
PAULINE ANTHROPOLOGY: ON THE INNER HUMAN BEING AND THE HUMAN “I”¹

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1. INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is one of the central aspects of Paul’s thought world, his theology. He used a variety of words to describe human beings. Statistically, *flesh* and *body* occupy first place, play a central role and are sometimes closely related to each other.²

Rudolph Bultmann’s famous observation that by *body* Paul means “the whole person” has influenced scholars’ approach to Paul’s anthropology for decades. His formulation that “man does not have a *σῶμα*, he *is* *σῶμα*, for in not a few cases *σῶμα* can be translated simply as “I” (or whatever personal pronoun fits the context) is central.”³ Bultmann also connected body with other anthropological specifications by saying that “the *σῶμα* is not something that outwardly clings to a man’s real *self* (to his soul, for instance), but belongs to its very essence.”⁴

According to Bultmann, the “somatic” term *body* also embraces the more sophisticated designations of man, such as “I” and *self*, which today are used as psychological human markers. For Bultmann, *body* closely

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² In the undisputed seven Pauline epistles, *σῶμα* occurs 74 times, *σάρξ* 72 times and *ψυχή* 11 times. See *Concordance to the Novum Testamentum Graece of Nestle-Aland, 26th Edition, and to the Greek New Testament, 3rd Edition*. (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 1763–1765; 1687–1688; 1939. Since *πνεῦμα* often refers to the Spirit of God or to the Holy Spirit, references to specifically human spirit need a special study and are left out of comparison.

³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*. Vol. 1 (London: SMC Press, 1988), 194.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

overlaps with the human “I” and what we call the *self*. Paul used the word ἐγώ which is “I”, but is sometimes called *self*. The English *self*, however, reflects much of what the Greek αὐτός probably referred to.

The phrase ὁ ἕσω ἄνθρωπος, which appears only twice in the undisputed seven epistles of Paul (2Cor 4:16 and Rom 7:22), is the focus of my attention. The third use in the Corpus Paulinum (Eph 4:16) testifies to the reception history of this phrase. In 2Cor 4:16, Paul contrasts ὁ ἕσω [ἡμῶν] (ἄνθρωπος) with ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος. The “inward man” is compared to the “outward man”, and in 2Cor 4:16–5:10 these expressions are related to the things which “cannot be seen” or “can be seen”, are eternal or temporary, to the mysterious human status of “being clothed” or “found naked”, to “a house not made with hands” or to “our earthly house.”⁵

How did Paul use these and other relevant words? There are several ways in which this could be approached. James D. G. Dunn correctly emphasises that Paul was more concerned “with humankind in relation to God, with men and women in their relationship with each other, and subsequently with Christ as God’s response to the human plight.”⁶ This relational nature of Paul’s theology binds various aspects of his worldview to a complicated web in which the mutual relations between anthropological terms are hard to follow. George H. van Kooten has recently published a detailed study on the anthropological terms used by Paul in their historical context, and he has paid special attention to the expression “the inner man” in the context of the renewal of the mind.⁷ Troels Engberg-Pedersen has considered the extent to which Paul thought of the mind in bod-

⁵ English translations of these phrases differ from each other. One may find *the inner person* and the *outer person* / *our inner nature* and *our outer nature* / *the inward man* and the *outward man* etc. Paul is delighted in the law of God κατὰ τὸν ἕσω ἄνθρωπον, i.e., in his “inmost self” (Rom 7:22, NRSV) whereas in Rom 7:23 the term νοῦς (mind; NRSV) is closely related to the term “inward / inner / man”, or “the inmost self” of Rom 7:22. The readers may even ask whether in Paul “the inward man” is somehow related to “sin in me” (Rom 7:17, 23), to “my flesh” (7:18) and to “this body of death” (7:24).

⁶ James D. G. **Dunn**, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Cambridge, U.K., 1998), 53.

⁷ George H. **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*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 232 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 357–392.

ily terms and ascribed transformative power to the spirit.⁸ I owe much to these works, and use the results to sketch out the structure of Paul's view, in which the concept finds its place.

My main research questions will be focussed on the meaning of the concept of the "inner man" in Paul and how this could better explain his anthropology in the context of eschatology and soteriology. Some wider questions arise immediately, such as how this concept relates to "the outer man", the body, the "I" and the *self*? What did these phrases mean to Paul's audience?

I demonstrate that in Paul's theology the "inner man" has more connections with other anthropological terms than meets the eye. I shall argue that in 2 Corinthians one finds a tentative presentation of the idea, which is complemented but not completed in Romans. On this basis I will show that the two epistles share a common pattern in this particular issue.

2. SEARCH FOR THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE NOVEL PHRASE

2.1. *On the General Religious Atmosphere of the Day*

It seems that ὁ ἕσω ἄνθρωπος does not fit into any of the anthropological categories of Paul.

Though some other categories, such as σάρξ, σῶμα, νοῦς and ψυχή, had partial counterparts in Hebrew, there is no word from which ὁ ἕσω ἄνθρωπος could have originated. The same applies to its antonym ὁ ἕξω ἄνθρωπος. To be precise, the Greek σῶμα did not have a direct equivalent in Hebrew either, and *flesh* (בשר) was the closest option.

Paul is often described as a first-century Jew seeking his way between Judaism and Hellenism in terms of dichotomy. In regard to Judaism and Hellenism, the concepts *dichotomy* and *dualism* have recently been reconsidered. Duality better expresses the interwoven nature of both mentalities in the Graeco-Roman context. T. Engberg-Pedersen recently pointed out that the shift from the concept of the Hellenistic "background" to the

⁸ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul. The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167, 153.

Hellenistic “context” itself reflects fresh insights.⁹ The background very accurately describes the environment from which people come, whereas context is usually understood as the environment in which people live.

These wider concepts that formed the context at the time of Paul’s activity for the understanding of the expressions like “the inner man / the outer man” were Jewish apocalyptic eschatology and Hellenistic philosophical eschatology. The individual’s experience of death and the afterlife were of central importance in Hellenistic thought. The mythology of the Greek underworld, with its varied conceptions of the afterlife, painted vivid landscapes where the fate of individual persons was most attractive, and the primary form of dualism is the distinction between mortality and immortality. In Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, on which early Christian understanding was based, the primary dualism is temporal, distinguishing between “this age” and “the age to come”. In both Jewish and early Christian forms of future expectations, the individual is also embedded in the community to which individuals belong (whether Israel, the remnant, the righteous, or the followers of Jesus).¹⁰ The members of Pauline communities were at least partially aware of these symbolic worlds, which made understanding of Paul’s phrases easier.

In the same cultural region, some ideas and convictions are often shared by both forms of eschatological expectations. In regard to his hearers and readers, Paul could to some extent count on a common ground of understanding, at least in Corinth.

2.2. *On the Literary Background of the Phrase “The Inward Man”*

In the middle of the 1st century, Paul’s readers came across his expressions on human nature. If Paul also used them while preaching and teaching, in theory the Corinthians may have had opportunities to talk to him and ask about their meaning; the Romans did not. A concise history of the terminology is still needed.

⁹ Troels **Engberg-Pedersen**, “Introduction” – *Paul Beyond the Judaism / Hellenism Divide*. Ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 1–4.

¹⁰ David E. **Aune**, “Anthropological Duality in the Eschatology of 2 Corinthians 4:15–5:10” – *Paul Beyond the Judaism / Hellenism Divide* (see note 9), 215–240, 218.

Xenophon (5th–4th century BC) used οἱ ἐνδον ἄνθρωποι to refer in a literal sense to men within the citadel. As a spatial and not a philosophical concept, the expression may be translated as ‘men inside’. Another literal meaning of the similar phrase τὰ ἔσω τοῦ ἀνθρώπου by Hippocrates is physiological and refers to organs ‘within man’.¹¹ These locative markers were probably in wider use because of their clarity and applicability in everyday life, but these meanings were not very helpful for understanding Paul.

There was, however, an expression of Plato (427–347 BC) that is close to that of Paul. In the *Republic* (IX 588A–589B) Plato draws an image of the soul. This tripartite soul seems to consist of a manifold and many-headed beast, a lion, and a man.¹² The expression ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος is part of a longer and more complicated passage, ὁθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος ἔσται ἐγκρατέστατος. It is translated as follows “(that all our actions and words should tend) to give the man within us complete dominion (over the entire man, and make him take charge of the many-headed beast).”¹³ In Plato the expression refers to the rational soul as distinct from the lower parts of the soul, and stands for the highest part of man’s soul.

Similar phrases appear in Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BC – ca. 50 AD), his equivalents of the Platonic terminology are ‘the true man’, ὁ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἄνθρωπος, or ὁ ἀληθινὸς ἄνθρωπος (*De fuga et inventione*, 131; *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*, 10), which brings to mind Plato. Philo was acquainted with the ideas of Plato, but the terminology of true man is also known from the ancient Jewish sources.¹⁴ As a Jewish scholar, he was well-versed in the Septuagint and the Deuterocanonical writings.¹⁵

¹¹ Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context*, 359–360.

¹² The rational human part of the soul, τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος (“des Menschen innerer Mensch”), is called also λογιστικόν and divine (τὸ θεῖον; IX 590D). It is believed, however, that this metaphor of Plato was not very widespread. See Thomas Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*. Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 8/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, Ostfildern: Patmos, 2010), 273–274.

¹³ Plato, *The Republic*. With an English translation by Paul Shorey. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: Cambridge University Press; London: Heinemann, 1963), 402–403.

¹⁴ Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context*, 366.

¹⁵ In the beginning of the Book of Job (1:1 LXX; cf. 1:8; 2:3), Job was called a true man

On the basis of Platonism, however, Philo posits three parts of the soul: the nutritive, the sense-perceptive and the rational (*Quaestiones in Genesim* 2.59, based on Plato's *Republic* 434E–444D). The substance of the rational soul is the divine πνεῦμα,¹⁶ which constitutes the cognitive part of the soul.

According to Philo, man was created in the image of God (Logos) and is third after God in the hierarchy, i.e., (1) God, (2) the image of God, (3) man.¹⁷ Philo believes that God established the real man in us, the mind (νοῦς), and according to him “this true man is the mind endowed with reason, which dwells in the soul of each of us” (Philo, *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*, 22–23). The inner man also functions within the human soul as man's conscience.¹⁸ It is clear that one cannot be sure of the history of these anthropological concepts between the time of Plato and Paul. Adolf Schlatter already had doubts about our ability to explain the connection between Plato's and Paul's use of the phrase.¹⁹ In sum, I reach the conclusion that the dichotomy between the inner and outer person was expressed in many ways throughout Graeco-Roman antiquity.²⁰

In the beginning of my study I paid attention to different translations of ὁ ἕσω ἄνθρωπος and ὁ ἕξω ἄνθρωπος. My own terminology here is not consistent,²¹ since different contexts seem to favour different choices. All current translations unveil some aspect of these phrases and can be suited to different contexts, and therefore I cannot point out the best. According to a comment by van Kooten, the terms ἐνδον, ἐντός and ἕσω are not

(ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀληθινός). Similarly, in the *Book of Enoch*, the main figure Enoch is addressed as the true man.

¹⁶ Dale B. **Martin**, *The Corinthian Body* (Chelsea, Michigan: Book Crafters, 1995), 13.

¹⁷ Concisely presented by Theo K. **Heckel**, *Der Innere Mensch. Die paulinische Verarbeitung eines platonischen Motivs*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, II 53 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1993), 54.

¹⁸ Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*, 368.

¹⁹ Heckel, *Der Innere Mensch*, 4.

²⁰ Walter **Burkert**, “Towards Plato and Paul: The ‘Inner’ Human Being” – *Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Bible and Culture. Essays in Honour of Hans Dieter Betz*. Ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 59–82.

²¹ In different expressions like “the inner person and the outer person / our inner nature and our outer nature / the inward man and the outward man / the inner man and the outer man” the noun ἄνθρωπος is translated as a man, a person, and nature. All possibilities are acceptable and illustrate how complicated Paul's phrases are.

adjectives but adverbs. He suggests that “for this reason we should really translate the relevant phrases in question as ‘the man within’, ‘the man inside’.”²² This translation is a novel option that does not make choice easier.

Paul was probably not literarily dependent on Plato, but may have known the ideas of Philo, who was influenced by Plato’s worldview. When Paul’s epistles reached Greek-speaking Hellenistic readers in Corinth, their possible familiarity with Philo’s ideas cannot be ruled out, and if so, this may have helped Paul’s addressees to understand the meaning of his ideas and specific expressions.

3. PAUL’S MESSAGE TO THE CORINTHIANS

3.1. The Immediate Literary Context Sheds the First Light on the Meaning of the Phrases

In 2Cor 4:16, the ancient reader found a phrase: Διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν, ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἡμέρᾳ. The epistle itself provided the primary context for understanding. In 4:10, Paul speaks through the ‘we’—we are always carrying the death of Jesus in the body, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. In this text, death is not essentially associated with the body, and life is not associated with the soul in a dualistic way. Both death and life are connected with the body, and everything that happens to the body depends on Jesus. The connection with Christ is binding, gives the human body a positive aspect and makes it subject to Christological and eschatological perspectives.

According to the textual context, ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος “is wasting away, is identified with the “earthen vessel” (4:7), with the “body” (4:10), with the “mortal flesh” (4:11), with “our earthly dwelling” and “tent” (5:1), and with “that which is mortal” (5:4).” Taken together, these expressions show that ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος is used as a metaphor for the physical body. This body is subject to weakness, aging, and death. The phrase may well be translated as “the outer nature” of a human being. Distinctive to ὁ ἔσω

²² Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context*, 358–359.

ἄνθρωπος is the fact that it is “renewed” (ἀνακαινοῦται) day by day (4:16), but is *not* described in 2Cor 4–5 as the soul or mind in typical Greek categories. Therefore the connection to the mind in Rom 7:23 is significant. It soon turns out that the inner person is taken into the wider process of renewal (ἀνακαίνωσις), i.e. into the renewal of the personality as part of the new creation (καινὴ κτίσις; 2Cor 5:17).

The two phrases conflict with each other, but since the outward man is not described by nature as evil or inherently in opposition to the inward man, they are not presented by Paul as moral opposites. Though the outward man may be compared to the vessel of the inward man (“clay jar” in 2Cor 4:7), what matters is not the difference in the moral qualities or values of these two entities, but their relation to the future. They differ in eschatological perspectives. Paul is convinced that the inward man (person) is not transient like the outward man, and represents that aspect of the Christian²³ person that survives death.

Philo had probably read Plato, and referred to the inner person by creating a variety of synonymous phrases.²⁴ Paul’s phrase ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος resembles the much older phrases by Plato and Philo. Hypothetically speaking, even if Paul was aware of Plato’s phrase, the majority of his readers in Corinth probably were not. On the other hand, it seems that the Corinthians may nevertheless have been familiar with somewhat similar oral sayings, since Paul did not find it necessary to give any more detailed explanations than he did in 2Cor 4:7–5:10. Paul seemingly assumed that the Corinthians would understand the intended meaning of his phrase. We do not know on what Paul based this hope, but there is also a possibility that Paul had used similar expressions when teaching and preaching in Corinth. In sum, Paul may have been aware of Philo’s expressions, but coined the combination of phrases ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος and ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος by himself.

²³ It is possible that according to the logic of Paul, Christians alone possess the inward person. Only those who are in Christ, participate in the new creation. It is possible to say that being in Christ is the reason for a person of being renewed day by day “already today” and of being part of the new creation.

²⁴ Aune, “Anthropological Duality in the Eschatology”, 222, refers to Philo’s expressions like “the real person within us, that is, the mind”, “the true person”, “the person within the person”, and “the better part within the worse, the immortal within the mortal.”

3.2. *The Wider Context Demonstrates How Paul Created Metaphoric Expressions*

The metaphors in 2Cor 4:7–5:10 are related both to ὁ ἕξω ἄνθρωπος and ὁ ἕξω ἄνθρωπος. Paul starts with 2Cor 5:1: “For we know that if (ἐάν) our earthly *house* (οἰκία) of this *tent* (σκηνή) is destroyed²⁵, we have a *habitation* (οἰκοδομή) from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” In 2Cor 5:8 he refers to death: “we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”²⁶ The phrase ἡ οἰκία τοῦ σκηνῶν is a metaphor where ἡ οἰκία (‘house’) really refers to the σκῆνος (‘body’). The basic semantic meaning of σκῆνος is ‘tent’, but the figurative extension of the expression also means ‘body’, more precisely ‘ephemeral or transitory body.’²⁷ Thus it seems clear that our earthly, *tent-like house* is to be identified with our outer person (4:16b), and thus perhaps also with our *mortal flesh* (4:11). The expression *tent-like house* is in harmony with the view of the body as a container of valuable commodities and with “this body of death” of Rom 7:24.

Whereas in many Hellenistic texts tent imagery is employed to describe the mortal body in distinction to the immortal soul,²⁸ in Paul the transitory body as an earthenware vessel (clay jar) of 4:7 is needed *not* for the soul within it but for the treasure of the veiled gospel (4:3f.). In 2 Corinthians Paul describes his sufferings during the ministry. His body is often in danger, and thus the earthly house refers to the vulnerable nature of his apostolic life. He is nevertheless the bearer of something glorious and “his weakness and vulnerability is needed for the proper conveyance of the treasure of the gospel.”²⁹ Thus the decay of the outer person

²⁵ The aorist passive use of the verb καταλυθῆναι which also means “to be demolished”, is often used with οἰκία and refers in this context to death as the deconstruction of the physical body.

²⁶ The expression ἐκδημησαι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος (‘to leave home = body’) is an idiom for death, confirmed in 5:9 by an abridged parallel construction εἴτε ἐνδημοῦντες εἴτε ἐκδημοῦντες.

²⁷ Aune, “Anthropological Duality in the Eschatology”, 224–226, gives several examples from Greek literature where σκῆνος means both ‘tent’ and ‘(ephemeral) body.’

²⁸ Victor Paul **Furnish**, *II Corinthians*. The Anchor Bible, 32A (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 293.

²⁹ Margaret E. **Thrall**, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Vol. 1. The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 324.

(outward man) is connected with the description of his apostolic suffering in 1Cor 4:8–12.³⁰

Paul alleges in 2Cor 5:1 that *we know*³¹ that after the decay of the mortal body *we have* the οἰκοδομή ἐκ θεοῦ as some kind of heavenly reality that already exists, but today is not yet at our disposal. Based on the ideas of Philo, it is possible to surmise that in Paul's thought the subject of the verbal construction *we know* may be the cognitive, rational, inner (inward) aspects of the persons involved, 'the men within' of at least some of the Corinthians. This implies that these 'men within' (van Kooten's interpretation in plural) are those who know, think, contemplate and have rational abilities.

A sort of anthropological duality in terms of "now" and "then" is visible in the fact that one human dwelling place, our temporary earthly house, will be replaced by the other, eternal habitation. On the other hand, this seems not to imply a body—soul relationship, and it does not necessarily reflect an ethical opposition between the outer and inner aspects of the person. Firstly, the term ψυχή does not occur here, and σῶμα is used neutrally (2Cor 5:6, 8, 10). Secondly, the phrases σῶμα πνευματικόν and σῶμα ψυχικόν already known to the Corinthians (1Cor 15:40–44) are not utilized for clarification. Thirdly, phrases formed earlier in 1Cor 15, like σώματα ἐπίγεια and σώματα ἐπουράνια, which are potentially useful expressions for illustrating the earthly house and heavenly habitation, are not utilised.

Paul placed anthropological characteristics in an eschatological context. On the one hand, the difference between the two 'men' is eschatological in nature and is slightly similar to the contrast between the 'old' and the 'new' man in Rom 6:6. On the other hand, it seems that ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος and ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος do not succeed each other in time but live parallel lives, since the inner person already exists. 'The age to come' has in some sense already arrived, but 5:1–10 emphasises its future nature. The inward renewal of human beings is clearly of central importance and

³⁰ The visible apostolate is weak, threatened, exhibited as last of all, as though sentenced to death, transitory like human outer person and earthenware vessel.

³¹ I suppose that οἶδαμεν refers to the common shared knowledge of the Corinthian community at the time Paul is speaking. Thus the expectation of the reader that ἔχομεν ('we have') means *we already have* is well justified. Paul seems to indicate that the οἰκοδομή ἐκ θεοῦ is an already now existing heavenly reality.

probably runs parallel with their gradual transformation to glory (2Cor 3:18). In one sense this transformation may become outwardly visible in the manifestation of the Christ-like character of humans, but a clearer characterisation of the two men / persons is still not given. This transformation of the “inner person” is simply reported elsewhere by the expression that allows one to think that the “I” of Gal 2:20 “by faith has grasped the reality of the new life in Christ.”³²

It appears that though “the outward man” is nearly the same as “the body”, the inward man is neither body nor soul. One may conjecture that Paul’s “inward man” (the man within / the man inside) is by nature close to, but not identical with the spiritual (πνευματικός) person whose character, inclinations and attitudes are reminiscent of the “inward man” of Plato. This supposition deserves attention, but remains beyond the limits of this work. It still seems to be certain that “the inward man” is not the body. It survives physical death, preserves the continuity and identity of the person and can, according to David W. Stacey, in 2 Corinthians be called the “self”, or even the “true self” or the “essential self.”³³ Perhaps in 2 Corinthians the “inward man” can partly even be called “I”, but not in the exclusive and full sense of the word. It is known that Paul has also equipped human σῶμα as a Divine creation with several positive aspects (1Cor 3:16; 1Cor 6:13–20), which also represent the “I”. Therefore the “self” and the “I” are not equated with the body, but nevertheless also embrace the body.³⁴

³² Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 289.

³³ David W. Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man in Relation to its Judaic and Hellenistic Background* (London: MacMillan, 1956), 212.

³⁴ Associations raised by 2Cor 12:2–5 are challenging. Paul does not know whether the person (ἄνθρωπος) whom he knows, was in the body or out of the body. What is decisive here is that it does not matter what was the case. It was the person and not the soul who was in the body or out of the body.

4. “I” AM A MYSTERY TO “MYSELF”

4.1. *Reappearance of the Phrase in Romans Raised New Questions*

Paul mentioned the inner person once again in Romans 7, and this new context raises the question of how the concepts of the inner person, the *self* and “I” are related to each other. Here I analyse Romans 7 and later on in 4.2 I ask what the two epistles have in common, and whether the structural elements of 2 Corinthians reappear in Romans.

The formal speaker in Romans 7:14–25 is the “I” who, according to Rom 7:22, delights in the Law of God, κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον. Here the “I” is not identical with “the inner man.” The “I” wants to do what is good, but nevertheless sooner accomplishes that which is evil (Rom 7:21). The problem is not with the law, but with human beings who are carnal, made of flesh, and attacked by sin, which dwells within them. Sin is the power that came into the world (Rom 5:12) and dwells in man, in his flesh (Rom 7:18) and in his members (7:23), the body.

Sin is not the only agent active in human thinking and doing. The inner man/person has an affinity with the will of God. The law of the human mind is in harmony with the law of God. It is only here in Paul that ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος is the equivalent of νοῦς, and thus the mind is involved in the moral conflict, whereas “I” is in the centre of the battle between the law and sin (Rom 7:22, 25). The “I” finds itself on both sides and is torn by the division. No wonder that human Ego in Romans is an oft-discussed topic. Joseph A. Fitzmyer says aptly that “as far as willing is concerned, the Ego is at one with the law.”³⁵ Nothing seems to be wrong with the mind as the knowing and planning subject that comprises the rational capacity of man. The mind can be at one with the law and is needed by decision-making.³⁶ The problem is in the weakness of the mind.

In this light the οὐ γινώσκω of Rom 7:15 can hardly mean the usual ‘I

³⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *Romans. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible, 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 473.

³⁶ Mind reflects human capacity to decide. Otto Michel (*Der Brief an die Römer. Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 4. 14. Auflage [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978], 235) explains: “νοῦς ist in 7,23 die Einsicht und das Urteilsvermögen, das sich durchaus auf die Seite Gottes schlagen kann.”

do not know.’ It seems instead that the subject of the verb knows well what he does. Rom 7:18 and the context provide good testimony of the rational ability of the “I”.³⁷ The problem lies instead with the will and the power to do what is right. Therefore, better explanation is along the lines of the sense ‘acknowledge.’ The conflict is much more clearly articulated if the interpretation goes as “‘I do not acknowledge’, that is, ‘I do not approve’, ‘I do not condone’” my own actions. This suggestion by C. E. B. Cranfield takes the inner conflict within the man seriously.³⁸

In the NRSV the inward man/person of Rom 7:22 is translated as “my inmost self”³⁹, which implies that ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος is thought to designate the very *heart* of the personality. It is not here alone, since according to Rom 2:14f. the prescriptions of the law are written even on the hearts of Gentiles.⁴⁰ Human conscience is related to the heart and is involved in discussion with conflicting thoughts that accuse or excuse human actions. Conscience is at least partly rational, and consequently even the reason (νοῦς) of the Gentiles is capable of approving the demands of God.

If in Rom 7:22 the word κατά means ‘after the manner of’, then the inward man (the man within) is the person seeking the will of God. Robert Jewett even says that “the location of the shared joy in the law is specified as Paul’s ‘inner self/person’.”⁴¹ Here I concur with Jewett’s interpretation, according to which the inward man is positively close to, but not identical with, “I”, is opposed to sin, the law of sin, and “this body of death” (Rom 7:23). Thus the inward man of Rom 7:14–25 is in contrast to the outward man of 2Cor 4:16, but it is not clear to which degree ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος can here, in Romans 7:22, be associated with the expression “the inmost self” suggested by some scholars and the NRSV. Based on Paul’s statement that “I am of the flesh” (Rom 7:14: ἐγὼ δὲ σὰρκινός εἰμι), and that he was sold

³⁷ In the beginning of the epistle, Paul claims that people by nature know about God and God’s invisibility is understood through God’s activity to which the whole created world testifies (Rom 1:19ff.).

³⁸ C. E. B. **Cranfield**, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Romans. Vol. 1. Introduction and Commentary on Romans I–VIII*. The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 359.

³⁹ Rom 7:22: “For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self.”

⁴⁰ A very similar motif is in Rom 2:28f. where the metaphors of the circumcision of heart and a Jew within are given.

⁴¹ Robert **Jewett**, *Romans: A Commentary*. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 470.

into slavery under sin, this “I” does not fully control his (its) own actions and his (its) power of judgement is limited.⁴²

In Romans 7 the human “I” is distinctly complicated and contradictory. As far as human understanding and will are concerned, the Ego is at one with the law. But not any longer—there is sin that dwells ‘within me’ (ἐν ἐμοί; Rom 7:20). Paul discovers a (new?) law: when *I* want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand (7:21).⁴³ In the expression ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία (Rom 7:17, 20), the “I” is like a metaphor for a house wherein sin dwells. There is a similarity to the expression ἡ οἰκία τοῦ σκῆνους (2Cor 5:1; the tent-like house), which refers to the outward man, the earthly body in which sin has taken place. In 2 Corinthians, however, the earthly body is not associated with the “I”.

The law of sin is so powerful that it is able to captivate the “I”⁴⁴. Theo K. Heckel conjectures that the word “I” is used in two ways. First, there is a simple observable “I”, but Paul says “I died” (Rom 7:10). After saying this, Paul is alive and can still go on doing his work and writing the epistle. This implies that there is a second use of “I” that guarantees the continuity of “I”.⁴⁵ The study by Heckel is detailed, but without an aim to draw a broader picture of the human self in Paul.

Troels Engberg-Pedersen has recently studied the enigma of “I” and stressed the role of the spirit Paul ascribes to the internal dynamics of human beings. Without Divine spirit, a person of flesh and blood—or body and soul—is a ‘psychic man’, an ordinary human being ‘of the flesh’,

⁴² In Rom 7:7–13, Paul seems to describe an unconscious sinning of the deceived. In the latter part, “I” is conscious of his sinning (v. 18). That is why “I” draws the conclusion that “it is no longer I that do it” and blames the power of sin (vv. 17, 20). See Niko **Huttunen**, “The Human Contradiction: Epictetus and Romans 7” – *Lux Humana, Lux Aeterna: Essays on Biblical and Related Themes in Honour of Lars Aejmelaus*. Eds. Antti Mustakallio *et al.* Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society, 89 (Helsinki: Exegetical Society; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 324–333, 326.

⁴³ According to Jewett (*Romans: A Commentary*, 469), the verb ἐβρίσκω implies a new insight that has been unavailable to Paul prior to his conversion. “While Paul intended to achieve the good by persecuting early Christians, he found that the behaviour that appeared so natural and good was actually bad.”

⁴⁴ Peter **Stuhlmacher** (*Der Brief an die Römer*. Das Neue Testament Deutsch, 6 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989], 103) puts it quite dynamically: “Der böse Trieb widerstreitet dem guten und nimmt das Ich gefangen durch das von der Sünde gebene “Gesetz”, mit dem sie über die Glieder des Menschen gebietet.”

⁴⁵ Heckel, *Der Innere Mensch*, 184.

i.e., σάρξ.⁴⁶ The ordinary human being is made up of body and soul. Since “sarx constitutes the essence—in the human sphere—of this present world”⁴⁷ eventually also νοῦς and the whole self-reflective train of thought belong to the level of ψυχή. This is so because “in the person who has not (yet) received the *pneuma*, the level of the *psychē* is insolubly tied to the body.”⁴⁸ This connection between soul and body can be understood in the light of the account Paul gives of the weakness of will in Rom 7:14–25. The soul is not strong enough, but is subjected to the body. Based on this statement, Engberg-Pedersen sheds light on the core of the problem and claims that in the internal struggle it is the flesh that wins out. Then he, however, connects νοῦς with the soul to the degree “that the ‘soul’ (here exemplified by the *nous*) is insolubly tied to the body, and also that soul and body together come to no more than sarx.”⁴⁹ It is not stated definitely, but it seems to be implied that νοῦς too is ‘sarkic’.

I agree that according to Paul, the soul is tied to the body, and without the influence of πνεῦμα they together may come to σάρξ. But it is for νοῦς that Paul has reserved a special place among the other anthropological characteristics. His picture of human structure is somewhat reminiscent of those of Plato and Philo. The delight of the inner person in the law of God seems to be preserved in the “I” (7:22), and therefore at least this “I” seems not to be corrupted.⁵⁰ At the same time, Paul has well substantiated the weakness of will, but this weakness does not necessarily turn νοῦς to σάρξ. If it were so, there would not be such a contrast between the law of God and the law of sin in Rom 7:25 and the true sense by the author of being a wretched man seeking rescue from this body of death (7:24).

Paul’s anthropology is complicated, for he also described the human self as σάρξ, the source of all that is opposed to God. “From the Ego as *sarx* proceed the detestable things that one does. It is because the Ego as the true willing self becomes a self that has fallen victim to ‘flesh’, dominated

⁴⁶ Heckel (*ibid.*, 190) says simply that Paul describes the whole human being as σάρξ: “Freilich wird bei Paulus mit *‘Fleisch’ (σάρξ) der ganze Mensch bezeichnet.” According to Bultmann, Pauline man is σῶμα.

⁴⁷ Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 104.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ This presentation of the *mind* here looks like a contrast to or a healing of the *senseless heart* of Rom 1:21 and *debased mind* of Rom 1:28.

by ‘sin’.⁵¹ Alongside the law of the mind, there is another law that makes the self a captive. The latter law is the indwelling sin, the principle within “I”. One may now ask whether the place of the indwelling sin is alongside ‘the man within’, i.e., next to the mind (νοῦς) that delights in the law of God? The chief protagonists are the Ego that agrees with God’s law and the Ego as the indwelling sin that prevents the Ego from carrying out that law. In that case, can we therefore consider that there are even three “Egos”?

Word for word, there seems to be simultaneously a fleshly “I” (v. 14), and a rational “I” (vv. 23, 25), even if not alongside of but clearly opposed to each other. James Dunn proposes that it is the same “I” each time—“the ‘I’ ‘sold under sin’ in its fleshliness, and the ‘I’ as ‘the inner man.’⁵² The minimum of the split “I” is expressed here, but the tension is not only an anthropological one, but very much also eschatological. I shall demonstrate that the “I” belongs at the same time to the old epoch of sin and death and the new epoch of life and spirit.

It is impossible to discuss how far the “I” can be associated with Paul’s personal self-account. It is enough to see a portion of paraenetic rhetoric here and to accept the view that Rom 7:7–25 can be seen as a fiction that presents the “I” *as if* it were Paul himself.⁵³ I concur with Engberg-Pedersen that the self-awareness of Paul is probably reflected in the several ‘I’s. According to Engberg-Pedersen there is the “uppermost ‘I’”, and the uppermost ‘I’ is the one that is giving account—I⁺. “This ‘I’ is both able to give an account of itself [...] and also forced to recognize that it is itself split between two sides of itself, the harmonization of which it can *not* control or bring about.”⁵⁴ Engberg-Pedersen explains well that according to Rom 7:15 it is obvious that “what I [I¹] bring about I [I⁺], i.e. the uppermost I,

⁵¹ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 475.

⁵² James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*. Word Biblical Commentary, 38A (Dallas, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1988), 390.

⁵³ Engberg-Pedersen (*Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 165) says that here Paul presents to the Romans the conversion pattern and gives “the whole account *as if* he were describing a set of experiences *of his own*.” He also shows that though Rom 7:7–8:13 presents the same theme as Phil 3:4–11 and Gal 2:19–20, he here in Romans constructed a self who is only a fictive one which the readers can ascribe to Paul, the writer of this fictional account.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 166. Here I [I¹] designates the fleshly “I” and I [I²] the rational “I”, the mind. The uppermost I or the person himself is I⁺.

do not know. He continues: “For what I [I²] want, that I [I⁺/I¹] do not do. But what I [I²] hate, that I [I⁺/I¹] do. [...] Thus understood, Romans 7 celebrates a schizophrenic split realized by the person himself (I⁺) between two incompatible desires that are connected with two opposed ‘I’s (I¹ and I²). Both features justify the claim that a Pauline notion of the self is being expressed here.”⁵⁵ A similar relationship is visible in 2Cor 4:16, where the contrast between the inner person and the outer person resembles the νοῦς and the μέλος of Rom 7. In accordance to the study of Engberg-Pedersen, Paul declares that I [I⁺/I²], which is νοῦς, rejoice in the law of God in the inner human being, but I [I⁺] see something different in the members (μέλος).⁵⁶ These are bodily desires that the uppermost ‘I’ see. In this model there definitely are three Egos.

Engberg-Pedersen describes the ontological status of the inner human being and the mind. According to consensus, Paul’s general view of body and soul was that they together were earthly physical phenomena. Paul contrasted them with the πνεῦμα, and if the latter was understood physically, so will the psychic human being be. Paul dramatises his picture of (his) split self by asking who will deliver him from the body of this death (Rom 7:24). Engberg-Pedersen summarizes: “Here the ‘body’ (*sōma*) does not refer merely to the ‘members’, but to the whole ‘human being’ (*anthrōpos*), who consists of both the ‘inner human being’ (the *nous*) and the ‘members’. This makes it virtually certain that Paul thought of the *nous* as part of the body.”⁵⁷

It seems that Paul thought of νοῦς in physical, material, and bodily terms. Πνεῦμα too was in a certain way understood in physical and material terms. To agree with this does not mean that it makes νοῦς automatically and always a sarkic category. In Romans Paul introduced νοῦς in at least two different ways. In the beginning of Romans, the senseless heart (Rom 1:21) and the debased mind (νοῦς in Rom 1:28) are sarkic, because these people are described as disobedient to the will of God and certainly lack the πνεῦμα. This “I” seems to describe the mind and thinking of the people of the pre-Christian world. But it is precisely in Romans 7 that νοῦς is in harmony with the law of God and can no longer be called sarkic. The

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

“I” in Romans 7 seems to testify to the renewal of the mind that has now taken place. In other words, it is here “the mind of the ‘I’” that delights in the law of God and not “the flesh of the ‘I’” that resists God’s law.⁵⁸

4.2. *On the Relationship between 2 Corinthians and Romans*

Paul’s Corinthian and Roman correspondence reflects differing, but also similar aspects.

The claim made in 2 Corinthians that ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος is renewed day by day has a strong eschatological dynamic, which reaches its fulfilment in the expression: “So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2Cor 5:17). In Rom 7:22f. the phrase ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος is synonymous with νοῦς and implies that it to a great extent forms the centre of the human person. It is only here that νοῦς partly overlaps with “I”. On the other hand, in Rom 7:25b the distinction between the “I myself” and the “mind” becomes visible in the expression αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῖ δουλεύω, with the word “mind” in the dative.⁵⁹ The νοῦς expresses what we today call the intellectual aspect of man, the rational or cognitive “I”, the I [I²] of Engberg-Pedersen, or “the mind of the I” of Schreiner. The mind in dative is used instrumentally and is morally weaker than was Plato’s ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος, since according to Paul the “mind” and the “inner man” do not obtain complete dominion over the entire man in the Platonic sense of the word.

Based on a comparison of the two segments, the relationship between 2Cor 4:16–17 and Rom 7:14–25 becomes clearer if 2Cor 4:16–17 is complemented with 2Cor 5:17 on the one hand and Rom 7:14–25 with Rom 12:1–2 on the other. In Romans 12:1–2, Paul appeals to the readers that they may be transformed by the renewing of minds. The object of this transformation is the νοῦς, which is probably reshaped or formed from within on condition that Jesus Christ is ἐν ὑμῖν (2Cor 13:5). Christ makes the νοῦς a slave to the law of God. This process too is meant to be permanent during a human lifetime. There is a similarity between the patterns in

⁵⁸ Thomas R. **Schreiner**, *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1998), 378.

⁵⁹ Robert **Jewett**, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 389.

these two epistles. The text in 2Cor 4:1–5:16 deals mainly with tensions within the person in the present *aeon*, points to the future and culminates in new creation (2Cor 5:17). Likewise, Paul first describes contradictions within the earthly human nature in Rom 7:7–25. Soon he sheds future light upon mankind and all of creation in Rom 8:18–23, and completes his vision with a call to be transformed by the renewing of minds by God in Rom 12:1–2.⁶⁰

Paul most likely supposed that the final stage of this eschatology, human participation in new creation (2Cor 5:17), would decisively influence the present. In Rom 7:14–25, the struggle between the two human natures or between the two aspects of human nature is described dramatically, and the text is by nature doctrinal. In 2Cor 4:16–5:10 and Rom 12:1–2, the human renewal process of humans is at the centre of attention, and these verses are quite parenthetical. Here eschatology takes hold of anthropology, points to the end of history as its fulfilment, and anticipates the present. This pattern is visible in both 2 Corinthians and in Romans.

5. SUMMARY

Bultmann's conviction that according to Paul man *is* σῶμα remains partly valid. In addition to the often-used word σῶμα, Paul introduced his novel expression ὁ ἕξω ἄνθρωπος as a metaphor for the physical body. Paul also identifies our "outer person" with the tent-like *house* and thus perhaps also with the mortal flesh. As to my wider research question, the conclusion can be made that although "the outward man" is nearly the same as "the body", "the inner human being" is neither body nor soul. Paul's "inward man" is by nature close to, but not identical to the spiritual (πνευματικός) person. Paul himself created the combination of the two phrases ὁ ἕσω ἄνθρωπος and ὁ ἕξω ἄνθρωπος.

Paul ascribed the inward man a significant aspect of the human being, which is related to other anthropological terms. "The man within" is

⁶⁰ God is the actor who alone transforms and renews. Humans are asked to present their bodies as a living sacrifice and become acceptable to God who then performs everything. Only then transformed human minds will be able to discern what is the will of God—in fact the law. Here the contradiction within the Ego finds some sort of reconciliation or solution.

inherently connected with the mind, the process of moral decision-making, and represents this rational aspect of the “I”, which is in harmony with the law of God but does not possess the power to overcome sin. This reasonable “I” has much in common with the *heart*, which denotes the believing “I” (Rom 10:9) and the motivating “I” (2Cor 3:3, 15). Thus the spiritual condition of the heart influences and partly determines the inner quality of the person (Rom 2:28–29), but the human “I” is not a unitary phenomenon, since there is at the same time a fleshly “I” and a rational “I”, probably conceived by Paul as not alongside of but opposed to each other.

I have demonstrated that according to Paul the human “I” is split, and simultaneously belongs to the old epoch of sin and death and to the new epoch of life and spirit, which places “I” in the midst of an eschatological tension. When the pre-Christian human mind (Rom 1) is renewed (Rom 7), the internal split of the “I” is immediately active, and proves that the human “I” is still in a need of permanent renewal.

Paul sent epistles to different communities and could not draw a covering anthropological scheme by putting all relevant words at their respective places for the sake of clarity. Complicated tensions between different aspects of the “I”, which are most striking in Romans, remain. Paul seems to have used the phrase *ὁ ἕσω ἄνθρωπος* to point to this aspect of humans that cannot be much tainted by sin. The metaphoric “inner man” is like an area in which contact and interaction between man and Christ can take place (2Cor 13:5), and because of that the inner man becomes the object and agent of the permanent internal renewal of the person. In that way, *eschaton* participates in the daily life of the believer. The inner man is neither the body nor the soul but part of the new creation and an eschatologically relevant aspect of personality.

In regard to the inner human being, I have demonstrated a remarkable similarity of patterns between 2 Corinthians and Romans. In 2Cor 4:1–5:16 Paul deals mainly with tensions within the person in the present *aeon*, then points to the future and completes his picture with the new creation (2Cor 5:17). Likewise, Paul first describes contradictions within the earthly human nature in Rom 7:7–25. Soon he sheds future light upon mankind and all creation in Rom 8:18–23, and completes his vision with a call to be transformed by the renewing of the minds by God in Rom

12:1–2. Renewal of the mind and participation in new creation, which are common aspects in 2 Corinthians and Romans, are not clearly enough emphasised by earlier studies on the concept of the inner human being.

Pauline thought did not remain unnoticed, and its influence on early Christianity is clearly visible. The author of Ephesians moulded a prayer to God the Father into the form that the Ephesians may be strengthened in their inner being with power through his Spirit (Eph 3:16; NRSV). In Eph 3:17 Christ is asked to dwell in their hearts through faith. The prayer is reminiscent of Paul's exhortation to the Galatians that Christ would be formed in them (Gal 4:19).

Some decades later, in 1Peter 3:3–4, the phrase *ὁ κρυπτός τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος* builds a connection to Hebrew anthropology with its understanding of the heart as the centre of human feelings and judgement. There is a strong internal kinship with Pauline thought. This phrase bears testimony to the wish to develop the idea of the invisible centre of Christians who already participate in the eternal.