


The “inner man” – Fundamental Concept of Pauline Anthropology?

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ABSTRACT: The reader of the Pauline Epistles encounters the metaphor of the “inner man” for the first time in 2 Cor 4:16. Inconspicuous at first glance, this metaphor reveals not only a wide reception history within Christian thought and tradition but also a conceptual depth which brings us close to the origins of our thought on human personality and subjectivity. In this article, I want thus to elaborate on the concept of the “inner man” in Paul. Tracing its origins in Plato, I want to show how this metaphor must be understood on a conceptual level using metaphors as archaeological tools that help to discover concepts that might get lost when only interpreted as linguistic ornaments. Claiming that Plato explicitly expresses the human »self« as a continuous agent in front of changing phenomena of the human soul with his concept of the “inner man,” I will then turn to Paul. Even though it is impossible to trace the exact origins of this metaphor in the writings of the Apostle, it is my thesis that it can be found in 2 Cor 4:16 in substance. Paul thus uses the metaphor of the “inner man” to express the newly redeemed and yet justified Christian »self« that is confronted with opposition and contradiction that *waste away the outer man*. The exact Greek wording of this metaphor allows to identify the pictorial level of this metaphor in Paul with the temple in Jerusalem. As I will show, Paul thus integrates two anthropological lines that he derives from the creational accounts in the “inner man,” showing interesting parallels to Philo of Alexandria. With the metaphor of the “inner man,” the reader of 2 Cor 4:16 therefore encounters a or even the fundamental concept of Pauline Anthropology.

KEYWORDS: Paul, Pauline anthropology, selfhood, inner man, subjectivity

The reader of the Epistles of Paul encounters the metaphor of the “inner man” for the first time in 2 Cor 4:16: “So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer man (ὁ ἕξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) is wasting away, our inner man (ὁ ἔσω) is being renewed day by day.” It can also be found in Rom 7:22: “For I delight in the law of God in my inner man (κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον).” If we look into the so called deutero-pauline Epistle to the Ephesians, we find another reference: “I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner man (εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον) with power through his Spirit” (Eph 3:16). On the first glance, this metaphor seems unsuspecting. A look into its reception history, however, reveals a wide prevalence, either literally or in substance, not only in patristic literature, but also in medieval and in early modern writings. The reader

This article is based on my monograph: Hecht, Stephan, *Der innere Mensch. Begriff und Ursprung christlich-platonischer Subjektivität* (Alber-Reihe Thesen 82; Freiburg: Alber 2021).

of the *Second Epistle of Clement* thus gets as answer to the question of the Second Coming of Christ that it will occur “when the two shall be one, and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female, neither male or female.”¹ Clement of Alexandria then directly refers to this metaphor,² followed by Tertullian³ and Origen, who use the metaphor of the “inner man” when interpreting the creational account in Genesis. Other references can not only be found in the writings of Eusebius, Jerome, Augustine who excessively draws on this metaphor, or Leo the Great, but also in pagan philosophical writings such as Plutarch, Porphyry or Plotinus.⁴ It is, however, not only patristic literature that draws so heavily on the “inner man.” Speaking about medieval literature, the reader encounters this metaphor in several *Novice’s manuals* and authors such as Hugo of St. Victor or the *Tractatus De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione* of David of Augsburg.⁵ Martin Luther, too, uses this metaphor in his *On the Freedom of a Christian*,⁶ followed by John Paul II, who starts his *Love and Responsibility* with an anthropological vision based on the “inner” and “outer” man.⁷ Given this wide reception history, it is therefore no wonder that scholars such as Theo Kobusch denote patristic philosophy as the “metaphysics of the inner man.”⁸ Jens Wolff even suggests that this metaphor could be used to speak about subjectivity in a conceptual unburdened way.⁹ Despite numerous biblical commentaries¹⁰ referring to the passages in the Pauline Epistles, there is hardly any research done that *explicitly* deals with the *concept* of this metaphor.¹¹ What is the conceptual framework of this terminology?

1 2 Clem. XII,2.

2 Clement of Alexandria, *Paid.* III, 1; III, 2.

3 Tertullian, *Anim.* IX, 7f.

4 For an overview over the wide reception history see: C. Marksches, “Innerer Mensch,” *RAC* XVIII, 266–312.

5 Cf. R. Schnell, “Wer sieht das Unsichtbare?,” *Anima und sēle. Darstellungen und Systematisierungen von Seele im Mittelalter* (ed. K.S. Philipowski) (Berlin: Schmidt 2006) 21–40. For a detailed overview see also: A. Der-ville – A. Solignac, “Homme Intérieur,” *DSAM* VIII/1, 650–674.

6 Cf. J. Wolff, “Martin Luthers »innerer Mensch«,” *Lutherjahrbuch* 75 (2008) 31–66.

7 Cf. John Paul II, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press 1993) 21–40.

8 T. Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie. Die Entdeckung der Subjektivität* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2006) 15.

9 Cf. Wolff, “Martin Luthers »innerer Mensch«,” 64–65: “Mit der präzisen Metapher vom inneren Menschen, der die etwas hochgestochenen Begriffe wie «Subjektivität» oder «Selbstbewußtsein» vermeidet und abstrakte Reflexionskategorien umschiff, wird sprachlich ein Freiraum geschaffen, der ein unmittelbares Angesporensein an den innerlichen Menschen erlaubt, ohne «Subjektivität» zur monistischen Kategorie zu erheben. Luther weiß offensichtlich durchaus, was das Phänomen der «Subjektivität» ist, er preßt es aber nicht in philosophische Reflexionskategorien.”

10 Only to mention some of them: R. Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms. A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: Brill 1971); H. Klein, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (Hermannstadt: Honterus 2015); C. Kruse, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press 1987); T. Schmeller, “Der zweite Korintherbrief,” *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (eds. M. Ebner – S. Schreiber) (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2008) 331–352; U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, ed. 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2017); H. Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 9 ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1924).

11 Studies that explicitly deal with the metaphor of the “inner man” as independent or starting point for other objects: J. Assmann, *Die Erfindung des inneren Menschen. Studien zur religiösen Anthropologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus Mohn 1993); H.D. Betz, “The Concept of the ‘Inner Human Being’ (ho esō anthrōpos)

How do we need to interpret it? Can we identify this metaphor as a or even the fundamental concept of Pauline Anthropology and where does it come from? I would like to approach these questions on a methodological level in a hermeneutical way using metaphors as archaeological tools that allow us to identify concepts and worlds of thought that would otherwise elude the reader. But where to start?

1. The Metaphor of the Inner Man in Plato

There is scholarly consent on the fact, that the metaphor of the “inner man” can generally be found in Plato’s *Politeia* 588a-b for the first time. All in all, it seems to be a creation of Plato himself, who introduces his readers into an “image of the soul” (εἰκόνα [...] τῆς ψυχῆς).¹² In Plato’s words:

And on the other hand he who says that justice is the more profitable affirms that all our actions and words should tend to give the man within us [τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ἐντός] complete domination over the entire man and make him take charge of the many-headed beast like a farmer who cherishes and trains the cultivated plants but checks the growth of the wild and he will make an ally of the lion’s nature, and caring for all the beasts alike will first make them friendly to one another and to himself, and so foster their growth.¹³

Plato uses this image “to reinforce the message of book IX that injustice does not benefit a person”¹⁴ and therefore provides the program of the *Politeia* as a relocation of justice in the interior sphere with an anthropological foundation. Plato speaks in this image about the many headed beast, the lion and the man within us.

“Mould, then, a single shape of a manifold and many-headed beast that has a ring of heads of tame and wild beasts and can change them and cause to spring forth from itself all such growths.” “It is the task of a cunning artist,” he said, “but nevertheless, since speech is more plastic than wax and other such media, assume that it has been so fashioned.” “Then fashion one other form of a lion and one of a man and let the first be far the largest and the second second in size.” “That is easier,” he said, “and is done.” “Join the three in one, then, so as in some sort to grow together.” “They are so united,” he said. “Then mould

in the Anthropology of Paul,” *NTS* 46/3 (2000) 315–341; U. Duchrow, *Christenheit und Weltverantwortung. Traditions-geschichte und systematische Struktur der Zweireichelehre*, 2 ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1983) 59–136; T.K. Heckel, *Der innere Mensch. Die paulinische Verarbeitung eines platonischen Motivs* (WUNT 2/53; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1993); Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie*; T. Kobusch, *Selbstwerdung und Personalität. Spätantike Philosophie und ihr Einfluss auf die Moderne* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2018) 76ff; Marksches, “Innerer Mensch,” 266–312; G. van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context. The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008) 358–374; C. Zarnow, *Identität und Religion. Philosophische, soziologische, religionspsychologische und theologische Dimensionen des Identitätsbegriffs* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010).

¹² Plato, *Rep.* IX, 588b. Cf. E. Pender, *Images of Persons Unseen* (International Plato Studies 11; Sankt Augustin: Academia 2000) 214.

¹³ Plato, *Rep.* IX, 589a-b.

¹⁴ Pender, *Images of Persons Unseen*, 214.

about them outside the likeness of one, that of the man, so that to anyone who is unable to look within but who can see only the external sheath it appears to be one living creature, the man.”¹⁵

There is no doubt that the three creatures stand for the three parts of the soul: The man symbolizes the λογιστικόν, the lion stands for the θυμοειδές and the many-headed beast for the ἐπιθυμητικόν. To understand what Plato wants to tell his readers with the metaphor of the “inner man,” one now needs to take two aspects into account. The first is him not interpreting these different aspects of the soul as parts in an analytical way. Plato speaks of them as “μέρος” (parts), he also uses words such as γένος or even εἶδος as species or appearance.¹⁶ Theories that argue for a strict dichotomy between these parts thus fall short. They must be understood as *phenomena of interior life* or better: phenomena of the experience of oneself.¹⁷ Given this stress on the phenomenology of interior states and motions, one faces another element that is important to understand the actual meaning of this image. It is the fact that one deals with metaphorical language. Even though Plato does, according to Elizabeth Pender, not use the word μεταφορά in his writings, one can find εἰκὼν next to ὁμοιώσις, ἀναλογία, εἶδολον or παράδειγμα as words functioning in the same way as metaphors.¹⁸ When the reader thus is introduced into an image of the soul as “εἰκόνα [...] τῆς ψυχῆς,”¹⁹ the images he uses are metaphors. Referring to David B. Claus, Pender now focuses on centrality of the platonic notion of the soul as immaterial that can imply a tension when confronted with traditional views of the soul.²⁰

Thus the Greek language does not possess a *literal* vocabulary for the nature and behaviour of the soul as posited by Plato. For even where one can point to the antecedents of such a vocabulary, it is clear that

15 Plato, *Rep.* IX, 588c-e.

16 Pender, *Images of Persons Unseen*, 196f.

17 This coincides with the fact that one can find a rich interior life in the Platonic Dialogues. See: Plato, *Phileb.* 41b: “ἐπιθυμία ἐν ἡμῖν”; 29c: “σμεκρὸν μὲν τὸ παρ’ ἡμῖν”; 39a: “ἐν ἡμῖν γιγνόμενοι”; Plato, *Leg.* III, 698a: “καὶ δεσπότης ἐνὶ τῇ αἰδώς”; Plato, *Tim.* 88b: “διὰ δὲ τὸ θεϊότατον τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν φρονήσεως”; Plato, *Rep.* IV, 436a: “θυμούμεθα δὲ ἄλλω τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν”; *Rep.* X, 603a-b: “πόρρω δ’ αὐτὸ φρονήσεως ὄντι τῷ ἐν ἡμῖν προσομιλεῖ”; Plato, *Thet.* 184d: “εἰ πολλαὶ τινες ἐν ἡμῖν.” The δικαιοσύνη as interior practice (Plato, *Rep.* IV, 443c-d). Further: Plato, *Rep.* IV, 443d: “ἐντός, ὡς ἀληθῶς περὶ ἑαυτὸν καὶ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ.” Plato, *Phileb.* 26b: “καὶ ἐν ψυχῇ αὐτῇ πάμπολλα ἕτερα καὶ πάγκαλα”; Plato, *Men.* 88c: “εἰ ἄρα ἀρετὴ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ”; 88e: “τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα πάντα εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνηρτῆσθαι, τὰ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῆς εἰς φρόνησιν”; Plato, *Gorg.* 453a: “ἡ ἔχεις τι λέγειν ἐπὶ πλεον τὴν ῥητορικὴν δύνασθαι ἢ πειθῶ τοῖς ἀκούουσιν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ποιεῖν”; Plato, *Gorg.* 477b: “οὐκοῦν καὶ ἐν ψυχῇ πονηρίαν ἡγῆ τινα εἶναι”; Plato, *Rep.* IV, 441c: “τὰ αὐτὰ δ’ ἐν ἐνός ἐκάστου τῇ ψυχῇ γένην εἵνεκα καὶ ἴσα τὸν ἀριθμόν.”; Plato, *Leg.* XII, 968e: “πρὶν ἐντός τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκάστῳ που μαθήματος ἐπιστήμην γεγονέναι.”

18 Cf. Pender, *Images of Persons Unseen*, 40, 42.

19 Plato, *Rep.* IX, 588b.

20 Cf. D.B. Claus, *Towards the Soul. An Inquiry into the Meaning of psychē before Plato* (New Haven, MI: Yale University Press 1981) 183: “There are two demonstrably important groups of philosophical or technical context of ψυχή in the fifth century, both of which stem semantically from the archaic ‘life-force’ and both of which are therefore able to merge more or less invisibly with one another and with popular usage at the end of the century. The first group consists of contexts in which ψυχή is essentially the impersonal animator of the body, [...] the second group [...] attests to a newly persona and in that sense ‘Socratic’ use of ψυχή based, somewhat unexpectedly, on strongly psychophysical rather than dualistic ideas.”

Plato, in formulating his own non-standard views on soul, would have to mould this vocabulary to his own ends.²¹

Pender thus differentiates between four modes of metaphorical language in Plato. In doing so, she builds on debates held in the philosophy of language and here foremost by Eva F. Kittay whereas metaphors are not only linguistic ornaments without any deeper meaning but comprise a cognitive core that can only be expressed by means of this linguistic tool.²² The first of these modes is thereby 1) the literal meaning of ψυχή.²³ In the second mode, Plato tries to express his concept of the soul 2) in a more abstract way. In this abstract sense, he differs with his notion of the soul from traditional interpretations, but the overall context of the passage does not imply a contradiction. As soon as this contradiction appears, one reaches the realm of metaphorical language in the dialogues where Plato uses 3) neutral or 4) imaginative metaphors.²⁴ Pender now claims that imaginative and neutral metaphors can always be reduced to abstract language as long as one asks about the “that” of the soul. This implies that these metaphors can further be explained in literal language. As soon as one asks for the “how” or the “what,” one is confronted with irreducible metaphors, that means, metaphors that include a cognitive core that can only be expressed by use of the metaphor given in the text.²⁵

The crucial aspect now lies in the fact that the metaphor of the inner man unfolds in an image that precisely talks about the “how” or the “what” of the interaction of the different phenomena of the soul. This means in other words that the metaphor of the “inner man” contains a cognitive core, it stands for something that can only be expressed by using metaphorical language.

It is now my thesis that Plato precisely answers what Annas once identified as Homunculus Problem. What is the I, the human »self«, that principle of continuity we need in order to express a continuous agent within various interior phenomena of the soul that are

²¹ Pender, *Images of Persons Unseen*, 185.

²² Cf. E.F. Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (Oxford: Clarendon 1987); Further: A. Haverkamp, *Theorie der Metapher* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1983); H. Blumenberg, *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*, 2 ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1999); G. Lakoff – M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press 2003); K. Löwith, “Die Sprache als Vermittler von Mensch und Welt,” *Gesammelte Abhandlungen. Zur Kritik der geschichtlichen Existenz* (ed. K. Löwith) (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1960) 208–227; A. Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought*, 2 ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993); P. Ricoeur, “Stellung und Funktion der Metapher in biblischer Sprache,” *Zur Hermeneutik religiöser Sprache* (eds. P. Ricoeur – E. Jüngel) (München: Kaiser Verlag 1974) 45–71; B. Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes. Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen*, 4 ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1975) 208–227.

²³ Cf. Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, 187.

²⁴ Cf. Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, 187.

²⁵ Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, 189.

partly contradictory, partly interacting?²⁶ Plato must have been aware of this problem, since he remarks some lines before:

“Now the phrase ‘master of himself’ is an absurdity, is it not? For he who is master of himself would also be subject to himself, and he who is subject to himself would be master. For the same person is spoken of in all these expressions.” “Of course.” “But,” said I, “the intended meaning of this way of speaking appears to me to be that the soul of a man within him has a better part and a worse part, and the expression self-mastery means the control of the worse by the naturally better part.”²⁷

One needs to ask: Why does Plato then use the metaphor of the “inner man” in order to express this continuous agent, the human »self«, so explicitly? Is the “inner man” not close to the λογιστικόν, the soul not close to the immutable ideas? Why does he not use these terms to express the human »self«?

It is indeed the platonic reason (νοῦς) that is described in *Nomoi* XII as “sustainer” (“σωτήρα”),²⁸ but as Gerhard Jäger showed, the νοῦς cannot fully be understood as an organ of the soul.²⁹ Stephen Menn further interprets the νοῦς as a cosmic principle the individual is participating in.³⁰ The human soul as such, however, runs short as well,

26 J. Annas, *An introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1981) 142: “Each part has desires and pleasures, and tries to gain them, sometimes at the expense of the other two; they conflict, agree, and so on. That is, they are freely described in terms that are normally used only of the person as a whole. But the theory was introduced to explain certain behaviour on the part of the whole person showing that he or she is not a real unity. The parts are explanatory entities, parts needed to the behaviour of the whole. If they themselves, however, can be described in the way the whole person is, have we not reproduced the problems that led to the need for the theory in the first place? The desiring part is introduced to explain why sometimes I reach for a drink even when there is countervailing motivation. But then it turns out that we can say that the desiring part *wants* a drink and tries to promote this aim even when the other parts do not concur. How have we advanced from saying that *I* want a drink though I realize that there is something to be said against it? How is my desire to work out the truth explained by saying that I contain a little reasoning part whose main desire is to know the truth? The parts lead to a regress of explanation if they reproduce, as they seem to, the features of the whole person that needed the explanation in the first place. Let us call this the Homunculus Problem: is the theory not worthless if it explains the behaviour of a person by introducing in the person homunculi, little people to bring about the behaviour.”

27 Plato, *Rep.* IV, 430e-431b: “οὐκοῦν τὸ μὲν ‘κρίττω αὐτοῦ’ γελοῖον; ὁ γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ κρίττων καὶ ἤττων δῆπου ἂν αὐτοῦ εἴη καὶ ὁ ἤττων κρίττων: ὁ αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐν ἡπασιν τούτοις προσαγορεύεται. τί δ’ οὐ; ἀλλ’ ἡν δ’ ἐγώ, φαίνεται μοι βούλεσθαι λέγειν οὗτος ὁ λόγος ὥς τι ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τὸ μὲν βέλτιον ἐνι, τὸ δὲ χεῖρον, καὶ ὅταν μὲν τὸ βέλτιον φύσει τοῦ χείρονος ἐγκρατὲς ᾖ, τοῦτο λέγειν τὸ ‘κρίττω αὐτοῦ’—ἐπαινεῖ γοῦν—ὅταν δὲ ὑπὸ τροφῆς κακῆς ἢ τινοῦ ὁμιλίας κρατηθῇ ὑπὸ πλῆθους τοῦ χείρονος σμικρότερον τὸ βέλτιον ἐν, τοῦτο δὲ ὥς ἐν ὀνειδίζει ψέγειν τε καὶ καλεῖν ἤττω ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἀκόλαστον τὸν οὕτω διακείμενον.”

28 Plato, *Leg.* XII, 961d: “χρηὶ τοίνυν, ὦ Κλεινία, παντὸς πέρι νοῆσαι σωτήρα τὸν εἰκότα ἐν ἐκάστοις τῶν ἔργων, ὥς ἐν ζώῳ ψυχὴ καὶ κεφαλὴ, τὸ γε μέγιστον, πεφύκατον. [...] ψυχὴ μὲν πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις νοῦς ἐγγιγνόμενος, κεφαλὴ δ’ αὐτὸς πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις ὄψις καὶ ἀκοή: συλλήβδην δὲ νοῦς μετὰ τῶν καλλίστων αἰσθήσεων κραθεῖς, γενόμενός τε εἰς ἐν, σωτηρία ἐκάστων δικαιοτάτ’ ἂν εἴη καλουμένη.”

29 Cf. G. Jäger, “NUS” in *Platons Dialogen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1967).

30 S. Menn, *Plato on God as nous* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press 1995).

since it is only ‘ὁμοιότερον (similar)³¹ and ἐγγύς (close)³² to the continuity of the ideas, but not immutable itself.

In other words: Plato expresses with the metaphor of the “inner man” explicitly the human »self« as principle of continuity in front of changing states and phenomena of the soul.

With this in mind, we can turn our attention to Paul and his use of the “inner man” in 2 Cor 4:16 and Rom 7:22. Does he use this term in a similar way? Can we possibly identify the earliest expression of Christian selfhood and subjectivity, even a fundamental concept of Pauline anthropology there?

2. The Metaphor of the “inner man” in Paul

2.1. A Platonic Metaphor in Pauline Epistles?

As it was already mentioned above, the reader of the Pauline Epistle finds the metaphor of the “inner man” in 2 Cor 4:16; Rom 7:22 and Eph 3:16 leading to the question how Paul got to this metaphor. It would be much too broad to discuss the rich reception history of the “inner man” in philosophical and religious writings before Paul.³³ Given this wide adaption and multiple references, it is understandable, why there are various attempts of scholars to explain the existence of this platonic metaphor in the Pauline Epistles. Robert Jewett for example claims that „all but Cremer accepted the idea that Paul’s terminology and thinking was influenced to some extent by Greek philosophy.”³⁴ Richard Reitzenstein on the other hand tried to highlight the gnostic background and its influence on Paul.³⁵ Joachim Jeremias further points to the *Corpus Hermeticum*, whereas Hans Windisch to gnostic and Hellenistic influences.³⁶ Theo K. Heckel now confronts his readers with a “catchword-Hypothesis.” Paul might have taken the metaphor of the “inner man” from his opponents³⁷ and here in particular from a pupil of Philo, namely Apollos, who is described by Luke in Acts 18:24–28 as a Jew whose origins lie in Alexandria, who was educated, came to Ephesus, was conversant with the scriptures and educated in the way of the Lord.³⁸ Could it also be that there were Jewish Missionaries confronting Paul and using this metaphor?

³¹ Plato, *Phaid.* 79b.

³² Plato, *Phaid.* 80b.

³³ For a detailed overview see: Marksches, “Innerer Mensch,” 266–312.

³⁴ Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, 392.

³⁵ R. Reitzenstein, *Die Hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen. Nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen*, 3 ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1966) 345.

³⁶ Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 152.

³⁷ Cf. Heckel, *Der innere Mensch*, 132.

³⁸ Heckel, *Der innere Mensch*, 140.

As Thomas Schmeller rightly suggests, the problems of a definite reconstruction are too complex.³⁹ But does Paul even use the metaphor of the “inner man” in the same way as Plato? Does it *explicitly* denote the human »self« as a continuous agent?

2.2. The Metaphor of the “inner man” – the Human »self«?

In the oldest passage of the Pauline writings where one can find this metaphor, 2 Cor 4:16, Paul embeds the “inner man” into the wider context of the overall topic of his letter. It is the apostolic service as an existence of suffering (*Leidensexistenz*) in opposition to worldly fame. In the centre is the dialectic between cross and salvation, death and life, destruction and renewal, but also change and continuity. It can easily be seen that this dialectic confronts the reader with a similar yet different constellation as it is given in Plato. The question in this context is: How can the continuity and perseverance of the individual human being be thought in face of a new Christian existence that is justified by the death and resurrection of Christ and partakes in it qua baptism but is confronted with dangers and oppositions that *waste away the outer man*? In other words: How can the newly redeemed and justified »self« of the Christian be expressed in the *status viatorum* as a continuous agent, but still on his journey with all its struggles, its contradictions? Given these questions, one must further ask: Why is Paul then talking about the “inner man”? Are there not other anthropological terms that would provide the reader with the conceptual capacity to express selfhood as a continuous and stable agent being *day by day* renewed?

In order to answer these questions, I want to differentiate between two anthropologies in Paul that were especially highlighted by George van Kooten’s study on Paul’s anthropology, namely *spirit anthropology* and *image anthropology*.⁴⁰

Van Kooten thereby emphasises the role and reception of both creational accounts, namely the priestly (Gen 1:1–2:3: *image anthropology*) and yahwist (Gen 2:4–25: *spirit anthropology*) account, and its influence on Jewish anthropological thought given in authors such as Philo and ultimately Paul.⁴¹ The *spirit-anthropology*, conceptually thus derived from Gen 2:4–25, rests primarily on the triad of νοῦς, ψυχή and σὰρξ as it is given

39 Schmeller, “Der zweite Korintherbrief,” 344: “Die Probleme und Unsicherheiten der Rekonstruktion sind so groß, dass solche Entwürfe heute oft mit Skepsis betrachtet werden.”

40 Cf. G. Van Kooten, “Paul’s Anthropology in Context. The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity” (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008) 375: “The most remarkable feature of Paul’s anthropology is that it consists of two separate anthropologies, which can be distinguished as a ‘spirit anthropology’ and an ‘image anthropology’. This comes as no surprise, as we have seen that Philo, too, knows of these two anthropologies and derives them respectively from the second and first account of man’s creation in Gen 1–2. The spirit anthropology is based on Gen 2.7, whereas the image anthropology follows from Gen 1.26–27.”

41 For a detailed analysis see: Van Kooten, “Paul’s Anthropology in Context,” 269–312. Published as separate article: Van Kooten, G., “The Anthropological Trichotomy of Spirit, Soul and Body in Philo of Alexandria and Paul of Tarsus,” *Anthropology in the New Testament and Its Ancient Context. Papers from the EABS-meeting in Piliscsaba/Budapest* (Leuven: Peeters 2010) 87–119.

in passages such as 1 Thess 5:23.⁴² In 1 Cor 2:13–15 Paul then attributes to each of them a way of life.

And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual (πνευματικοίς). Those who are unspiritual[ε] (ψυχικός δὲ ἄνθρωπος) do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are spiritual discern (πνευματικός) all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ. And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh (ἀλλ’ ὡς σαρκίνοις), as infants in Christ.

The *Sarkinos* is worldly and lives according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα) (Rom 8:13). The same counts for the *Psychicos*, who does “not receive the gifts of God's spirit.” Both thus fall short to express the justified and redeemed human »self« in the context of 2 Corinthians. The *Pneumaticos* by contrary lives according to the spirit (κατὰ πνεῦμα) (Rom 8:5). Would this not be an ideal candidate? In the center now is 1 Cor 15:41–48, where the *Pneumaticos* is embedded in a framework of redemption:

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body (σῶμα ψυχικόν), there is also a spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν). Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit (ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν). But it is not the spiritual (πνευματικόν) that is first, but the physical (τὸ ψυχικόν), and then the spiritual (πνευματικόν). The first man (ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος) was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven (1 Cor 15:45–48).

Paul differentiates in this passage between σῶμα ψυχικόν and σῶμα πνευματικόν. One could now follow that Paul speaks of the spirit (πνεῦμα) only when talking about human salvation. But Paul speaks of the pneumatic body here, not the *pneuma* as such. In Van Kooten's word: „In Paul's view, it is not that the pneumatic reality (τὸ πνευματικόν) as such belongs to the future, but rather that the pneumatic *body* only becomes a reality after the eschatological resurrection.”⁴³ Paul thus attributes the *pneuma* to the fallen existence as well. From 1 Cor 15 follows that Adam was not created with ψυχή and σάρξ, but was created with πνεῦμα, ψυχή and σάρξ with the πνεῦμα of the fallen creation now in need for renewal and transformation. „Every human being has *pneuma*, only the Christians can have their *pneuma* really and effectively restored.”⁴⁴ By contrast, the πνεῦμα as well as the ψυχή and

42 “May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.”

43 Van Kooten, “Paul's Anthropology in Context,” 302.

44 Van Kooten, “Paul's Anthropology in Context,” 304.

σάρξ fall short of describing the human »self« as this newly redeemed and justified continuous agent that is confronted with oppositions and contradictions.

Following 1 Cor 15 further, one can leave this *spirit-anthropology* and look at the *image anthropology*. Paul writes in 1 Cor 15:49: “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust (ἐφορέσαμεν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ), we will also bear the image of the man of heaven (φορέσομεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου).”

Paul uses the word “φέρειν” and introduces his readers into the idea that man carries the image of God within himself. „Even though he does once identify man with the image of God (1 Cor 11.7), properly speaking only Christ is the image of God (2 Cor 3.17, 4.4; Rom 8.29).”⁴⁵ In the centre is thus that the individual should be transformed into the image of God, Christ. The *image anthropology* thus does not have the conceptual capacity to express this human »self« in the *status viatorum* as mentioned above since it accentuates not the individual human being but Christ as the true image of God and ideal to be transformed by the spirit.

Conversely, the metaphor of the “inner man” can be identified as the Christian version of this platonic »self« expressing redeemed selfhood within a situation of salvation that begun but is faced with oppositions, dangers and contradictions.

2.3. The “inner man” – Fundamental Concept of Pauline Anthropology

So far, it could be shown that Paul expresses the human »self« as a continuous agent with his concept of the inner man. At the end of this article, I would like to ask, if the metaphor of the “inner man” can be identified as a or even the fundamental concept of Pauline Anthropology? More technically: How does Paul integrate both anthropologies into his concept of the “inner man”? In order to answer this question, it is important to look at Christoph Marksches who remarks that Paul uses “ἔσω” and “ἐξω” instead of Plato using ἐντός in order to express this metaphor.⁴⁶ It is thereby interesting that the words “ἔσω” and “ἐξω” appear in the Septuagint, next to the description of space in a rather neutral way,⁴⁷ foremost in the description of the Temple in Jerusalem or Tabernacle with “ἔσω” in particular designating the Holy of Holies.⁴⁸ This fact might provide us with a hint of the context

⁴⁵ Van Kooten, “Paul’s Anthropology in Context,” 378.

⁴⁶ C. Marksches, “Die platonische Metapher vom «inneren Menschen»: Eine Brücke zwischen antiker Philosophie und alchristlicher Theologie,” *Int. J. Class. Tradit.* 1/3 (1995) 6: “Diese Brücke hat im Falle der Metapher vom «inneren Menschen» *bewusst* keiner gebaut, sie hat sich aber für nachfolgende Generationen als tragfähig erwiesen.”

⁴⁷ Gen 39:11: “ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ ἔσω”; Job 1:10: “τὰ ἔσω τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ”; Gen 9:22: “ἀνήγγειλεν τοῖς δυνὶν ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ ἐξω”; Gen 15:5: “ἐξήγαγεν δὲ αὐτὸν ἐξω”; Gen 19:17: “ἐξήγαγον αὐτοὺς ἐξω”; Gen 24:11: “καὶ ἐκοίμισε τὰς καμηλοὺς ἐξω”; Gen 24:29: “Λαβὼν πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐξω ἐπὶ τὴν πηγὴν”; Amos 4:5: “καὶ ἀνέγνωσαν ἐξω νόμον καὶ ἐπεκατέσαντο ὁμολογίας.”

⁴⁸ Cf. Exod 26:33: “You shall hang the curtain under the clasps, and bring the ark of the covenant in there, within the curtain (καὶ εἰσοίσεις ἐκεῖ ἐσώτερον καταπετάσματος); and the curtain shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy”; Lev 10:18: “Its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary. You should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary (κατὰ πρόσωπον ἔσω φάγεσθε), as I commanded”; Lev 16:2: “The Lord said to Moses: Tell your brother Aaron not to come just at any time into the sanctuary (εἰς τὸ ἅγιον

in which Paul thought about the pictorial level of the metaphor of the “inner man” coinciding with the fact that Paul speaks of the human person as a temple primarily in his correspondence with the Corinthians as can be seen with verses such as 1 Cor 3:16; 1 Cor 6:19 or 2 Cor 2:17. The Temple in Jerusalem as imaginative analogy to the “inner man” fits further into a context where Paul describes the apostolic ministry as similar as to the sacrifice of Christ. Windisch even argues that the earthly vessels (“ἐν ὅσπρακίνοις σκεύεσιν”) mentioned in the text could be interpreted as Temple vessels.⁴⁹ The expression *day by day* could further be an allusion to the daily temple sacrifice. A more subtle argument for the idea that Paul thinks of the “inner man” as the Temple in Jerusalem can be found with V.5,1: “For we know that if the earthly tent (οἰκία τοῦ σκηνῶν) we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God (οἰκοδομήν), a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς).”

Paul uses the word “ἀχειροποίητος” that one will also find in Mark 14:58, when talking about the renewal of the temple: “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands (χειροποίητον), and in three days I will build another, not made with hands (ἄλλον ἀχειροποίητον οἰκοδομήσω).”

Consequently, the temple in Jerusalem not only serves as the cognitive framework and as pictorial level of the “inner man,” but also integrates both anthropologies in this metaphor. As it was shown with 1 Cor 15, Paul thinks that the individual carries the image of God like the statue of a deity within him or herself. The “inner man” is further the place, where this newly redeemed and justified »self« experiences the works of the Holy Spirit. The temple imagery is thus the ideal conceptual space to integrate and combine both anthropologies in an overall concept. When looking on the reception history of this metaphor before Paul, it is interesting that Philo of Alexandria seems to use this image of the soul in a similar fashion. As Heckel shows, Philo must have known the platonic image in the *Republic*.⁵⁰ Even though he does not use this metaphor in a literal way and thus follows other

ἑσώτερον) inside the curtain before the mercy seat that is upon the ark, or he will die; for I appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat”; Lev 16:12: “He shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of crushed sweet incense, and he shall bring it inside the curtain (καὶ εἰσίοσει ἑσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος)”; 2 Chr 29:16: “The priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it, and they brought out all the unclean things that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord (καὶ εἰσῆλθον οἱ ἱερεῖς ἔσω εἰς τὸν οἶκον κυρίου ἀγνίσαι); and the Levites took them and carried them out to the Wadi Kidron”; 1 Kgs 6:15: “He lined the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the rafters of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood; and he covered the floor of the house with boards of cypress (ἐκολλοστάθμησεν συνεχόμενα ξύλοις ἔσωθεν καὶ περιέσχεν τὸ ἔσω τοῦ οἴκου ἐν πλεωραῖς πευκίναϊς).” Εἔσω is used as ἐξῶθεν for the outside of the arche, but also for the ark (Gen 6:14; Exod 25:11; Exod 26:35), the outside of the Tabernacle for the place, where the sacrifice took place (cf. Exod 26:35); Cf. Hecht, *Der innere Mensch*, 185–189.

⁴⁹ Cf. Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 142. Windisch argues that the phrase “ἐν ὅσπρακίνοις σκεύεσιν” in 2 Cor 4:16 might point to the use of these words in the LXX (Lev 6:28; 11:33; 14:50) for vessels used at the temple service (“ein im Tempeldienst gebrauchtes tönernes Gefäß”).

⁵⁰ Cf. Heckel, *Der innere Mensch*, 50ff. Heckel refers to passages such as Philo, *QE*. I, 19: “Wherefore not ineptly does He add that one must have a girdle about the middle, for this place is considered as the manger of the many-headed beast of desire within us [πολυκεφάλω θρέμματι τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἐπιθυμιῶν].” Against a tradition

ancient authors who refer to Plato's image using the actual metaphor in a variety of forms and transformations whilst sticking to its cognitive core, the human »self«, ⁵¹ Philo seems to identify the "inner man" with the creation of an ideal human being he takes from the priestly account (Gen 1:1–2, 4a) ⁵² using the platonic metaphor as an "exegetical tool" ("exegetisches Werkzeug") ⁵³ to describe the ideal human existence in the eyes of God. In this regard, the reader encounters expressions such as the heavenly man (als ἀνθρῶπος-νοῦς), but also an identification of the "inner man" with Adam, the wise man or king (σόφος, βασιλεύς), the human mind, other biblical figures such as Enoch or Moses and finally the human conscience. ⁵⁴ Interestingly, Philo seems to think in the same conceptual patterns as Paul thus integrating this anthropological concept into temple metaphorology:

For there are, as is evident, two temples of God: one of them this universe, in which there is also as High Priest His First-Born, the divine Word, and the other the rational soul, whose Priest is the real Man; the outward and visible image of whom is he who offers the prayers and sacrifices handed down from our fathers, to whom it has been committed to wear the aforesaid tunic, which is a copy and replica of the whole heaven, the intention of this being that the universe may join with man in the holy rites and man with the universe. ⁵⁵

At another passage, the reader encounters even a similarity to 1 Cor 15:49 with the idea of the human mind as enshrined (ἀγαλματοφορεῖσθαι) and thus carried around like the statue of a deity (ἄγαλμα).

And where in the body has the mind made its lair? Has it had a dwelling assigned to it? Some have regarded the head, our body's citadel, as its hallowed shrine, since it is about the head that the senses have their station, and it seems natural to them that they should be posted there, like bodyguards to

that merges passages from the *Timaios* and the *Republic*, Heckel brings forth the following passage: *QE*. II, 100: "Why is the height of the altar three cubits? The literal meaning (refers to) the service of the several priests, that they may easily be able to perform their office by standing on a firm base, hiding their bellies and the things within their bellies, because for that many-headed beast [πολικέφαλον θηρίον], desire, and the farther (part) around the heart, because of anger, the counselor of evil, that it may be superior to the head."

51 Cf. Marksches, "Innerer Mensch," 266–312.

52 Philo, *Opif.* XLVI, 134: "After this he says that 'God formed man by taking clay from the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life' (Gen. ii,7). By this also he shows very clearly that there is a vast difference between the man thus formed and the man that came into existence earlier after the image of God: for the man so formed is an object of sense-perception, partaking already of such or such quality, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal; while he that was after the (Divine) image was an idea or type or seal, an object of thought (only) incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible."

53 Cf. Heckel, *Der innere Mensch*, 56ff: "doch weitere Belege zeigen, daß das Bild vom obersten Seelenteil als Mensch im Menschen für Philon ein schnell zur Hand genommenes exegetisches Werkzeug sein kann. Nicht immer zwingt ihn der Text, dies schwierige Instrument zu verwenden; gelegentlich genügen ihm auch sehr vage Stichwortanknüpfungen, um dieses Bild einzubringen."

54 H. Leisegang, *Der Heilige Geist. Das Wesen und Werden der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis in der Philosophie und Religion der Griechen. Die vorchristlichen Anschauungen und Lehren vom Pneuma und der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1967) 79ff, n. 5.

55 Philo, *Somm.* I, 215.

some mighty monarch. Others contend pertinaciously for their conviction that the heart is the shrine in which it is carried (“καρδίας αὐτὸν ἀγαματοφορεῖσθαι”).⁵⁶

Even though a reconstruction of how Paul got to this metaphor is not possible and one can find similar description in other ancient sources,⁵⁷ parallels as such might evidence a philonic climate (“*philonischen Denkaura*”⁵⁸) in Corinth or at least a broader philonic tradition in the Jewish communities of Asia Minor as argued by Heckel⁵⁹ or David T. Runia.⁶⁰ In addition, Maren Niehoff recently argued that detailed descriptions of landscapes in the work of Philo reflect the wide spread and reception of his works in areas beyond Egypt.⁶¹

All in all, the expression of the “inner man” serves Paul to express the human »self« in the wake of the newness of the *factum Christi*,⁶² the experience of the crucified and living Christ, within the conceptual frameworks and imagery of his time. Based on discussions about the status of metaphors such as at George Lakoff and Mark Johnson,⁶³ the temple as pictorial level of the “inner man” thus serves as a religious appropriation (*religiöse Daseinsanneignung*)⁶⁴ urged by the need to develop new linguistic patterns for expressing the newness of the experience of Christ. Furthermore, when using the temple in Jerusalem as pictorial level for the “inner man,” Paul uses imagery that can also be understood in front of a pagan audience since temples belonged to the everyday life of ancient people. It serves thus his broader mission.⁶⁵

56 Philo, *Somn.* I, 31ff; see also *Opif.* 82: “He bears about within himself, like holy images (ἀγαματοφορούντα), endowments of nature that correspond to the constellations. He has capacities for science and art, for knowledge, and for the noble lore of the several virtues. For since the corruptible and the incorruptible are by nature contrary the one to the other, God assigned the fairest of each sort to the beginning and the end, heaven (as I have said) to the beginning, and man to the end.”

57 Cf. Van Kooten, “Paul’s Anthropology in Context,” 201: “Many further passages from ancient philosophers could be adduced here. Similar views circulate in Stoicism, to the effect that one should not build temples but hold the divine in one’s mind (...) (SVF 1.146; Zeon apud Epiphanius, *Panarion* 3.508). Such views are also echoed in Nemesius of Emesa, according to whom man is a temple of God (Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 1.433 edn Einarson; 1.15.19 edn Morani). Other Christians reflect these traditions. In his *Sententiae*, the Christian compiler Sextus (...) expresses views derived from pagan, Neo-Pythagorean collection: not only that the wise man is a living image of God (*Sententiae Sexti* 190 (...)), but also that one should treat the body as a temple of God.”

58 Heckel, *Der innere Mensch*, 141.

59 Heckel, *Der innere Mensch*, 141.

60 Cf. D.T. Runia, “Philo of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Thought,” *SPhiloA* 7 (1995) 153: “by making the distinction between Philo and Philonism, proposing the latter term for the broader tradition.”

61 Cf. M. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria. An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2017) 125ff.

62 With reference to Lubac’s dictum: „le fait du Christ.” See: H. de Lubac, *Typologie-Allegorie-Geistiger Sinn. Studien zur Geschichte der christlichen Schriftauslegung* (Freiburg: Johannes Verlag 1999) 182.

63 Cf. Lakoff – Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

64 Cf. Hecht, *Der innere Mensch*, 190 with reference to B. Janowski, *Konfliktgespräche mit Gott. Eine Anthropologie der Psalmen*, 4 ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft 2003) 33ff.

65 V. Gäckle, *Allgemeines Priestertum. Zur Metaphorisierung des Priestertitels im Frühjudentum und Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014) 16.

Conclusion

As I tried to show, the metaphor of the “inner man” can be found in Plato’s *Republic* IX. 588 as an “image of the soul” for the first time. Inconspicuous at first glance, this metaphor unfolds a conceptual depth that can be identified with an *explicit* expression of the human »self« as a continuous element within a permanent flux of interior phenomena of the soul. Even though we cannot reconstruct where and how Paul got this terminology and if he received it from Plato via direct and indirect ways, it can at least be found in substance. Trying to express redeemed and justified human existence confronted with oppositions and contradictions, the “inner man” as continuous agent stands for this new Christian identity integrating both anthropologies he derives from Genesis in the imagery of the temple in Jerusalem as the pictorial level of this metaphor. It is, therefore, my thesis that the metaphor of the “inner man” in Paul is not only a, but probably the fundamental concept of Pauline Anthropology.

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