



The Soul-Body Compound in Didymus the Blind's *Commentary on Genesis* and its Neoplatonic Background

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Abstract

This article concentrates on the view of the soul-body compound as presented by Didymus the Blind in his *Commentary on Genesis*, and also on some characteristic traits of Neoplatonic psychology which can be found in this text. A closer inspection of *Commentary on Genesis* reveals that what Didymus presents as the soul-body compound can be understood equally well as the compound of the superior intellectual soul conceived as a transcendent essence of the soul, and the ensouled body which is already a compound of the material body and the inferior irrational soul acting similarly to the body's immanent form. Therefore, it seems plausible to surmise that it is this kind of solution to the soul-body problem which Henry Blumenthal called the marriage of dualism and hylomorphism, and which left its mark not only on later Platonic tradition, but presumably also on Didymus.

Key words: Didymus the Blind, *Commentary on Genesis*, soul-body compound, Neoplatonic psychology

Słowa kluczowe: Dydim Ślepy, *Komentarz do Księgi Rodzaju*, złożenie duszy i ciała, psychologia neoplatońska

1. Introduction

This article¹ concentrates on the view of the soul-body compound as presented by Didymus the Blind in his *Commentary on Genesis*,² and also on some characteristic traits of Neoplatonic psychology which can be found in this commentary. Not

¹ For correcting my English I am indebted to William Gold.

² Didyme l'Aveugle, *Sur la Genèse: Texte inédit d'après un papyrus de Toura*. Introduction, édition, traduction et notes par Pierre Nautin, avec la collaboration de Louis Doutreleau, t. 1–2, *SCh* 233–244, Paris 1976–1978 (hereafter *Gen. Com.*).

surprisingly, this kind of task encounters at least two difficulties. The first is that Didymus' view will have to be reconstructed from his exegetical commentary, which might be regarded as a mere collection of more or less occasional opinions rather than a coherent exposition of his own thought. This is why any attempt to reconstruct Didymus' view requires a careful analysis of the comments, sometimes even vague mentions, which are interspersed throughout the text. Therefore, to make the analysis of Didymus' stance more valid, a wider range of illustrative material from Didymus' other texts will also be taken into account. The second difficulty arises from doubts in correctly identifying the philosophical doctrine sources used by Didymus. Scholars tend to take it for granted that the philosophical material found in Didymus' writings was taken from Philo and Origen, who both greatly influenced Didymus. Notwithstanding the indisputable fact that in many cases Didymus followed Philo³ and Origen by repeating their exegeses, it is worth noting that not all of this philosophical material can be explained as some kind of debt he owes to his Alexandrian masters. A closer inspection of Didymus' texts confirms what ancient historiographers wrote about Didymus regarding his extensive education and knowledge in the fields of arithmetic, dialectic and philosophy.⁴ From this, we can infer his compatibility with some patterns of thought which he may have shared with his contemporaries. One of the striking tendencies of late antique philosophy, and one that might have left its mark on Didymus' view, is that which enhances Aristotle's significance in Platonic psychology. As this is still a largely unexplored area of Didymus' thinking,⁵ we shall

³ D.T. Runia's, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, Assen, Minneapolis 1993, pp. 197–204; É. Lamirande, *Le masculin et le féminin dans la tradition alexandrine. Le Commentaire de Didyme L'Aveugle sur la 'Genèse'*, "Science et Esprit" 1989, vol. XLI, no. 2, pp. 137–165; A.C. Geljon, *Philonic Elements in Didymus the Blind's Exegesis of the Story of Cain and Abel*, "Vigiliae Christianae" 2007, no. 61, pp. 283–312; A.C. Geljon, *Philo's Influence on Didymus the Blind* [in:] *Philon d'Alexandrie. Un penseur à l'intersection des cultures Graeco-Romaine, Orientale, Juive et Chretienne*, Turnhout 2011, pp. 357–372; J.M. Rogers, *Didymus "the Blind" and His Use of Philo of Alexandria in the Tura Commentary on Genesis*, Cincinnati 2012; J.M. Rogers, *The Philonic and the Pauline: Hagar and Sarah in the Exegesis of Didymus the Blind*, "The Studia Philonica Annual" 2014, no. 26, pp. 57–77; H. Reuling, *Between Philo and Tradition: Literal Allegorical Interpretation in Didymus the Blind* [in:] *After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16–21*, Leiden 2006, pp. 54–80.

⁴ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* IV 25; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* III 15; Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* IV 30.

⁵ As we might expect, most studies on Didymus focus on issues regarding exegesis and theology. Among the limited number of analyses concerning the philosophical background of Didymus' thought, first and foremost we should note: R.A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*, Urbana, Chicago 2004; R.A. Layton, *Propatheia: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of the Passions*, "Vigiliae Christianae" 2000, no. 54, pp. 262–282; M.A. Ὀρφανοῦ, *Ἡ ψυχή καὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ Δίδυμον Ἀλεξανδρέα (τὸν Τυφλόν)*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1974; M. Zambon, *A servizio della verità: Didimo il Cieco 'lettore' di Aristotele*, "Studia Graeco-Arabica" 2012, no. 2, pp. 129–200; K. Plaxco, *Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation*, "Studia Patristica" 2013, vol. LXVII, pp. 227–237; R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, Oxford 2000, pp. 351–352. Other works which at least partly contribute to the subject of Didymus' philosophical affinities are: H.S. Schibli, *Origen, Didymus, and the Vehicle of the Soul* [in:] *Origeniana Quinta*, R.J. Daly (ed.), Louvain 1992, pp. 381–391; B.J. Bennett, *The Origins of Evil: Didymus the Blind's Contra Menichaeos and its Debt to Origen's Theology and Exegesis*, Toronto 1997; B.J. Bennett, *Didymus the Blind's Knowledge of Manichaeism* [in:] *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and its World*, P.A. Mirecki, J.D. BeDuhn (eds.), Leiden–Boston–Köln 2001; S. Blossom, *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus*, Frankfurt

do no more than give an example of how this tendency can be traced to Didymus' concept of the soul-body compound, which was a prominent theme of the period. We shall therefore extract Didymus' general approach to the soul-body issue on the basis of a few passages from his *Commentary on Genesis*, which may be convergent with a Neoplatonic approach to the problem in question. After this, we shall look more closely at some possible Neoplatonic borrowings in Didymus' thought.

2. The soul's embodiment

One of the passages where Didymus raises the soul-body question is in *Gen.Com.* 81,1–108,15, where he discusses the interpretation of the fall of man as described in *Genesis* 3. According to this interpretation, the fall of man results in the association of the incorporeal soul with the material body. As Didymus also suggests in other passages, it is at this very moment that the soul affiliates with the material body characterised as dense (παχύ) and perishable (φθάρτον),⁶ distinguished from the kind of quasi-immaterial body which the soul previously possessed.⁷

This is one of the examples showing that Didymus describes the fall of the paradisiacal man in terms of a transition from the immaterial to the material, from the incorporeal to the corporeal, from the intelligible to the sensible. Didymus' commitment to the idea is particularly evident in his interpretation of man's fall conceived as a change in man's mode of cognition, and specifically, as passing from intellection to sense-perception. The paradisiacal man is said to be illuminated by God and entirely engaged in intellection of God himself, and also of intelligible objects.⁸ As long as he was involved in intellection, he could see God with the eyes of the soul, that is, with the noetic eyes of the inner man.⁹ However, after the Devil had led the man astray and made him turn his eyes away from their proper object, the noetic eyes of the inner man were closed. What was instead opened were the sensible eyes which directed man's attention to the sense-perceptible objects and to the body. As a result, the man plunged into bodily desires and pleasures, and in this way he affiliated with the material body.¹⁰

am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien 2010; J.C.M. van Winden (rev.), *Didyme l'Aveugle. Sur Zacharie. Texte inédit d'après un papyrus de Toura. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes de Louis Doutreleau, SCh* 83–85, Paris 1962, "Vigiliae Christianae" 1963, no. 17, pp. 181–183.

⁶ *Gen.Com.* 107,9. See also *Gen.Com.* 106,10–108,15; 153,30–154,2, and 82,11–12.

⁷ In *Commentary on Genesis* there are some, indirect references to the concept of that quasi-immaterial paradisiacal body. In *Gen.Com.* 108, 5–7 and 108, 14–15 Didymus indicates that a man in paradise could not have a dense body, in *Gen.Com.* 118,14–16 he mentions a different kind of corporeal substance (ἡ σωματικὴ οὐσία) appropriate for life in paradise, and in *Gen.Com.* 107, 4–7 he simply states that the man in paradise was immaterial (τὸ ἄβληον). For discussion on Didymus' view of a quasi-immaterial body and its possible correspondence with the Neoplatonic doctrine of ὄχημα of the soul see: H.S. Schibli, *op.cit.*, pp. 381, 383–384, 387.

⁸ *Gen.Com.* 89,22 and 89,4. See also *Gen.Com.* 81,27–82,11; 83,12–13; 84,25.

⁹ *Gen.Com.* 81,26–82,1; 82,7–9; 83,12–13.

¹⁰ Cf. *Gen.Com.* 82,11–12; 83,14–17; 87,20–21; 95,18–21; 97,15–19; 153,30–154,2.

In order to stress the transition from the domain of the incorporeal to that of the corporeal, which is the point of the fall of man, Didymus mentions some authors who claim that the first substrate (πρώτον ὑποκείμενον) of the soul was the incorporeal substance (ἄσώματος οὐσία), which was beyond every place (ἐκτὸς παντὸς τόπου) but became in a place (ἐν τόπῳ) at the very moment when the soul experienced the body. This opinion serves as the basis for explaining the meaning of the question “Where are you?” (Που εἶ;) ¹¹ that God asked man after he had hidden himself from God, ashamed of his own nakedness. “Where are you?” is interpreted as follows: “You are in a place (ἐν τόπῳ), though you were free from every place (ἢ ἀπὸ παντὸς τόπου ἐλευθέρα) through incorporeality (διὰ τὸ ἄσώματος); since you did not preserve it and you have become attached to the body, you have come into a place (ἐν τόπῳ).” ¹²

One can discern here the influence of Philo, who used a similar argument in his interpretation of *Gen.* 3:9. It should be noted, however, that Philo’s exegesis of that passage does not refer to a difference between the incorporeal soul and the embodied soul (or the body); it simply highlights the difference between God, who according to Philo is not “in a place”, and a creature, who is “in a place.” ¹³ There is a different intention to Didymus’ exegesis, where the basic stress is upon the soul’s embodiment, suggesting that Philo might not be the sole source of inspiration to which Didymus alludes in *Gen.Com.* 91,1–7. Didymus’ phrasing, as well as the meaning of the quoted passage, should be recognised above all as an echo of the specific line of reasoning inspired by Aristotle, ¹⁴ used by Plotinus, and developed by Porphyry. ¹⁵ Reiterating Plotinus’ approach, Porphyry applies this line of reasoning to demonstrate the difference between incorporeal and corporeal things, and hence to expound how incorporeal things can be present in corporeal ones; in particular, how the soul can be present in the body. According to Porphyry, bodies which subsist in matter and extension are “in a place”, whereas incorporeal things, which are free from matter and extension, cannot be “in a place”. Porphyry states that, in the case of bodies, “‘being somewhere’ (πού) means being in a place (ἐν τόπῳ)” ¹⁶ as opposed to incorporeal things, which transcend every place (κρείττονα παντὸς ἐστὶ τόπου). ¹⁷ This is how Porphyry explains why a soul as an incorporeal thing cannot be present in a body in the same way as one body can be present in another. It is present in the body, as we read in *Sent.* 3, not locally (οὐ τοπικῶς), but by relation (τῇ σχέσει). This assumption implies serious difficulties in solving the problem of the soul’s presence in the body, and at the same time in explaining the

¹¹ *Gen.* 3:9.

¹² *Gen.Com.* 91,1–7.

¹³ *Leg. All.* III 51–52.

¹⁴ *Phys.* IV 4,212a20.

¹⁵ Plotinus, *Enn.* IV 3,20,10–15; V 2,2,19–20; Porphyry, *Sent.* 1–2 and 33. On this question, see also: G. Madec, *Notes sur les Sentences* [in:] Porphyry, *Sentences*, L. Brisson (ed.), Paris 2005, vol. 2, p. 383; C. D’Ancona, *Les Sentences de Porphyre entre les Ennéades de Plotin et les Éléments de Théologie de Proclus* [in:] Porphyry, *Sentences* L. Brisson (ed.), Paris 2005, vol. 1, pp. 157, 198. Cf. R. Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200–600 AD: A Sourcebook*, vol. 1: *Psychology (with Ethics and Religion)*, Ithaca 2004, pp. 204–210 and also pp. 217–220.

¹⁶ *Sent.* 33,3–4. Transl. J. Dillon [in:] Porphyry, *Sentences*, vol. 2, p. 816.

¹⁷ *Sent.* 2.

nature of the soul-body compound. The main difficulty results from the supposition that the soul-body compound is made up of two contrasting natures.

It is easy to see in Didymus' text not only the repeated use of expressions used by Neoplatonists, but also a reference to their line of argument. In a similar vein to Porphyry, Didymus highlights that the soul-body compound is the compound of two antithetical natures: corporeal, described as being "in a place", and the other, incorporeal, described as being "beyond every place". The opposition of two antithetical natures is something which is consistently maintained when Didymus tackles the question of the soul-body compound, although in different parts of the commentary he does so using different terms. However, it is important to acknowledge that Didymus does not mention the conclusion formulated by the Neoplatonists here. Instead we find the phrase regarding the condition of the embodied soul: "since you did not preserve it (i.e. incorporeality) and you have become attached to the body, you have come into a place (ἐν τόπῳ)."¹⁸ The meaning of this phrase, as well as that of the entire passage, is that before the embodiment the soul was an incorporeal being which cannot be "in a place", and when it experienced the body and affiliated with the body it somehow became a corporeal being which is "in a place."

Although Didymus indicates neither the authors to whom he ascribes such a view nor his own attitude towards it, it is easy to see that this is a kind of approach to the soul-body problem which draws on Neoplatonic sources and which is compatible with Didymus' interpretation of the fall of the paradisiacal man taken in terms of a transition from the intelligible to the sensible. This is why one could reasonably claim that in *Gen.Com.* 91,1–7 Didymus alludes to an opinion which supports his own view and which reveals a significant feature of his own approach to the problem of embodiment and, at the same time, to the problem of the soul-body compound. In order to explain this approach it is necessary to refer to other passages of Didymus' commentary.

3. The definition of man as a composite being composed of soul and body

In *Gen.Com.* 54,22–57,8 we find a definition of man that states that "man means a composite being composed of the soul and the body, but mostly the soul" (Ὁ ἄνθρωπος σημαίνει καὶ τὸ σύνθετον ζῶον τὸ ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος συνεστὸς καὶ μάλιστα τὴν ψυχὴν).¹⁹ Not surprisingly, when discussing this definition, Didymus' primary interest was invariably the opposition between the two different aspects of human nature represented by the soul and the body. Let us start, then, by examining these fragments which show how Didymus conceives the soul and the body.

Regarding the soul, Didymus writes that the first element of the soul-body compound is an incorporeal and intelligible substance (ἀσώματος καὶ νοερά οὐσία).²⁰

¹⁸ *Gen.Com.* 91,6–7.

¹⁹ *Gen.Com.* 54, 22–24.

²⁰ *Gen.Com.* 57, 7.

What seems to be significant is that similar descriptions of the soul appear whenever Didymus considers its original and essential nature,²¹ which is intellect alone conceived as a superior element of the soul, clearly distinguished from its inferior element, i.e. the lower soul.²² This is why the notion of the soul in Didymus' writings has a double meaning; it can either mean the soul's superior element, which is the intellect alone, or its inferior element, which is the lower soul.

The distinction between the superior intellectual soul, also referred to simply as "intellect", and the inferior soul, also referred to as "soul", has been demonstrated in the interpretation of *Gen. 1:27*, where Didymus takes the categories "male" and "female" as allegorical representations of the two opposite elements of human soul; "male" stands for the intellect while "female" stands for the soul, i.e. the lower soul.²³ The relationship between these two elements has been described in terms of the master–student metaphor as well as that of the sower and the one that receives the seed. According to these metaphors, the intellect, represented by "male", acts as the master sowing the seed of reason in the soul, whereas the soul, represented by "female", acts as the ground in which the seed is being sown. As Didymus explains, the soul is not capable of conceiving anything of itself, and is only able to receive the seed of learning from the higher being, i.e. the intellect, and nurture it.²⁴ He also suggests that this is a kind of relationship that is exemplified by the link between higher and lower beings, the latter being less endowed with reason.²⁵ This could be an indication that Didymus alludes to the Neoplatonic relation between the intellect as the higher being and the soul as the lower being, where the function of the higher one is to form the lower, whereas the function of the lower one is to receive the form. In this sense, Plotinus could say that the intellect resembles a form (εἶδος), while the soul is like a receptacle (δεχόμενον), and thus like a matter of the intellect (νοῦ ὕλη) (*Enn.* V 1,3,22–23).

Although the Neoplatonic relationship between the higher and the lower soul taken as a form-matter relation cannot be excluded as Didymus' frame of reference in *Gen. Com.* 63,7–9, it must be stressed that all that has been offered in the interpretation of *Gen. 1:27* follows first and foremost Philo's leitmotiv, namely, association of the categories "male" and "female" with the two opposite elements of the soul, the higher element identified with the intellect or with the reason, and the lower element usually identified with sense-perception. In Philo's writings, therefore, the figures of the male and the female, as well as those of the sower and the recipient of the seed, express the bipolar nature of the soul in which the two opposite elements can be identified.²⁶ And this is also what can be found in Didymus' psychology.

²¹ Cf. *Gen. Com.* 91, 1–7; 152, 7–12; 153, 19–23.

²² Cf. M.A. Ὀρφανοῦ, *op.cit.*, pp. 118–139.

²³ *Gen. Com.* 62, 21–23.

²⁴ *Gen. Com.* 62, 24–63, 3.

²⁵ *Gen. Com.* 63, 7–9.

²⁶ *QG* I 45; *Opif.* 165; *Leg.* II 44, 64, 73, III 49–50, 185; *Cher.* 41, 57; *Somn.* I 246; *QG* I 25, 37, 45–49, 52, II 49; *Spec. Leg.* 37, 201. See also *Leg.* II 14, 50, 73; *Leg.* III 11; *Ebr.* 59, *Sacr.* 103, *Somn.* II 9.

All this shows that the description of “soul” as an intelligible and incorporeal substance, which is found in the analysis of the definition of man as a soul-body compound in *Gen.Com.* 57,5–8, refers to the higher and essential nature of the soul, which is the intellect alone, clearly distinguished from the sensible and irrational inferior soul. This understanding of the soul in *Gen.Com.* 54,22–57,8 is additionally confirmed by the fact that in the same passage “soul” has been identified with the inner man, which for Didymus means precisely intellect. Although in *Gen.Com.* 55,1–3 we find only a vague mention which identifies the inner man with νοῦς, and equates it with ψυχή, in *Gen.Com.* 43,29 it is distinctly linked with intellect alone. Similarly, in other passages it is associated with an intelligible dimension of human nature. In *Gen.Com.* 81,27–29 we are told that the eyes of inner man keep clear sight not in a sensible way, but in an intelligible way. In *Gen.Com.* 127,7 the inner man is described as a man hidden in thought (ἐν διανοίᾳ ἄνθρωπος). It is therefore apparent that what prevails in Didymus’ descriptions of inner man is the intelligible dimension of human existence, and particularly the intellectual activity of man.

It is clear that, when Didymus explains his definition of man as a soul-body compound and that the soul is to be understood as inner man who can be equated with the intellect, by “soul” Didymus means exclusively the incorporeal and intelligible substance of the soul, in other words, the intellect alone.

We can now turn to the body, which, in Didymus’ account in *Gen.Com.* 54,22–57,8, is identified with outer man and described as the visible and sense-perceptible (φαινόμενον καὶ αἰσθητόν) part of man, additionally called the in-formed body (σῶμα μεμορφωμένον).²⁷ Firstly, we should discuss the use of the term σῶμα μεμορφωμένον, which may refer to a particular view of the human body which Didymus alludes to in different passages of the commentary. The basis for this view seems to be the difference between the concept of body and that of matter as suggested in the exegesis of *Gen.* 1:2. Although lacunae in the text prevent a thorough understanding of this important passage, we can still infer the conception of matter that was held in Alexandrian exegesis, which interpreted the figure of earth from *Gen.* 1:2 as an allegory of matter.²⁸ In keeping with Alexandrian tradition, Didymus asserts – as far as we can decipher from his exegesis of *Gen.* 1:2 – that matter (ὕλη) is devoid of qualities and formless (ἄποιος καὶ ἄμορφος),²⁹ and as such makes up the substrate (ὑποκείμενον) of bodies that are to be created.³⁰ Such a reading of the passage

²⁷ *Gen.Com.* 57, 7–8.

²⁸ On this subject see J.C.M. van Winden, *Arche. A Collection of Patristic Studies*, Leiden 1997, pp. 52, 99–101, 108–109, 134–138. Cf. also M. Alexandre, *Le Commencement du Livre Genèse I–V. La version grecque de la Septante et sa réception*, Paris 1988, pp. 74–80.

²⁹ *Gen.Com.* 3B.

³⁰ *Gen.Com.* 2 B 1–5. It is hardly possible to decipher the exact meaning of Didymus’ account of unqualified and formless matter, not only because of the damage to the text, but also because in the preceding lines Didymus refers to the Manichaean view. As a result we cannot even separate the alleged Manichaean view from Didymus’ own opinion. Didymus’ interpretation of *Gen.* 1:2 as a report of the Manichaean view has been examined by Byard Bennett, who furthermore points out the possible Middle-Platonic sources of Didymus’ account of unqualified matter: B. Bennett, *Didymus the Blind’s Knowledge of Manichaeism...*, pp. 52–55.

conforms with *Gen.Com.* 48,20–25, where Didymus mentions the concept of λόγος σπερματικός, which forms the bodies of animals that emerge from earth (i.e. matter). It may be an indication that what makes bodies specific bodies is some immaterial factor, such as λόγος σπερματικός, that forms amorphous matter and brings bodies into existence. Thus, if Didymus did in fact acknowledge this kind of difference between the matter, which is intrinsically ἄμορφος, and the body, which is intrinsically μεμορφωμένον, the expression σῶμα μεμορφωμένον used at *Gen.Com.* 57,7–8 could be an indication that by “body” Didymus was referring to a particular body. This may be a body which is formed by some immaterial factor, some kind of form, and hence which already exists as a kind of compound of form and matter.³¹

Secondly, it is worth mentioning that Didymus identifies “body” with the outer man set in contrast with the inner man. While the association of the soul with the inner man is clear enough, the association of the body with the outer man requires a more extensive explanation. This is because the antithesis of inner man vs outer man serves in Didymus’ text as an antithesis between the higher dimension of human nature, identified with the domain of the intelligible, and its lower dimension, identified either with the domain of the sensible³² or with that of the irrational, and so not with the body alone. Moreover, it often takes the form of the antithesis between the intellect itself and the rest of the human constitution. This is what is maintained in *Gen.Com.* 43,29, where inner man was contrasted with irrational beings, and also in *Gen.Com.* 130,4–5, where he was contrasted with the irrational nature of man himself, strictly speaking with the vital power of the human soul (ζωτική δύναμις τῆς ψυχῆς) depicted as a power related to the very outer man (ἄδελφός ... τοῦ ἔξω ἀνθρώπου). All of this shows that the notion of outer man refers not so much to the human body, but rather to the whole lower nature of man described as sensible and irrational. At the same time it may be an indication that the notion of outer man refers not only to the body, but to a particular kind of soul-body compound. This is what can result from the kinship between the outer man and the vital power of the soul indicated in *Gen.Com.* 130,4–5. The notion of the vital power of the soul (ζωτικὴ δύναμις τῆς ψυχῆς) may refer to the concept of the living body which comes into existence when the soul conjoins with the body and makes it an actual living body. This kind of concept is based on the premise that the human body does not exist on its own. It exists as a living body only while it is enlivened and informed by a soul; that is to say, it exists only as an ensouled body. Consequently, as an ensouled body it is conceived as the compound of the soul and the body where the soul is the source of life. Yet the soul that enlivens and informs the body may not be the superior intellectual soul, but the vital power of the soul or the whole inferior soul. This is what one might detect as

³¹ The clear differentiation between the notion of matter and that of body as well as the understanding of “body” in terms of a compound of matter and form, and also a distinction between several kinds of formal elements which mould matter, such as εἶδος, λόγος, λόγος σπερματικός, and ποιός (ποιότης), was a question examined by the Middle-Platonists and Neoplatonists. The significance of the concept of “body” as a form-matter compound in Neoplatonism has been elaborated by L. Brisson, *Between Matter and Body: Mass (ἄγκος) in the Sentences of Porphyry*, “International Journal of the Platonic Tradition” 2010, no. 4, pp. 36–53.

³² Cf. *Gen.Com.* 81,27.

Didymus' position as expressed in *Commentary on Psalms*,³³ where we are told that ὀρεκτικὴ ψυχὴ as it is ψυχὴ ἄλογος is separated from the intellect (χωρὶς νοῦ) and exists only in the association with the body "for which it is a soul", and hence ὀρεκτικὴ ψυχὴ perishes along with the body.

There are two important inferences that should be drawn from this statement. The first is the clear distinction between the intellect and the lower irrational soul (ψυχὴ ἄλογος). The second is that unlike the superior, intellectual soul, which seems to exist by itself, thereby preserving its autonomy, the lower irrational soul seems to serve as the very embodied soul directly conjoined with the body. It seems to exist as a kind of formal element of the body which comes into being and perishes along with the body.

From this, we can infer that when Didymus calls the body "outer man" he is indicating that the word "body" has been applied not to a sole material body, but to the living body made up of the irrational soul and the material body, which is in fact nothing but the complete natural human organism (except the intellect alone) enlivened and informed by the irrational embodied soul and treated as a kind of habitat for the lower side of human nature. Such usage of the word "body", which can be found in Didymus' remarks in his definition of man as a soul-body compound, can be of considerable significance. Firstly, it shows that by the second part of the compound, Didymus is describing not a material body but an ensouled body which is already a compound of the soul and the body. Secondly, it demonstrates that by the second part of the compound, Didymus is referring to the whole lower nature of man i.e. sensible and irrational, as it is these which are inherent to the ensouled body. If this analysis is correct, Didymus' definition of man as a soul-body compound can be understood as follows:

- 1) By "soul", Didymus means the intellect alone, which is an incorporeal substance (essence) of the soul. As such, the intellect accounts for the soul's superior, original nature, from which the whole soul as well as the whole human being derives its existence. Nevertheless, even after the association with the body, the intellect remains somehow separate and independent, and is therefore clearly distinguished from the inferior irrational soul directly associated with the body. Therefore, the intellect is the only element of the human constitution that preserves the soul's original nature, purely incorporeal and intelligible, and so it constitutes a superior, rational nature of man that consists of the intellectual activity inherent to inner man.
- 2) By "body", Didymus means a living body which comes into being when the soul conjoins with the material body, thereby enlivening and informing it. It exists as a compound of an inferior irrational soul and material body where the irrational soul accounts for the formal element of the body and so remains inseparable from it. This strict association of the irrational soul and material body constitutes the inferior nature of man, sensible and irrational, inherent to outer man.

As a result, what Didymus presents as the soul-body compound can also be understood as the compound of (1) the intellect alone, and (2) the ensouled living body which is already a compound of the irrational soul and the material body. Therefore, if

³³ *Ps. Com.* 45,9–11. Didymos der Blinde, *Psalmenkommentar (Tura-Papyrus)*, Teil I, L. Doutreleau, A. Gesché, M. Gronewald (eds.), Bonn 1969 (hereafter *Ps. Com.*). See also *Com. Gen.* 42, 14–15.

we have correctly analysed Didymus' accounts of the soul-body compound, it seems plausible to surmise that a superior, intellectual soul acts as a transcendent form. In contrast, the inferior soul comes into direct contact with the body and acts as a constituent of the living body similarly to an immanent form which remains inseparable from the body. We can therefore say that in the description of the superior soul the Platonic perspective prevails, where the stress is upon the transcendent, incorporeal, intelligible, and immortal character of the soul (this is perceived by Neoplatonists as compatible with the Aristotelian approach to the question of intellect³⁴). By contrast, in the description of the inferior soul the Aristotelian perspective prevails; according to this: (1) the soul exists only in the association with the body as its cause and entelechy, (2) the soul perishes along with the body, and (3) the body is treated as an instrument (*ὄργανον*) by which the soul performs all vital functions of the living being. Such an appraisal of Didymus' concept of the soul-body compound shows its similarity to that of Neoplatonists such as Plotinus,³⁵ and especially Porphyry. As Andrew Smith³⁶ and, more recently, George Karamanolis³⁷ have shown, Porphyry's higher soul, i.e. the intellect alone, is seen as the soul in itself (*καθ' αὐτήν*), and is understood exclusively in terms of an intelligible and immortal substance. The lower soul, on the other hand, is seen as a soul in relation to the body (*κατὰ σχέσιν*),³⁸ and is regarded as a secondary power (*δεύτερα δύναμις*) of the soul itself;³⁹ this may be understood as an immanent form that comes into being and perishes along with the body, similarly to Aristotle's *ἐντελέχεια* of the body. It is this kind of solution to the soul-body problem which Henry Blumenthal called the marriage of dualism and hylomorphism⁴⁰ and which left its mark not only on later Platonic tradition, but presumably also on Didymus.

³⁴ On the agreement between Plato's transcendent soul and Aristotle's intellect, see L.P. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists*, Ithaca, New York–London 2005, pp. 139–140.

³⁵ It is worth noting, however, Plotinus' limited use of Aristotelian hylomorphism. As Christopher I. Noble has shown, Plotinus accepts the Aristotelian assumption that a living body is alive insofar as it is enlivened by enmattered form; nonetheless, a form which enlivens the body is not the soul itself but another entity, namely the "soul-trace" introduced by Plotinus in *Enn.* IV 4,18, in order to justify the animation of the body and at the same time to preserve the transcendence of the soul itself. This is why Noble can conclude his paper with the statement that Plotinus adapts Aristotelian ideas to the requirements of Platonism rather than harmonising Plato with Aristotle. C.I. Noble, *How Plotinus' Soul Animates His Body: The Argument for the Soul-Trace at Enneads 4.4.18.1–9*, "Phronesis" 2013, no. 58, pp. 278.

³⁶ A. Smith, *Porphyry's Place in Neoplatonic Tradition. A Study in Postplotinian Neoplatonism*, The Hague 1974, p. 14.

³⁷ G. Karamanolis, *Porphyry's Notion of Empsychia* [in:] *Studies on Porphyry*, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, G. Karamanolis, A. Sheppard (eds.), suppl. 98, London 2007, p. 95.

³⁸ Porphyry, 253F, 114–116 – *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, A. Smith (ed.), Studgardiae et Lipsiae 1993.

³⁹ *Sent.* 4.

⁴⁰ H.J. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity: Interpretations of the "De Anima"*, Ithaca, NY 1996, 111.

4. The compound of the irrational soul and the material body

A complete appraisal of the concept of the soul-body compound requires a closer inspection of the irrational soul, as it is this element which remains inseparably conjoined with the body. Discussion of this point also gives us the opportunity to take a closer look at the Platonic borrowings that can be found in Didymus' psychology. As in many other cases, while describing the irrational soul, Didymus draws his inspiration from different psychological models used by Platonists. He repeatedly refers to Plato's tripartite soul, which can be confirmed primarily by the presence of Plato's terminology. For instance, in *Gen.Com.* 119,23–26, Abel, a shepherd of animals,⁴¹ is understood allegorically as a shepherd of senses (τῶν αἰσθήσεων), and so he is thought to represent imposing reasoning (λογισμός) on the spirited (τὸ θυμικόν) and desiring (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) faculties. In *Gen.Com.* 140,14, where the shepherd allegory reappears, Didymus clarifies that Abel is a shepherd because he guides irrational faculties (ἄλογοι δυνάμεις), namely desiring (ἐπιθυμητική), appetitive (ὀρεκτική) and spirited (θυμική) ones. Although it is easy to discern here that Didymus makes use of Plato's terminology, we must emphasise that he does not adopt Plato's soul model literally. Significant modifications of Plato's stance that are characteristic of later Platonists can be detected here. Firstly, instead of parts (μέρη), Didymus usually distinguishes the faculties (δυνάμεις) of the soul.⁴² This is a distinctive feature of later Platonism, where Plato's "parts" terminology was replaced by the terminology of "powers"/"faculties" from Aristotle.⁴³ This is why, even when referring to Plato's tripartite soul, Didymus points out that it is the soul which has three faculties (τριδύναμος).⁴⁴ The term τριδύναμος may refer to the terminology used in the debate held by Neoplatonists over why the soul should be recognised as having many faculties (πολυδύναμος), rather than as having three parts (τριμερής).⁴⁵ Secondly, in

⁴¹ *Gen.* 4:3–5.

⁴² For a discussion of the use of the terms concerning the parts and faculties of the soul in Didymus, see M.A. Ὀρφανού, *op.cit.*, pp. 139–145.

⁴³ As for Didymus, one could, of course, regard his use of the term δύναμις instead of μέρος as an influence of Philo, who in fact employed the term δύναμις (cf. *Leg. All.* II, 24, 35, 45; III 185; *Migr.* 213; *Mut.* 110; *Opif.* 67). But Philo uses both terms, μέρος and δύναμις, interchangeably, whereas Didymus is much more consistent in using δύναμις, similarly to Neoplatonists.

⁴⁴ *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 337,11 – *Kommentar zum Ecclesiastes (Tura-Papyrus)*, Teil VI, G. Binder, L. Liesenborghs (eds.), Bonn 1969; *Ps.Com.* 142,23 – *Psalmenkommentar (Tura-Papyrus)*, Teil III, M. Gronewald, A. Gesché (eds.), Bonn 1968. It is worth mentioning that the word τριδύναμος, which also appears in the texts of later Neoplatonists (Proclus, Hierocles, and Ammonius), is probably of Gnostic origin. Hippolytus uses it when referring to Peratics (*Refutatio omnium haeresium* 5.12.4.4 and 10.10.3.6). It also appears in a Coptic version in Nag Hammadi Sethian treatises. The arguments for the Sethian – and not the alleged Porphyrian – source of the presence of the word τριδύναμος in later Neoplatonists has been demonstrated by Tuomas Rasimus. See T. Rasimus, *Porphyry and the Gnostics: Re-assessing Pierre Hadot's Thesis in Light of the Second and Third-Century Sethian Treatises* [in:] *Plato's Parmenides and Its Heritage. Vol. 2: Its Reception in Patristic, Gnostic, and Christian Neoplatonic Texts*, J.D. Turner, K. Corrigan (eds.) Atlanta 2010, pp. 81–110.

⁴⁵ Iamblichus, *De Anima* 11; Cf. Porphyry, 253F – *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, A. Smith (ed.), Studgardiae et Lipsiae 1993.

Didymus' commentary, the irrational soul is composed not only of two irrational faculties borrowed from Plato, i.e. spirited (τὸ θυμικόν) and desiring (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν), but also of many others used by Neoplatonists. Similarly to Neoplatonists, who have a tendency to multiply the soul's faculties by designating almost each kind of activity that the soul reveals as a distinct δύναμις, Didymus mentions "various affections and movements of the soul, which are numerous and diversified."⁴⁶ Furthermore, he uses the general expression "irrational faculties" (ἄλογοι δυνάμεις) as a designation of the whole irrational soul, which can be regarded as a distinct, though multifaceted, sphere of irrational man's activities as opposed to activity of reason and intellect. All this shows that Didymus' approach mirrors the soul models which prevailed in late antiquity, dividing the soul into two areas, rational (or intellectual) and irrational, with further subdivision into separate irrational faculties within this.

The first category, which serves to delineate the irrational soul, is that of sense-perception. This is why Didymus often makes use of Philo's soul model which accounts for the soul's division into two parts: intelligible and sensible, νοῦς and αἴσθησις.⁴⁷ According to this division, the lower soul is regarded as having an immediate connection with the sensible world and thereby operating within the sphere of the senses.⁴⁸ Its basic faculty is that of sense-perception, which is understood as a cognitive faculty of the soul itself, that is based on impressions from sensible objects which are received by the physical senses. Didymus also ascribes imagination (φαντασία)⁴⁹ and memory (μνήμη)⁵⁰ to the lower soul faculties. All these are contrasted with higher cognitive faculties, among which Didymus includes λογισμός⁵¹ and διάνοια,⁵² described as faculties of reasoning and intellection called τὸ λογιστικόν⁵³ and τὸ θεωρητικόν.⁵⁴ Such a distinction between lower cognitive functions ascribed to the lower soul and higher cognitive functions ascribed to the higher soul are also in accordance with the similar distinction found in Neoplatonic philosophy. In this Neoplatonic philosophy, the former were conceived as bodily dependent (as they operate on images that come from sense-perception and so depend on affections in sense-organs of the body), whereas the latter were conceived as bodily independent (as Platonists believed that thinking, especially pure intellection, does not require the activity of any bodily organ). Consequently, the former were assigned to the lower soul, associated with the body, whereas the latter were assigned to the higher soul, separable from the body. It is worth noting, however, that Neoplatonists did not agree as to where the line of demarcation lies between the higher and lower cognitive functions.⁵⁵

⁴⁶ *Gen.Com.* 70,17–18.

⁴⁷ *Gen.Com.* 44,9–12; 62,22–25; 95,18–21; 119,23–26; 150,3–4; 152,10–11.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Gen.Com.* 81,19–82,18; 87,20; 217,23–24; 29–30.

⁴⁹ *Gen.Com.* 48,26–28; *Ps.Com.* 144,3.

⁵⁰ *Ps.Com.* 144,3; 202,34.

⁵¹ *Gen.Com.* 44,11; 119,26; 71,8.

⁵² *Gen.Com.* 84,25; 127,18.

⁵³ *Gen.Com.* 140,9; *Ps.Com.* 142,24.

⁵⁴ *Gen.Com.* 114,9; *Ps.Com.* 203,1.

⁵⁵ Cf. Iamblichus, *De Anima* 13.

They observed the peculiarity of Plotinus's view, according to which even discursive reasoning (διάνοια, λογισμός) was assigned to the lower cognitive faculties inherent in the lower embodied soul. Plotinus did so in order to single out the intuitive intellect (νοῦς) as the only kind of thinking which is entirely independent of the body and, as such, the only one that constitutes the higher intellectual soul.⁵⁶ Didymus does not seem to be as sensitive to the problem as Neoplatonists were. Nonetheless, he repeats the general division into lower and higher cognitive activities, assigned to the lower and higher soul respectively. As a result, he ascribes all intellectual activities, from discursive reasoning to intuitive intellection, to one rational/intellectual faculty of the soul, which contrasts with all other cognitive activities such as sense-perception, imagination, and memory.

Apart from sense-perception and other lower cognitive activities, the second category used by Didymus to describe the lower soul is that of the motive power behind a movement of the irrational soul as well as all human activity.⁵⁷ In some ways similar to Plato's Eros, it is understood as the universal power of desire inherent in human nature. This is why Didymus ascribes to the irrational soul various kinds of drives, from the lowest types up to higher human aspirations, among which he ranks passion/affection (πάθος),⁵⁸ impulse (ὄρμη),⁵⁹ desire (ἐπιθυμία),⁶⁰ spirit (θυμός),⁶¹ and appetite (ὄρεξις).⁶² It is worth noting, however, that it is not clear whether they are to be understood as separate faculties, or rather only as specific capacities or functions of the irrational soul, or even perhaps as some sub-faculties responsible for individual kinds of human emotions. Regardless of whether they are separate faculties or not, there is no reason to doubt that, referring to an ever growing number of differentiated powers, Didymus appreciates both the approach and terminology of Neoplatonism, as evinced by the enumerations of soul powers presented by Porphyry⁶³ and Iamblichus.⁶⁴

Finally, let us turn to the lowest faculties of the soul, among which Neoplatonists mainly count the vegetative (φυτικόν), nutritive (θρεπτικόν), growth-promoting (αὐξητικόν), and reproductive (γεννητικόν) faculties which are responsible for all vital functions of the body. Regardless of incidental uses of typically Neoplatonic terminology, such as the mention of the faculty of reproduction (γεννητικὴ δύναμις) in *Gen. Com.* 97,10–15, Didymus generally uses the broad expression of a vital power of the soul (ζωτικὴ δύναμις τῆς ψυχῆς).⁶⁵ He seems to treat it as one faculty responsible for enlivening the body and the maintenance of its life, and appears not to explore further by examining separate sub-faculties within it, as Neoplatonists did. Moreover,

⁵⁶ *Enn.* VI 9,5,7–9.

⁵⁷ *Gen. Com.* 165,18–21; 166,10–13; 112,13–15.

⁵⁸ *Gen. Com.* 62,1–5; 70,17–18; 71,6–12; 165,18–19.

⁵⁹ *Gen. Com.* 48,26–28; 112,13–15; 235,22.

⁶⁰ *Gen. Com.* 62,3; 119,23–26; 140,14.

⁶¹ *Gen. Com.* 119,23–26; 140,14.

⁶² *Gen. Com.* 140,14.

⁶³ Porphyry, 253F, 16–17 – *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, A. Smith (ed.), Studgardiae et Lipsiae 1993.

⁶⁴ Iamblichus, *De Anima* 12–13.

⁶⁵ *Gen. Com.* 43,12; 130,4.

when Didymus raises the issue of the vital power of the soul he comes to a comparison between the human irrational soul and the soul of animals. Both the animal and the human irrational soul enliven the body, set it in motion,⁶⁶ and perform all other vital and physical functions. In addition, Didymus indicates in *Gen. Com.* 48,26–27 that the soul of animals is endowed with faculties of imagination and impulse (κίνησις φανταστική καὶ ὀρμητική). This means that the animal and human irrational souls carry out not only the vital power of the soul, but also the same psychic and lower cognitive functions. At this point human and animal nature overlap. Nevertheless, although the human irrational soul can be regarded as an analogue of an animal soul, this does not mean that they are exactly the same, especially as regards the question of immortality of a living being, that is, immortality of the compound of the irrational soul and the material body.

5. The soul-body compound with regard to the question of immortality of living being

When Didymus raises the issue of the difference between the animal and human irrational soul, he depicts an animal's soul as "corporeal" (σωματική). Regrettably, it is not clear enough from the text what exact meaning has been ascribed to this term. At first, we are told that in the case of an animal's soul to be corporeal means to be "in a body" as a component of bodily constitution.⁶⁷ This may suggest that the expression "corporeal soul" implies a strict connection between the soul and body so that the soul is understood as a form of the body. In the following sentence, however, we cannot ignore the quotation from *Lev.* 17:11, where we are told that the soul of every living being is its blood.⁶⁸ This suggests that an animal's soul is a corporeal substance. Although Didymus never confirms that *Lev.* 17:11 should be understood literally, and it would probably be rash to ascribe such a view to him, we cannot treat it as definitively impossible. Regardless of the exact meaning of the "corporeal soul", there is no doubt that Didymus depicts the "corporeal" nature of an animal's soul in order to emphasise its indissoluble bond with the body. This is why the passage concludes with the statement that an animal's soul does not exist separately from the body and thereby comes into being and perishes along with the body.⁶⁹ This means that an animal's soul is mortal and this is an aspect in which the animal and human soul differ, as the human soul survives the dissolution of the body.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Gen. Com.* 43,16–17.

⁶⁷ *Gen. Com.* 48,28–49,1.

⁶⁸ *Gen. Com.* 49,1–2. Cf. *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim* II 59, where Philo considers blood as a substance of the lower soul, and also *De Principiis* III 4,2, where Origen discusses a view on the "corporeal soul".

⁶⁹ *Gen. Com.* 48,12–14; cf. also: *Gen. Com.* 43,12–14.

⁷⁰ *Gen. Com.* 48,14–15.

It is clear that the human soul taken in its essential nature survives the dissolution of the body, i.e. the intellectual soul which subsists by itself and thereby is independent of the body; that said, it is not equally clear whether the same can be said of the inferior irrational soul, which is associated with the body and, as has been shown, is comparable to an animal's soul. The answer should be found in a meaningful passage on the appetitive soul.⁷¹ Here, we are told that the appetitive soul, as an irrational soul, exists separately from the intellect (*χωρίς νοῦ*) and by no means accounts for the foundation (*οὐδὲ ὑφισταμένη τὴν ἀρχήν*), unless in the compound (*εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ συνθέσει*). It therefore perishes along with the body for which it is the soul. In this passage Didymus evidently separates the irrational soul from the intellectual and stresses that, as we have already seen, the irrational soul exists as a constituent of the soul-body compound, and therefore perishes along with the body. This should lead us to the conclusion that only the intellectual soul survives the dissolution of the body, while the irrational soul dies along with the body, similarly to an animal's soul. This is how the question of the lower soul has been solved in Neoplatonism, although here whether and how a lower soul perishes along with the body was a matter of dispute.⁷² As for Didymus, meanwhile, we should note that even though in *Ps.Com.* 45,9–11 he unequivocally admitted that the irrational soul perishes along with the body, he could not admit that it perishes totally or irretrievably. It seems reasonable to suppose that for Didymus being dead is after all not tantamount to being utterly extinct. Death seems to be extinction only of a particular kind of activity of irrational soul operating in the extended sensible world, i.e. the activity that consists in performing vital functions of the living body as well as in satisfying its needs and desires. As Didymus claims, man is essentially *τὸ σύνθετον ζῶον*, i.e. the indissoluble compound of the soul and the body, similarly to all other creatures juxtaposed with God, who is the only completely incorporeal being. In other words, man was made up of two contrasting natures and exists in such a manner both before and after death, except that after death his lower nature undergoes a thorough transformation; instead of the material body man receives a pneumatic body (*σῶμα πνευματικόν*).⁷³ Therefore, as the soul that maintains the life of the material body, the lower soul is no longer active (rather than dissolved). What is presumably active instead is some kind of lower soul enlivening the resurrection body, somehow transformed and conformed to the intelligible realm, just as

⁷¹ *Ps.Com.* 45,9–11.

⁷² Cf. Iamblichus, *De Anima* 37, and also: J.F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Chico, CA 1985, pp. 11–32.

⁷³ *Za.Com.* 231,12–20. Didyme l'Aveugle, *Sur Zacharie*. Texte inédit d'après un papyrus de Tou-ra. Introduction, text critique, traduction et notes de L. Doutreleau, *SCh* 83, t. 1, Paris 1962 (hereafter *Za.Com.*). See also: *Ps.Com.* 328,23ff and *Gen.Com.* 149,2–5. Although Didymus never specifies in greater detail the nature of the pneumatic body (*σῶμα πνευματικόν*) and its relation to the quasi-immaterial body which man possesses in paradise, the overall tenor of his thought inclines me to agree with H.S. Schibli in supposing that these are two different kinds of body. The "pneumatic" resurrection body seems to be an altered form of the material body (also called "house"), i.e. an altered form of the material body received as a result of the fall of man. As such it is to be distinguished from the paradisiacal quasi-immaterial body (presumably identified with "tabernacle") received by man at the beginning as an eternal quasi-immaterial substrate of the soul. Cf. *Gen.Com.* 106,10–108,15; 118,14–16. See H.S. Schibli, *op.cit.*, pp. 384–385.

a transformed pneumatic body, so that the whole human being attains his ultimate perfection and is therefore able to “see God face to face”.⁷⁴

6. Conclusion

The particular emphasis that Didymus places on the immortality of the whole human being is one of the examples that show that despite the standard dualistic psychological presupposition characteristic of Platonism – i.e. conceiving the human being as comprising two antithetical natures (intelligible and sensible, rational and irrational, independent of the body and involved with the body) – ultimately he inclines towards the concept of man conceived as an inherent unity of the soul-body compound. His reasons for advancing this concept are varied, but evidently include general increase in the human body’s dignity and value characteristic of Christian tradition, and obviously the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. And this is the point in which Didymus’ and Neoplatonic psychology differ the most significantly.

It is nonetheless true that Didymus could have been influenced by Neoplatonism. What is more, among the remarkable amount of technical terms and arguments deriving from Platonic tradition, attention should be drawn to the use of Aristotle’s nomenclature and reasoning gaining growing acceptance within Neoplatonic schools, as this is what could support a Christian justification of an infinite unity of the soul and the body. For Didymus, as well as for other Christian authors, Aristotelian hylomorphism could serve as a philosophical point of reference for the inextricability of the soul-body compound, both before and after death.⁷⁵ Admittedly, the growth of Aristotelian hylomorphism is a distinctive feature not only of late-antique Christian but also of Neoplatonic psychology. The Neoplatonic view on the lower soul that acts as a cause and entelechy of a living being and also the concept of the soul’s vehicle shows an increasing significance of the understanding of man as a composite being necessarily

⁷⁴ *Za.Com.* 231.9–11. Didymus’ writings give us some idea of the ultimate transformation of the human being. A good example, albeit an exceptional one, is Enoch’s rapture to the heavens, interpreted by Didymus as an immediate consequence of his absolute perfection and plenitude attained in earthly life (*Gen.Com.* 148,7–149,18). Although Didymus does not define Enoch’s perfection, it is clear enough that this is an example of a state that can be approached in this life, yet ultimately it is to be obtained at resurrection. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suppose that an ultimate transformation of the human being is related to the transformation attained through the perfection of an inherent human nature. This kind of human perfection consists in an assimilation of the whole lower nature into the higher. Didymus calls it a harmony of the soul (cf. *Gen.Com.* 33,13–16; 72,20–25), and depicts it by alluding to Plato’s chariot metaphor (*Phaedrus* 253,c–d), where a charioteer driving two horses is taken as a reference to the reason’s control over the spirited and desiderative parts of the soul (*Gen.Com.* 70,17–21; 71,6–12; 112,13–15; 119,23–26; 140,13–15, cf. also the whole passage in *Gen.Com.* 59,24–62,5). The most exact illustration of absolute human perfection is the description of man’s sojourn in paradise, where the stress is upon immediate knowledge of God conceived by Didymus as a result of “putting the reason upon the senses” (*Gen.Com.* 81,29–30), so that the sense-perceptible nature of man is concealed, but not non-existent. This is how Didymus depicts the ultimate result of the prime conformity of the lower to the higher nature, namely a pure comprehension of God.

⁷⁵ Similarly, the Aristotelian classification of change was (among others) a theoretical framework which supported the understanding of the transformation of the resurrection body. Cf. *Ps.Com.* 328,23ff.

comprising two elements, formal and material. For Neoplatonists, however, it does not entail the acceptance of immortality of the whole lower nature of man including immortality of the material body. And this is why one can reasonably claim that Didymus takes the soul-body unity further than a slight corrective to Plato's soul-body dichotomy that is to be found in Neoplatonism.

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