values present in the epistle.

One of Paul's central objectives in Rm is to strengthen the social identity of the group as a Christian movement, an aspect that underlines the membership of its parts to other group identities, particularly the ethnic type. Esler (2006: 29) interprets the action of Paul as an attempt to exercise the leadership over the groups of Christians in Rome which were separated by divisions related, at least in part, to its ethnic status of Jews or Greeks in order to join them in a unique identity.

The Apostle is living in the period that remains between the historical time and the end of time. That present time is very important for the followers of Jesus because it is a time to wait for the second coming, a time in which the Envoy of the Messiah the Apostle takes the floor to face the established guidelines: due to the fact that the Messianic context means a transformation of the worldly prevailing categories, that oppress the truth under the dominion of the injustice and evil (Rm 1, 18⁵), Paul's relationship with his time is one of a political nature.

Indeed, in the *Epistle to the Romans* Paul proclaims the εὐαγγέλιον. This announcement is the way that assumes the promise of the Messiah in the Messianic time. In the proclamation and explanation of the Gospel of this letter, Paul does not identify the Messianic with the destruction of the existent

Σπανίαν, prays Rm 15, 24—, this is the reason why his going to Rome would be useful as an impulse to get there.

⁴ Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ. (Rm 1, 1). All the quotations in Greek are taken from Vidal 1996 and the translations belong to King James Bible.

⁵ Τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων.

things in the world rather he proposes a “disabling and unenforceability of the law” (Agamben, 2006: 99, our translation), through the investment of certain values established until that time; therefore, his assessment of the Messianic event implies a political challenge to the established order.

The Messianic vocation that the Apostle calls for himself from the *incipit* of his letter, through the use of the term κλητός, involves a call to live in the Messiah and is not strictly a new community but a change in the judicial and social characteristics of its members.

Paul has revealed in other writings that the law operates, above all, by the establishment of divisions and separations. For example, 1 Co 7, 17 recommends that every man should maintain the same life status that God assigned to him, whether he is circumcised or not, a slave or a free man. Εἰ μὴ ἐκάστῳ ὡς ἐμέρισεν ὁ κύριος, ἕκαστον ὡς κέκληκεν ὁ θεός, οὕτως περιπατεῖτω καὶ οὕτως ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις πάσαις διατάσσομαι. The principle or the legal order is men’s division: for the Hebrew Law, this division separates the Jewish from the non Jewish; according the imperial law, the division distinguishes between slaves and free men.

Rm 14-15 reveals that the believers of Rome were questioning the identity of the group. Paul, as their leader, tries to mobilize the identity of the group to prevent its disintegration. This task represented a major challenge because the ethnic differences of the Christians of Jewish origin and the Christians of pagan origin of Rome, in the socio-cultural context of the 1st century, were largely irreconcilable. Such juridical division is expressed by Paul through the antithesis circumcision/foreskin and Jews/Greeks⁶.

For Paul, the challenge is to eliminate this duality with the nomination of a new division, the σάρξ/πνεῦμα, which does not coincide with the previous one but is not completely different to it. Indeed, from this opposition the subgroup of Jews is divided into manifest Jews (or Jews according to the flesh) and undercover Jews (or Jews according to the spirit). The same principle applies to non-Jews, although this can only be deduced from the use of the word “all” in Rm 1.7 whereby Paul speaks to the addressees of his epistolary message.

Now there are Jews who are not Jews and non-Jews who are not non-Jews; this is because the true Jew is not the manifest one and the real circumcision is not that one of the flesh. Paul clearly states in Rm 9, 6: “for

⁶ It is important to remember that the non-Jewish Christians to whom Paul was related to were Greek or spoke that language. In the same terms, in a generic way, Paul names ἔθνη to every member of the messianic community that had not a Judaic origin.

they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” and in Rm 9, 25, citing Hosea: “I will call them my people, which were not my people”.

For Paul, the distinction between those who are under Mosaic law and those who are not is no longer functional. According to Agamben (2006: 106), this does not mean simply that Paul extends the application of the law to non-Jews: rather, the Apostle makes indiscernible Jews and non-Jews from the legal point of view.

According to Taubes opinion, the concept of law in Paul’s epistle also should be considered as a commitment formula to the Roman Empire as the text was written, precisely, to be sent to Rome, where the cult to the Caesar prevailed. From this perspective, the idea of law, associated to the political figure of the emperor, also shows up as subverted because for Paul and his followers the *nomos* is, actually, the one who died nailed at the Cross under the order of a legal disposition. Under these terms, the death of a fair man as if he had been a criminal invalidates the distinction between a pure and an impure person, that was the basis of cultic religiosity, on the one hand, and the judicial practice, on the other. The paradox of the Messiah as a scapegoat, says Taubes, “means the end of the law” (2007: 133, our translation).

The concept of law in relationship with the judicial and social situation of the inhabitants in the Empire becomes clear in another series of categories used by Paul to refer to the set of men and subgroups proposed by the law, in addition to the already mentioned law that distinguishes Jews and non-Jews

In Rm 1, 13 Paul declares his aim of “to have some fruit” (evangelize some foreigners) also “among you” (foreigners of Rome), as well “as among other Gentiles” (ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν), a sentence that emphasizes his preaching between all the non Jewish people of the region. However, the versicles that follow show a change of perspective, at least on the discourse sphere.

In Rm 1, 14 Paul states that he is committed or in debt with both the Greeks and the barbarians (Ἕλλησιν τε καὶ βαρβάρους), with the wise men and the uneducated (σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοήτοις). Thus he refers to the social division of the world from the perspective of the Hellenic learned man, reinforced by the mention of the wise and the fools, which is also a way to refer to “all” and that replicates the terms of the first sentence: the Greeks are the sages and the barbarians are the uneducated, a point of view that, in this case, takes the expression of Paul.

In the same line, we can analyze the political effect due to the fact that it implies the use of the term δοῦλος, utilized by the Apostle at the *prescriptio* of the epistle. The juridical meaning of δοῦλος opposes to ἐλεύθερος and, because of that, it refers to the social division of the Mediterranean world of the 1st century from the Roman law's perspective: the slave or the free men were the only two possible juridical positions for a person in the Roman Empire. Despite this, at the *prescriptio* of the letter, δοῦλος acquires a technical meaning because, as Agamben explains, the Apostle uses this word to neutralize the normative division, the one proposed by Moses law and also the one that emerges from the Roman Empire's juridical and social conditions, that is when he makes it depend of the messianic situation. The condition of Messiah's slave supposes a change of all previous legal conditions and establishes a new statement defined by an unconditional left behind from the believer towards the power of Jesus and His commitment through love and the promise. On the other hand, the fact of being called κλητός shows Paul's vocation, "the particular change that every legal state and every worldly condition have just because of the simple fact of being entailed to the messianic event" (Agamben, 2006: 32, our translation), as it happened to Paul himself.

By means of the vocation and the service to the Messiah, the man is, paradoxically, liberated from slavery, factual condition imposed legally and that is left behind thanks to the messianic event (Vidal, 2005: 114). This liberation includes the future dependence of the believer with the due respect to the one that liberated him (Rm 6, 16-18). The image of the slavery applied to life illustrates the fact that the man is always under some power; so, the messianic rescue brings the liberation from the domain of the sin but, at the same time, settles the new life under the lordship of the messianic Lord.

All these instances of revocation of the legal and ethnic divisions imposed by the law are highlighted by another opposition, revoked by Paul in Ga 3, 28, which explicitly refers to women, not as independent subjects neither by the Hebrew law nor the Roman law: "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female", "for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

4. Relationship between natural order and human nature in *Paradise* by Ambrose of Milan

In this section, we analyze the topic of natural law in an early text by Ambrose of Milan, the treatise of *Paradise*, with the intention of taking a preliminary step towards the comprehension of the Ambrosian anthropology. Ambrose's comment of Gn 2, 10-14 in this text explains that Adam was asked not to judge but to recognize and distinguish good from evil and to entrust confidently to the words of the creator. For Ambrose, "pious reason" (Nauroy 2003: 336, our translation) dominates all the passions by a movement of its will between good and evil framed in the Christian economy of salvation.

The homily *Paradise* (Par.) is the first work of Ambrose of Milan, composed around 375. As regards this treatise, the same Bishop explains in the letter XLV, written to Sabinus, that the paradise should not be considered a place but a part of our nature: the representation of paradise as a fertile land alludes to the soul in which the welcome seed multiplies, all virtue is planted and the wisdom as a manifestation of the omnipotent God lies⁷. What is important for the author, then, is not the description of paradise as a physical place but the analysis of the state in which the man was after the creation and before the fall.

The image of paradise as an allegory of the soul, governed by the virtues (prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice), can be summarized in the notion of 'innocence', under the doctrine which considers the man as a created being "*selon l'image de Dieu*" (Maes, 1967: 74-75). Ambrose uses the term *natura* in an etymological sense. 'Nature' is equivalent to the born individual because it embodies what the being receives in its origin all which by birth belongs to the particular nature of the being⁸. This etymological perspective is added to the theological reason, given the fact that man is considered as created by God in the earthly paradise⁹, which gives rise to a "*conception historique de la nature*" (Maes, 1967: 20)¹⁰.

⁷ In effect, Ambrose is one of the few exceptions that tended to an allegorical interpretation of paradise, in keeping with the exegesis of Philo of Alexandria and of Origen.

⁸ According to Emout & Meillet 2001, the first meaning of *natura* is the "*action de faire naître*" ("the action of giving birth").

⁹ As regards this issue, Ambrose raises a distinction between man and woman from the consideration of the places where they were created: while he was formed 'outside' paradise and placed there, she was made 'inside' of paradise. To the naked eye it could be said that woman possess a higher hierarchy, but Par. IV, 24 points out that it isn't: "*Quo loci illud adverte, quia extra paradisum vir factus est, et mulier paradisum, ut advertas quod non loci intra, non generis nobilitate, sed virtute unusquisque gratiam sibi comparat.*" "*Extra denique paradisum factus, hoc est, in loco inferiore, [...] et illa quae in meliore loco hoc est, in paradiso facta est, inferior reperitur.*" ("Note of the fact that man was created outside Paradise, whereas woman was made within it. This teaches us that each person acquires grace by reason of virtue, not because of security or of race. Hence, although created outside Paradise, that is, in an inferior place, man is found to

Par. IV, 24 starts with the quote from Gn 2. 15 (“*Et apprehendit Deus hominem quem fecit, et posuit eum in paradiso operari, et custodire*”¹¹) which outlines the characteristics of man embodied by the Creator. It is about a modeled man with an unblemished nature and intellect who was on Earth and only turned into real life thanks to the divine breath so it became a “living soul”. The man has a material condition, he is an earthly man, but inspired by God he receives a free gift. But he is not the image of God, rather he was made in the “image of God”.

The fact of having been created in God's image allows the man a special participation in the divine life (it gives him a soul) and thus for him the natural order¹² is not separated from other superior one: the natural moral order, whose knowledge was accessible to him; however, the man lost this knowledge because of sin and he will only recover it through the redemptive work of Christ.

Through sin, the man's soul loses the image of God bringing him serious consequences from the point of view of the moral standards. The garden of the delights that, as was said before, is an allegory of the soul, loses its paradisiacal condition and, consequently, man faces nature devoid of divine grace. Now man knows what nudity is, which can be interpreted as the lack of virtues, and experiences death, or in other words the loss of eternal life. Thus, the tribulations that God uses to punish him reveal that, until man does not conform to the natural law again, his life will be full of mortifications. And the recovery of such nature will be possible only through the redemption of Christ. It can be noticed that, despite man's fall into sin, Ambrose has a

be higher, whereas woman, created in a better place, that is to say, in Paradise, is found to be lower”. Quotations of *Paradise* in this article are from Savage's translation).

¹⁰ This author proposes the idea of “*conception historique de la nature*” from the use of the term in *Cain and Abel*, a treatise composed in 377, after *Paradise*, and examines Ambrose's theological reason in analyzing Gn. 4, 2, where it comes up that the Bishop considers man created by God in paradise, so his nature contains everything that Adam has received at the time of his creation. Even though Gn. 4, 2 deals with Abel before Cain, the order of nature is that of chronological birthday. In the same sense, *Paradise* gives order to the human generation: first Adam, second Eve, assimilating the nature of the first woman to the nature of the first man. For more details about the features of the unique human nature in man and woman, see Miranda 2010.

¹¹ “And God took the man whom he has created and placed him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it”.

¹² Ambrose's idea of nature or natural law is not limited to the consideration of humans only, but it also takes into account animals and non-living beings.

unitary vision of man, which finds its full realization of the content of the concept of “in God's image” in all the stages of the history of salvation, that is to say, in the redemptive work of Christ which gives him back grace and restores his lost nature.

The study of the conception of human nature and its relationship with the natural order in the work by Ambrose of Milan, as well as the evolution of the author's thoughts as regards this issue, are not reduced just to some passages from Par.; however, this constitutes an important step in the critical revision of some aspects of the Bishop's moral anthropology in his first allegorical works, especially those which link his ideas to that of Philo of Alexandria (cf. Miranda, 2011).

The text concentrates on man as an ambiguous creature both from the ontological and ethical point of view. As regards the ontological dimension, the text focuses on the duality of composition that establishes different topics organized in pairs, which replicate the anthropological scheme already developed by Philo in the 1st century: the modeled man different to the created man, the figures of Adam and Eve in representation of the intellect and sensitivity; the notions of soul and body symbolizing masculinity and femininity. As to the ethical perspective, the counterparts are good and evil which express the ideas of innocence and sin.

In addition to the exegetical instances that are evident in relation to the letter of Genesis, the Ambrosian text highlights the constant need for a hermeneutics, broadly conceived in the life of man, that allows to shed light on the signs, already announced in the Bible but which are repeated on a daily basis and whose interpretation is responsible for a subsequent practice whether it is adequate or not. Thus, the allegory helps to teach that things are not as they appear to be on the surface and, therefore, require the acute look and discernment to be understood. A clear example of this situation is the locative case of Adam and Eve (referring to Adam as modeled outside the garden and Eve as modeled inside) and the temporary perspective in the case of Cain and Abel (Cain was born before Abel, a topic that is treated in the second treatise of *Cain and Abel*), positions which seem relevant but in fact, do not define the moral of the human condition, for they are pinned on terms of grace and virtue.

5. Conclusions

This paper deals with two texts from Antiquity which record the social beliefs regarding the topics of natural law and natural right. This issue is not

less important since the conception of higher and primary rules over the positive one puts into question certain aspects of human institutions and political regulations.

Firstly, we analyzed Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, which refers to the Hebrew law as an instance overshadowed after the coming of Christ. In this way, the run-up to the Messianic event characterized by the legal regulation is equated with sin. In addition, this missive subverts the normative order of the Roman Empire every time it criticizes the laws that separate men and discredits the authority of Caesar.

Apostle Paul's political actions aim at generating a new unity among the Christians and overcoming the oppositions and legal and ethnic divisions through a plan of universalization that seeks to establish a new community, the *ἐκκλησία*, which surpasses the dichotomies and is united, not divided, in the faith of Christ. In this way, the new alliance is not strictly a natural law but a law giving by the grace.

As a matter of fact, this Pauline *ἐκκλησία* has its roots on a renewed social relationship among men, based on new categories that resist the law as a political force of order. The abolition of the worldly powers to separate men which brings along the Messianic release entails a redefinition of the solidary aspects that unite men and an assessment of the love and commitment with Jesus above the human ranks governing life in that time.

Finally, it is appropriate to point out that, from a strictly rhetorical point of view, Paul's strategy of subversion of values that characterizes the Messianic time is a disguised presentation that uses the same rhetorical figure that the worldly powers employ to characterize and dominate humanity: the Jewish/non-Jewish; circumcision/foreskin; Greeks / barbarians; sages/fools; slaves / free antithesis are overshadowed by another antithesis (*σάρξ/πνεῦμα*) that, at the level of the statement, seems to assimilate to the previous ones but surpasses and revokes them in pursuit of a new legitimation of man.

We also studied the treatise *Paradise* by Ambrose of Milan, which shows a vision of natural law related to the salvation of the human soul entrusted with faith to the precepts of God. In this text, as opposed to the previous one, the problem of natural law is more closely related to human behavior and the minds of the individuals, without direct political consequences.

Man is created in God's image and, therefore, comes to life endowed by God with a natural law in his soul which inspires the human moral condition.

The aforementioned moral status and its respective purpose are explained by Ambrose through the use of metaphors that describe the state of innocence similar to the paradisiacal state which came to an end once the man fell in sin. The paradise is not a physical place located in a specific space and time, but a part of nature. Thereby, Ambrose reveals the immanence of the virtuous state in each man who, by the mere fact of having received the divine breath, became the owner of the soul and the respective vision of this paradise.

What is more, the man has a special participation in the divine life and the natural order for the fact of his being created in the image of God gave him the soul which is the divine gift that allows him to discern between good and evil. The loss of the moral condition and the fall in sin, despite the ability to recognize evil, caused his departure from paradise and his redemption can only come straight from the redemption that is in Christ.

In these two works, the question of the law of nature is a head matter. Each of them approached the topic with an argument only different in appearance, since directly or indirectly, they are inspired in God. In the case of the *Epistle to the Romans*, the direct source of divine law is the Creator and therefore all the human actions must be guided by faith in Christ. In this case the concern for the natural law has a political connotation which tends to subvert the institutions of the Roman Empire and to erase the differences established by human standards.

In *Paradise*, the natural law is part of the human nature itself, but the last reason also lies in God who is the one who gives the divine influx endowing man with the soul. The soul gives man the ability to discern between good and evil and, if his behavior is in accordance with the precepts of the deity, he finds himself in a condition equivalent to the paradise. In this way, Saint Ambrose manages to explain, metaphorically, the participation of the soul in the natural order prescribed by the Creator.

References

Editions and translations

Savage, J. (2003). *St. Ambrose. Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press [1961].

Vidal, S. (1996). *Las cartas originales de Pablo*. Edición bilingüe griego-español, con introducción y notas. Madrid: Trotta.

Miranda, Lidia Raquel & Lell, Helga María.
 Political and Moral Implications on Human Institutions according to Natural Law
 Paradigm in Two Ancient Christian Texts.
www.revistarodadafortuna.com

King James (1611). *Bible* on line (Authorized Version).
<http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>

Bibliography

Agamben, G. (2006). *El tiempo que resta*. Comentario a la carta a los Romanos. Madrid: Trotta.

Aftalión, E. J; Vilanova y J. Raffo. (1999). *Introducción al Derecho*. Buenos Aires: Abeledo Perrot.

Delhay, Ph. (1960). *Permanence du droit naturel*. Louvain: Nauwelaerts; Lille: Giard.

Dondeyne, A. (1961). “Réflexions philosophiques”, dans *Les désordres de l'homme. Semaine des intellectuels catholiques français*. Paris: Horay, 19-37.

Ernout, A; A. Meillet. (2001). *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*. Histoire des mots. A. Meillet Publisher, Paris: Klincksieck.

Esler, P. F. (2006). *Conflicto e identidad en la carta a los Romanos*. El contexto social de la carta de Pablo. Estella: Verbo Divino.

Fassò, G. (1982). *Historia de la Filosofía del Derecho*. Tomo I. España: Ediciones Parámide.

Laurent, B. y F. Refoulé (1985). *Iniciación a la práctica de la teología*. Tomo 4. Vol. IV. Madrid: Cristiandad.

Lhoir, J. (1964). “Le droit naturel chez les théologiens protestants actuels”. *Collect. Mechlin*. 49: 226-241.

Maes, B. (1967). *La loi naturelle selon Ambroise de Milan*. Roma: Presses de l'Université Grégorienne.

Miranda, L. R. (2010). “Tras los pasos de Filón: la naturaleza humana en *De paradiso*, de Ambrosio de Milán”. *Anales de Filología Clásica*, Buenos Aires: EUDEBA: 121-137.

Miranda, L. R. (2011). “Unidad y dualidad de la naturaleza humana en los tratados *De paradiso* y *De Cain et Abel* de Ambrosio de Milán”. *Argos. Revista de la Asociación Argentina de Estudios Clásicos*. Vol. 35 (in press).

Miranda, Lidia Raquel & Lell, Helga María.
Political and Moral Implications on Human Institutions according to Natural Law
Paradigm in Two Ancient Christian Texts.
www.revistarodadafortuna.com

Nauroy, G. (2003). *Ambroise de Milan. Écriture et esthétique d'une exégèse pastorale*. Quatorze études. Bern: Peter Lang.

Osuna, A. (1978). *Derecho natural y moral cristiana*. Salamanca: Editorial San Esteban.

Taubes, J. (2007). *La teología política de Pablo*. Madrid: Trotta.

Recebido: 12 de abril de 2012

Aprovado: 27 de junho de 2012