

ORIGENISM IN THE SIXTH CENTURY: LEONTIUS OF BYZANTIUM ON THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL

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Modern scholarship has established that Leontius the Monk, the author of several Christological treatises, is identical with the monk Leontius of Byzantium who appears in Cyril of Scythopolis' *Life of Sabas*. However, once this identification is made we are confronted with a strange discrepancy. Cyril characterises Leontius as one of the leaders of the Origenist faction within Palestinian monasticism but in his writings Leontius does not speak openly about his allegiances.¹ The only clues that he gives are found in his early work *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*. There he borrows a pithy phrase from Abba Nonnus, another famous Origenist of the time who also figures prominently in Cyril's *Life of Sabas*; and he quotes a passage from Evagrius' most controversial text, the *Capita gnostica*. However, even this we only know from marginal glosses because in the text itself Leontius does not name names.² Moreover, the quotation from Evagrius is a bland statement about the power of love, and Nonnus' phrase refers not to Origenist lore but to the Christological debate.³ The same problem arises when we turn to the arguments that Leontius puts forward in order to justify the Creed of Chalcedon. Evans' hypothesis that *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* contains references to the pre-existing soul of Christ have been conclusively disproved by Brian Daley and it is now universally accepted

¹ Cf. most recently D. Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy. A New Perspective on Cyril of Scythopolis' Monastic Biographies as Historical Sources for Sixth-Century Origenism* (Rome, 2001), pp. 133-138: 'Leontius the Origenist, as he appears in Cyril's writings'.

² *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*, PG 86, 1285A6-B1; ed. B. E. Daley, *Leontius of Byzantium: A Critical Edition of His Works, With Prolegomena* (Diss. Oxford, 1978), henceforth abbreviated to CNE. Reference to Nonnus in CNE, PG 86, 1276A1, ed. Daley p. 6, l. 5: εὐλαβῆς καὶ θεῖος ἀνήρ; and *scholion* in the apparatus: περὶ τοῦ ἀββᾶ Νόννου φησί; quotation from Evagrius in CNE, PG 86, 1285A14-15, ed. Daley, p. 13, l. 22-23: τινὶ τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν ἀνδρῶν θεοσόφω; and *scholion* in the apparatus: περὶ Εὐαγρίου. Cf. F. Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz und die gleichnamigen Schriftsteller der griechischen Kirche* (Texte und Untersuchungen, 3; Leipzig, 1887), p. 289, 295.

³ Nonnus called the Eutychians and Nestorians ἐναντιοδοκῆται, cf. CNE, PG 86, 1276A7, ed. Daley, p. 6, l. 5. For the passage from Evagrius cf. *Capita gnostica*, IV.50, ed. and tr. A. Guillaumont, *Les six Centuries des Képhalaïagnostica d'Évagre le Pontique. Édition critique de la version syriaque commune et édition d'une nouvelle version syriaque, intégrale, avec une double traduction française* (Patrologia Orientalis, XXVIII.1, Paris, 1958), pp. 158-159.

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that Leontius follows the official teaching that the incarnation is a composition of a divine nature with a human nature consisting of a body and a soul.⁴ As a consequence most contemporary scholars are of the opinion that Leontius was not an Origenist in the strict sense of the word. They argue that Leontius regarded Origenist speculation as perfectly acceptable because it did not affect the core tenets of the Christian faith but that he did not himself engage in it.⁵

This interpretation seems to be confirmed by close analysis of the first section of *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* where Leontius attempts to show that the formula of Chalcedon does not contradict commonly accepted notions about the order of being. As I have argued in a recent article Leontius builds his theory entirely on Aristotelian foundations and deliberately excludes the Platonic theory that universals have an existence outside individual instantiations.⁶ It is evident that such a conceptual framework is difficult to reconcile with the conventional portrayal of Origenism as an intellectual current heavily influenced by Plato's philosophy. However, it must not be forgotten that Leontius' highly original ontological discussions take up only the first section of *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*. The remainder of the treatise focuses almost exclusively on the analogy between the incarnated Word and the human compound. Leontius mentions several Nestorian and Monophysite objections to the use of the anthropological paradigm and in each case attempts to show that they are not valid. This raises the question: why would he have expended so much energy on this matter after he had already established a viable framework for the incarnation? One answer lies without doubt in the conventions of the Christological discourse where the ability to produce analogies for the incarnation of the Word was of great significance because it demonstrated that a particular Christology was not just a flight of fancy. However, anthropological statements could also be made for their own sake. In an article about a Nestorian Christological treatise from the late sixth or early seventh century I have sought to demonstrate that the anonymous author of this text used the analogy between the incarnated Word and the human being as a means to set out his own views about

⁴ The interpretation of D. Evans, *Leontius of Byzantium: An Origenist Christology* (Washington, 1970), has been conclusively disproved by B. Daley, 'The Origenism of Leontius of Byzantium', *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 27 (1976), pp. 333-369. Evans had argued that the term 'Christ' signified the pre-existent soul of the Word. However, the term simply refers to the compound made up of Word on the one hand and human soul and body on the other.

⁵ Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz*, p. 293, drew the attention to a passage in Cyril of Scythopolis' *Life of Cyriacus* where Origenist monks argue that speculation about the world and the souls does not touch on the central tenets of the Christian faith and should therefore not be policed by the official church, cf. E. Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis* (Leipzig, 1939), p. 229, ll. 24-31. He suggested that Leontius might have held such a view. This interpretation was accepted by Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, pp. 157-164; and also by Daley, 'Origenism', p. 369.

⁶ D. Krausmüller, 'Making Sense of the Formula of Chalcedon: the Cappadocians and Aristotle in Leontius of Byzantium's *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*', *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011), pp. 484-513.

the human being and to polemicise against an alternative anthropology that was being propagated by his adversaries.⁷

In what follows I will make the case that Leontius, too, pursued such a twofold agenda when he wrote his treatise *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* and that he constructed his arguments in such a way that the specifically Origenist notion of a pre-existent soul is implied. My focus will be on the first Nestorian objection to the applicability of the anthropological paradigm and on Leontius' response to it. I will discuss all parts of the argument because in such a dense text every single sentence may well be crucial for a proper understanding of Leontius' position. By contrast, I will only adduce material from other parts of *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* and from Leontius' later treatise *Solutiones* if they can help to clarify the meaning of the passage under discussion. The Nestorian objection reads as follows:

Ἄλλ' ὁ ἄνθρωπος, φασίν, εἰ καὶ ἐξ ἑτεροειδῶν συνέστηκεν, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὀπότερον αὐτῶν δίχα θατέρου τὸ εἶναι ἔσχηκεν, ὁ δὲ Λόγος ἔστι καὶ πρὸ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος· καὶ ὁ μὲν ἐξ ἀτελῶν συνέστηκε μερῶν, ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς τέλεια ἔχει τὰ μέρη καὶ ταύτη οὐδὲ μέρη ἂν εἰκότως καλοῖντο. Πῶς τοίνυν τὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κράμα ἐπὶ τε τοῦ Λόγου καὶ τῆς σαρκώσεως λαμβάνεις, μηδὲν εὐικός;⁸

But, they say, even if the human being is made up of (sc. entities) that belong to different species, neither of them has its being without the other, whereas the Word exists even before the humanity, and the former one is made up of incomplete parts whereas Christ has parts that are complete and that should therefore properly not even be called parts. How, then, do you apply the human mixture to the Word and the incarnation, when it is utterly dissimilar?

The Nestorian argument hinges on the dissimilarity between the divine Word on the one hand and the human soul on the other. It is evident that this argument could be countered most effectively through the claim that the soul, too, exists as a complete self-sufficient being before its composition with the body. As is well known such an alternative anthropology had indeed been proposed by Origen and Evagrius who spoke of a monad of pre-existing minds, which then fell away from God and were joined with bodies. However, we wait in vain for Leontius to proclaim his Origenist beliefs. Instead, he declares that he employs the anthropological paradigm not 'because of the pre-existence or simultaneous existence ... of the parts' (διὰ τὸ προϋπάρχειν ἢ συνυπάρχειν ... τῶν μερῶν) but only because the human being is an example of an unconfused union of two natures with diametrically opposite sets of qualities.⁹ This statement has been interpreted by modern scholars in radically different ways. Friedrich Loofs has suggested that Leontius deliberately sidesteps

⁷ D. Krausmüller, 'Conflicting anthropologies in the Christological discourse at the end of Late Antiquity: the case of Leontius of Jerusalem's Nestorian adversary', *Journal of Theological Studies* 56 (2005), pp. 413-447.

⁸ *CNE, PG* 86, 1280B11- C6, ed. Daley, p. 9, l. 21-p. 10, l. 2.

⁹ *CNE, PG*, 86, 1280D4-6; ed. Daley, p. 10, l. 12.

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the issue and thus leaves open the possibility that the soul is indeed pre-existent, just as the Word is.¹⁰ In contrast, Brian Daley and more recently Daniel Hombergen have argued that Leontius makes a concession to his adversaries and admits that in these respects the two cases do indeed differ.¹¹ In order to decide which of these interpretations is correct we first of all need to gain a better understanding of the Nestorian position with which Leontius is confronted.

No Nestorian texts from the first half of the sixth century have survived. Fortunately, however, this gap can be filled through recourse to the writings of earlier Antiochene theologians. Of particular relevance are the *Confutationes* of Eutharius of Tyana, a contemporary and friend of Nestorius. This treatise contains the following statement about the use of the anthropological paradigm:

Ἄνθρωπος μὲν γὰρ ἐκ ψυχῆς νοητῆς καὶ σώματος αἰσθητοῦ ζῶον γνωρίζεται εἰκότως διὰ τὸ μηδέτερον χωρὶς τοῦ ἑτέρου προάγουσαν ἔχειν ὑπόστασιν μηδὲ σῶζειν τὸν ὄρον τῆς φύσεως κατὰ ταῦτόν μὲν ἀρχὴν τοῦ εἶναι λαβόντα ἐκ γαστρὸς καὶ οὕτως εἰς τὸν βίον ἐρχόμενα, ἐνὸς δὲ ζῶου σύστασιν ἐργαζόμενα. ὁδὲκύριος Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἐξ ἀτελῶν πραγμάτων τὸ εἶναι δέχεται, ἀλλὰ τελείων φύσεων ἐν ἑαυτῷ σύνοδον δείκνυσι· κάκει μὲν μέρη ἀνθρώπου ψυχῆ καὶ σῶμα, ἐνταῦθα δὲ οὔτε ἡ σὰρξ μέρος τοῦ Λόγου οὔτε ὁ Λόγος μέρος τῆς σαρκός. ... πῶς οὖν κέχρηται τῷδε τῷ ὑποδείγματι μηδὲν ὅμοιον ἔχοντι;¹²

For a human being is justly recognised as a living being made up of an intelligible soul and a sensible body because neither has a pre-existing hypostasis without the other nor preserves the definition of nature since they have received the beginning of their being simultaneously in the womb, and have thus come into this life and brought about the constitution of one living being. By contrast, the Lord Jesus does not receive his being out of incomplete things, but shows the concourse of complete natures in him. And in the former case soul and body (sc. are) parts of a human being, whereas in the latter case the flesh is not part of the Word and the Word is not part of the flesh. ... How, then, do they use this paradigm when it has not similar features?

It is immediately evident that this argument is almost identical with the Nestorian objection in Leontius' treatise. This leaves no doubt that Leontius is engaging in a real debate, and even raises the possibility that he quotes from a lost Nestorian text. However, this is not the only conclusion that we can draw from Eutharius' treatise: it also helps us to make better sense of Leontius' counter-argument. The invective against the use of the anthropological paradigm appears at the very end of the *Confutationes* and was evidently added as a post-script to an already existing

¹⁰ Loofs states that the pre-existence of the soul is 'zum mindesten nicht ausgeschlossen', cf. Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz*, p. 295.

¹¹ Cf. Daley, 'Origenism', p. 356: 'In matters of anthropology, it seems, Leontius has no quarrel with other non-Origenists'; and Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, p. 16.

¹² Eutharius of Tyana, *Confutationes*, ed. M. Tetz, *Eine Anthologie des Eutharios von Tyana* (Patristische Texte und Studien, 1; Berlin, 1964), p. 44, ll. 2-8.

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manuscript. This addition was most likely prompted by the position of Apollinaris of Laodicea who had argued that like the human being the incarnated Word was one nature compounded of incomplete parts where the Word took the place of the human mind.¹³ In the earlier sections of his treatise Eutherius takes a rather different stance. There he is willing to employ the anthropological paradigm in order to illustrate his own Antiochene Christology: he points out that the human being is one and nevertheless two unconfused natures with their own diametrically opposed characteristics.¹⁴ It is evident that this older, unselfconscious use of the analogy between Christ and the human being is virtually identical with the position that Leontius claims to take. Since Leontius points out that the anthropological paradigm had been used in the Christological discourse for a very long time it could be argued that he appeals in an oblique way to older Antiochene authors against the position of contemporary Nestorians.¹⁵ Accordingly, one could conclude that Leontius did not wish to drop a useful analogy only because the Monophysites misused it.¹⁶ This seems to support Daley's and Hombergen's contention that Leontius' refusal to speak about the temporal dimension cannot be taken as a sign of his Origenism.

However, a different picture emerges when we subject Leontius' argument to careful analysis. I will start by looking more closely at the passage in which he juxtaposes the two cases of pre-existence and simultaneous existence. It reads as follows:

Οὐ μὴν τὸ παράδειγμα καλῶς γε ποιούσιν, ἐκβιάζοντες οὕτως ἔχειν ὡς τὸ πρωτότυπον. Οὐ γὰρ ἔτι ἂν εἴη παράδειγμα εἰ μὴ καὶ τὸ ἀπεικὸς ἔχοι. Ἡμεῖς τὸν ἄνθρωπον οὔτε διὰ τὸ προϋπάρχειν ἢ συνυπάρχειν οὔτε διὰ τὸ ἀτελὲς τῶν μερῶν συγκεχωρεῖσθαι γὰρ τοῖς κακοσχόλοις ἀτελεῖ λέγειν καίπερ οὐκ ὄντα κατὰ τὸν τοῦ εἶναι λόγον ὡς ὕστερον δείξομεν· ἀλλὰ πρὸς δήλωσιν εἰλήφαμεν παράδειγμα τοῦ αὐτῆ τῆ οὐσίας τὸν Λόγον ἠνῶσθαι τῷ ἐξ ἡμῶν σώματι.¹⁷

However, they do not use the paradigm properly, forcing it to be identical with the prototype, for it would no longer be a paradigm if it did not also have something that was unlike (sc. the prototype). We use the human being as a paradigm neither because of the pre-existence or simultaneous existence nor because of the incompleteness of the parts – for it may be conceded to the ill-willed ones to call them incomplete even if they are not so according to the definition of being as we will show afterwards – but in order to show that the Word has been united with the body from us in its very substance.

¹³ For Apollinaris, cf. H. de Riedmatten, 'La christologie d' Apollinaire de Laodicée', *Studia Patristica*, 2 (Texte und Untersuchungen, 64, Berlin, 1957), pp. 208-234.

¹⁴ Eutherius, *Confutationes*, ed. Tetz, p. 12, ll. 21-28.

¹⁵ *CNE, PG* 86, 1280C11-15, ed. Daley, p. 10, ll. 6-8.

¹⁶ *CNE, PG* 86, 1280C8-11, ed. Daley, p. 10, ll. 4-6.

¹⁷ *CNE, PG* 86, 1280C15-1281A2, ed. Daley, p. 10, ll. 11-16.

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In this passage Leontius rejects his adversaries' claim that the human being could only serve as an analogy for the incarnated Word if one part were pre-existent and both parts were complete. He claims that paradigms can include divergent features, which are left aside in the comparison, and then applies this general rule to the specific case of the human paradigm. At first sight it appears that Leontius has set out a coherent argument. However, a closer look at the phrase 'neither because of the pre-existence or simultaneous existence ... of the parts' (οὔτε διὰ τὸ προϋπάρχειν ἢ συνυπάρχειν ... τῶν μερῶν) reveals an inconsistency. The general framework that Leontius has established would only have required the phrase 'not because of simultaneous existence' (οὔτε διὰ τὸ συνυπάρχειν), parallel to the following 'not because of the incompleteness of the parts' (οὔτε διὰ τὸ ἀτελὲς τῶν μερῶν), because according to the Nestorian these are the aspects in which the human being differs from the incarnated Word.¹⁸ However, Leontius has added the alternative 'not because of pre-existence' (οὔτε διὰ τὸ προϋπάρχειν), which makes no sense in the context because it would establish a strict parallel between the soul and the divine Word and should therefore be considered in the comparison. It can be ruled out that this inconsistency simply escaped Leontius' notice because he chooses words and expressions with the utmost care. Therefore we must ask: why did Leontius introduce the notion of pre-existence into his argument?

In order to find an answer we need to turn to the parallel theme of the completeness or incompleteness of parts. As we have seen Leontius mentions in this case only the diverging feature as is required by his conceptual framework. However, this is not his last word on the topic. In a lengthy parenthesis he states: 'for it may be conceded to the ill-willed ones to call them incomplete even if they are not so according to the definition of being' (συγκεχωρεῖσθαι γὰρ τοῖς κακοσχόλοις ἀτελῆ λέγειν καίπερ οὐκ ὄντα κατὰ τὸν τοῦ εἶναι λόγον), and then announces that he will provide proof for his contention in the following section.¹⁹ When we turn to this section we find that Leontius accepts the incompleteness of body and soul only in the most formal sense, pointing out that neither of them is the complete human being and that they can therefore be considered incomplete parts of a whole.²⁰ Accordingly he feels no qualms to apply this framework to the incarnated Word as well:

Τέλειος μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ πλήρης, καὶ παρεκτικὸς τελειότητος· τελεία δὲ καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ, ὡς πρὸς τὸν ὅρον τῆς ὑπάρξεως. Ἄλλ' οὐδὲ ὁ Λόγος τέλειος Χριστός, κἂν τέλειος εἴη θεός, μὴ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος αὐτῷ συντεταγμένης

¹⁸ This interpretation is confirmed through a further example from Trinitarian theology, which Leontius offers to his readers: the sun and its radiance are used as analogy for the Father and the Son, despite the fact that the radiance is 'without a hypostasis' (ἀνυπόστατον), which is therefore not considered in the comparison. Cf. *CNE, PG* 86, 1281A14-B3, ed. Daley, p. 10, ll. 26-28.

¹⁹ *CNE, PG* 86, 1280D5-8, ed. Daley, p. 10, ll. 13-14.

²⁰ *CNE, PG* 86, 1281B7-10, ed. Daley, p. 10, ll. 21-31.

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οὔτε ἡ ψυχὴ τέλειος ἄνθρωπος, κἂν τελείαν ἔχει οὐσίαν, μὴ τοῦ σώματος αὐτῆς συνεπινοουμένου.²¹

For the Word is complete, and full, and purveyor of completeness, and complete is also the soul of the human being, as regards the definition of existence. But neither is the Word the complete Christ, even if he is complete God, when the humanity is not correlated with it, nor is the soul a complete human being, even if it has a complete substance, when the body is not considered with it.

Here Leontius takes a view that is radically different from the Nestorian position: rather than juxtaposing the complete parts of the incarnated Word with the incomplete parts of the human being, he declares that both the Word and the soul can be regarded as both complete and incomplete. It is evident that we have come a long way from Leontius' earlier protestations that the human being can only serve as an analogy for the incarnated Word because it is *not* completely like it: now Word and soul are presented as two specific applications of a general framework, which reduces the difference between them to nothing.²²

This modification raises questions about the validity of Leontius' earlier statement concerning the parallel temporal aspect. As we have seen there, too, he states that he will not consider this aspect, thereby implying that there is a difference between the human being and Christ, but then mentions pre-existence, which would create a strict parallel between the soul and the divine Word. Thus one could argue that in both cases Leontius makes a show of accepting his adversary's position but at the same time provides his readers with clues that for him the analogy is much stricter than it first seems. Indeed, the very fact that he mentions pre-existence as an option alongside simultaneous existence is significant. After all, Gregory of Nyssa had introduced simultaneous coming-to-be explicitly as the orthodox alternative to Origenism and sixth-century authors such as Severus of Antioch and Pamphilus were still insisting that only the latter theory was acceptable.²³

So far we have focused on the first part of Leontius' statement, which purports to list dissimilarities between the human being and the incarnated Word. Now we need to turn to the second part in which Leontius sets out his own understanding of the anthropological paradigm. There he claims that he will employ it exclusively in order to illustrate 'that the Word is united with the body from us in its very substance' (τοῦ αὐτῆς τῆς οὐσίας τὸν Λόγον ἠνωῖσθαι τῷ ἐξ ἡμῶν σώματι).²⁴ This is a

²¹ *CNE, PG* 86, 1281C12-D4, ed. Daley, p. 11, ll. 12-17.

²² Daley is not aware of this reinterpretation of the topic of incompleteness. Accordingly, he adduces Leontius' apparent concession that in the case of incompleteness archetype and paradigm do indeed differ as evidence for Leontius' supposed acceptance of simultaneous existence. Cf. Daley, 'Origenism', p. 356: 'Leontius concedes these two objections, saying that every analogy limps.'

²³ Cf. D. Krausmüller, 'Anti-Origenism and the "Sleep of the Soul" in Seventh- to Ninth-Century Byzantium', in R. Young and J. Kalvesmaki (eds.), *Evagrius and His Legacy*, forthcoming in 2014.

²⁴ *CNE, PG* 86, 1281A1-2, ed. Daley, p. 10, ll. 15-16.

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strikingly odd characterisation of the incarnation since it only considers one part of the human compound. Instead one would have expected him to use the phrase ‘that the Word is united with the human being from us’ (τὸν Λόγον ἠνωσθαι τῷ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἀνθρώπῳ), which would also have included the soul. It can be ruled out that Leontius believed the divine Word to have assumed only a human body. Such a view would have been heretical and in any case a few lines further down the ‘common human being out of soul and body’ (κοινὸς ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος) is compared with the ‘Saviour out of divinity and humanity’ (Σωτὴρ ὁ ἐκ θεότητος καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος), which makes an ‘Apollinarian’ reading of his statement impossible.²⁵ In order to understand Leontius’ true intentions we need to consider that τὸν Λόγον ἠνωσθαι τῷ σώματι has an exact counterpart in τὴν ψυχὴν ἠνωσθαι τῷ σώματι, which refers to ordinary human beings. The significance of this parallel between Word and soul reveals itself when we look at the context. Leontius avers that in the union of Word and body both components are not confused but preserve their differences, just as is the case with the human being, and then adds the following explanation:

Οὔτε γὰρ ἐξ ἀοράτου ἢ ἀθανάτου ὄρατὴ καὶ θνητὴ γέγονεν ἢ ἡμετέρα ψυχὴ οὔτε μὴν ὁ Λόγος ὄρατος ἢ θνητὸς καίπερ ἐν ὄρατῷ καὶ θνητῷ σώματι τῆς τε ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ Λόγου γεγενημένων.²⁶

Neither has our soul turned from being invisible and immortal into being visible and mortal nor indeed has the Word become visible or mortal, although both our soul and the Word have come to be found in a visible and mortal body.

Here Leontius juxtaposes both the divine Word and the human soul with the human body, with the consequence that the Word and the soul again appear to be two strictly parallel cases. Such a configuration is possible because Leontius focuses on two qualities that the divine Word shares with the human soul but not with the human body. This gives the impression as if the union of the divine Word and the human soul were a straightforward matter where both entities are at the same ontological level and thus compatible. It is evident that such a view is highly problematic within a Christian conceptual framework.²⁷

In the section of *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* that follows the passage under discussion Leontius modifies the straightforward parallel that he has created between the Word and the soul. There he deals with another objection to the use of the anthropological paradigm, namely that the soul is circumscribed by the body

²⁵ *CNE, PG 86, 1281A9-12*, ed. Daley, p. 11, ll. 21-24.

²⁶ *CNE, PG 86, 1281A5-9*, ed. Daley, p. 10, ll. 18-21.

²⁷ It should be pointed out that Leontius’ statement is reconcilable with an Origenist Christology. By focusing on the composition of the Word with the body he leaves it open when the soul was compounded with the Word. This might have happened at the incarnation but could also have happened before all time.

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and suffers through it and that the incarnated Word would therefore also become ‘passible and circumscribed’ (παθητὸς καὶ περιγραπτός).²⁸ Here we find the same direct juxtaposition between the Word and the body as before since Leontius considers the case that the Word might become circumscribed and passible ‘through the union with the circumscribed and passible body’ (διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸ περιγραπτόν καὶ παθητὸν σῶμα ἔνωσιν).²⁹ However, now Leontius also makes a distinction between Word and soul. He argues that the soul itself is passible ‘because it has received passible faculties that are combined with it for its benefit’ (παθητικὰς πρὸς τὸ αὐτῇ συμφέρον συναρμοσθείσας λαβοῦσα) and therefore suffers with the body to which it is bound whereas the divine Word is by nature impassible ‘even if it appears in a body’ (κἂν ἐν σώματι γένηται).³⁰ Yet nowhere in *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* is there any mention of the most fundamental difference that separates the Word from both body and soul, namely that the former is ‘uncreated’ (ἄκτιστος) whereas the latter are ‘created’ (κτιστός).³¹ There can be no doubt that this is a conscious omission. Later in the text Leontius deals with the objection that if the human body and soul are two natures in one hypostasis there should be three natures in the incarnated Word.³²

This objection was countered by other Chalcedonians with the argument that body and soul are both part of created nature and thus should count as one nature when juxtaposed with the uncreated Word.³³ In contrast, Leontius makes no reference to this argument but develops an alternative strategy in order to solve the problem.³⁴ The testimony of his later treatise *Solutiones* is even more striking. There he informs his Monophysite adversaries that Christ cannot be one nature because a nature cannot be at the same time ‘visible and invisible, mortal and immortal, circumscribed and boundless, and generally generate and ingenerate’ (ὄρατὴ καὶ ἀόρατος, θνητὴ καὶ ἀθάνατος, περιγραπτὴ καὶ ἀόριστος, καὶ συνόλωσ γενητὴ καὶ ἀγένητος).³⁵ This list is highly instructive: the first three juxtapositions where the first term refers to the body alone have close counterparts in *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* whereas the last distinction where the first term refers to the soul as well, is entirely absent there. These findings confirm our previous interpretation: while apparently presenting the two views that the soul existed before the body and that it came into existence together with the body merely as two alternatives without

²⁸ CNE, PG 86, 1284B13, ed. Daley, p. 12, l. 16.

²⁹ CNE, PG 86, 1284B11-12, ed. Daley, p. 12, l. 15.

³⁰ CNE, PG 86, 1284D11-13, C1-2, ed. Daley, p. 13, l. 11-12, p. 12, ll. 17-18.

³¹ Leontius of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos*, I.26, PG 86, 1492D4-5.

³² CNE, PG 86, 1293B11-C1, ed. Daley, p. 20, ll. 17-21.

³³ Cf. U. Lang, *John Philoponus and the Controversies over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century. A Study and Translation of the Arbitrator* (Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense, 47; Leuven, 2001), pp. 73-75.

³⁴ CNE, PG 86, 1293C14-1297C4, ed. Daley, p. 20, l. 22-p. 23, l. 21.

³⁵ *Solutiones*, PG 86, 1944B6-8, ed. Daley, p. 95, ll. 12-13.

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committing himself to either of them, Leontius creates a context that insinuates the correctness of the former point of view.

Further confirmation that Leontius considered the soul to be ingenerate comes from the immediately following passage, which focuses on the completeness or incompleteness of parts. Introducing the human being as an example, Leontius points out that body and soul are complete ‘as regards the definition of being’ (κατὰ τὸν τοῦ εἶναι λόγον) and incomplete only ‘in relation to the definition of the whole human being’ (ὡς πρὸς τὸν ὅρον τοῦ ὅλου ἀνθρώπου).³⁶ In order to understand this argument we need to realise that it was formulated against an existing Nestorian position. Again it is Eutherius of Tyana who helps us to reconstruct the context. Eutherius first states that ‘before the union’ (πρὸ τῆς ἐνώσεως) both Word and flesh had complete natures ‘so that nothing at all was lacking either in the divinity or in the humanity as regards their own definitions’ (ὡς μηδὲν ὅλως λείπειν μήτε τῆ θεότητι εἰς τὸν ἴδιον λόγον μήτε τῆ ἀνθρωπότητι).³⁷ Then he claims that both body and soul are instead incomplete ‘parts of one person’ (μέρη ἐνὸς προσώπου) because each of them has only one part of the definition of the human being.³⁸ In order to support his argument he points out that ‘those who are knowledgeable in these matters define the human being as a rational mortal living being, deriving “rational” from the soul and inferring “mortal” from the body’ (ὀρίζονται γοῦν τὸν ἀνθρώπον οἱ περὶ ταῦτα δεινοὶ ζῶον λογικὸν θνητόν, τὸ μὲν λογικὸν ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐρμηνεύοντες, τὸ δὲ θνητόν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἀποφαίνοντες).³⁹

Such formulae, which define a species through a combination of an overarching genus and specific differences, were ultimately derived from Aristotle’s *Categories* but had been popularised through Porphyry’s *Isagoge*. Leontius is, of course, familiar with this conceptual framework: at the end of his later treatise *Solutiones* he lists as characteristics of the human being ‘animal, rational, mortal, and receptive of opposites in its parts’ (τὸ ζῶον, τὸ λογικόν, τὸ θνητόν, τὸ τῶν ἐναντίων ἀνὰ μέρος δεκτικόν) and adds that this is ‘the infallible definition of its substance’ (ὁ ἀπταιστος τῆς οὐσίας αὐτοῦ ὅρος);⁴⁰ and earlier in the same treatise he explains that ‘the particular definitions of each thing’ (οἱ ἴδιοι ἐκάστου πράγματος ὅροι) are arrived at by adding to the highest genera ‘substance’ (οὐσία) and ‘animal’ (ζῶον) specific differences such as ‘corporeal’ (ἐνσώματον) and ‘incorporeal’ (ἀσώματον), and ‘rational’ (λογικόν) and ‘irrational’ (ἄλογον).⁴¹ Therefore one would have expected him to modify the Aristotelian definition by creating complementary terms for ‘rational’ and ‘mortal’ because this would have permitted him to claim that the rational and immortal soul and the irrational and mortal body were separate

³⁶ CNE, PG 86, 1281B7-10, ed. Daley, p. 10, ll. 29-31.

³⁷ Eutherius, *Confutationes*, ed. Tetz, p. 44, ll. 9-11.

³⁸ Eutherius, *Confutationes*, ed. Tetz, p. 44, ll. 19-21.

³⁹ Eutherius, *Confutationes*, ed. Tetz, p. 44, ll. 18-21.

⁴⁰ *Solutiones*, PG 86, 1945B9-11, ed. Daley, p. 96, l. 28.

⁴¹ *Solutiones*, PG 86, 1921D1-6, ed. Daley, p. 81, ll. 5-12.

species characterised through a combination of genus and specific differences. However, this is not the case as can be seen from Leontius' response:

Τί γὰρ λείποι τῆ ψυχῆ χωριστὴν ἐχούση καὶ ἰδίαν ζωὴν, πρὸς τὸ εἶναι οὐσίαν ἀσώματον αὐτοκίνητον; τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτῆς δηλοῖ καὶ τὸ ἀθάνατον καὶ τὸ ἀνώλεθρον.⁴²

For what would be lacking in the soul, which has its separable and own life, in order for it to be an incorporeal and self-moved substance? For this is indicated by its immortality and indestructibility.

It is evident that Leontius does not give his readers a complete 'definition of being' (ὅρος τοῦ εἶναι) of the soul because the formula 'incorporeal substance' (οὐσία ἀσώματος) is not complemented with the crucial specific difference 'rational' (λογική).⁴³ By contrast, the quality 'immortal' (ἀθάνατος) does appear. Yet rather than presenting his readers with the straightforward formula 'incorporeal immortal substance' (οὐσία ἀσώματος ἀθάνατος) he introduces the further characteristic 'self-moving' (αὐτοκίνητος) and explains only in a second step that the immortality of the soul is a consequence of this particular feature.

The reason for these modifications reveals itself when we realise that Leontius' definition of the soul is based on the famous proof of the immortality of the soul in Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*. There Plato argues that the soul is immortal because it is ever-moving and that it is ever-moving because it is not moved from the outside but by itself.⁴⁴ Further study shows that Leontius is dependent on Late Antique doxographical texts. There Plato's views about the soul are usually summarised as 'intelligible substance, which is moveable from itself' (οὐσία νοητή, ἐξ ἑαυτῆς κινητική).⁴⁵ However, this definition is sometimes rephrased as 'incorporeal self-moved substance' (οὐσία ἀσώματος αὐτοκίνητος) in order to make it resemble more closely Aristotelian definitions of being consisting of genus and specific differences.⁴⁶ It is this modified formula that Leontius has adopted, no doubt because it allowed him to shift almost imperceptibly from one framework to the other.

The implications of this shift are evident. Despite his earlier protestations Leontius does not make the case that the soul has a complete set of substantial qualities, which can be considered by the mind in isolation from the compound. Instead he demonstrates that the soul is complete as a living being within the human compound and that it has an actual independent existence outside the body after its separation from it. Thus he introduces the temporal dimension into an argument

⁴² *CNE*, PG 86, 1281B10-13, ed. Daley, p. 10, l. 3–p. 12, l. 2.

⁴³ Cf. *CNE*, PG 86, 1296C10, ed. Daley, p. 22, l. 9: οὐσία λογική καὶ ποιότης ἀσώματος.

⁴⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245c-e.

⁴⁵ Cf. Nemesius of Emesa, *De natura hominis*, II.68, ed. M. Morani (Leipzig, 1987), p. 17, ll. 3-4, with references to doxographical texts in the apparatus.

⁴⁶ Pseudo-Galen, *Definitiones medicae*, 29, ed. K. G. Kühn, *Opera omnia*, 20 vols. (Leipzig, 1821-1833), vol. XIX, p. 355b ll. 11-12: Ψυχὴ ἐστὶν οὐσία ἀσώματος αὐτοκίνητος κατὰ Πλάτωνα.

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that at first sight seems to consider only the parallel theme of completeness. At this point one might conclude that Leontius is only concerned with the afterlife.⁴⁷ However, as is well known Plato had argued that in order for the soul to be immortal it must be without beginning because if it had been produced by some other entity it would have been moved by it and would therefore not be self-moving. Of course, in Leontius' text the crucial term 'ingenerate' (ἀγένητος) does not appear. However, one can argue that this aspect is implied, in particular since Leontius uses the term 'indestructible' (ἀνώλεθρος), which in philosophical literature is regularly complemented with ingenerate: Proclus, for example, states that Plato 'in his *Phaedrus* ... showed the soul to be ingenerate and indestructible' (ἀγένητον ... καὶ ἀνώλεθρον ἔδειξεν ἐν Φαίδρω τὴν ψυχὴν).⁴⁸ In itself such an argument may not be considered conclusive. However, at this point we need to remember that in the immediately preceding paragraph Leontius had studiously avoided to juxtapose the ingenerate divine Word with the generated human soul. Thus one can hypothesise that contemporary readers would already have been sensitised to this topic and would therefore have realised that with his recourse to Plato, Leontius was signalling his belief that the soul is ingenerate.⁴⁹

Indeed, it can be argued that the very mention of the concept of self-movement was sufficient to conjure up the notion of pre-existence. After all, the implications of this concept were well known to Christian authors.⁵⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, for example, states bluntly in his *Contra Iulianum* that 'nothing is ... self-moved but everything is produced by him (sc. God), and appears to have received the movement from non-being to being' (αὐτοκίνητον ... οὐδέν, παρήκται δὲ τὰ πάντα παρ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι κίνησιν λαχόντα φαίνεται).⁵¹ Cyril

⁴⁷ Cf. Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*, p. 163, concludes: 'For Leontius, the independence of the soul does not imply its pre-existence, but it appears connected with its immortality.'

⁴⁸ Proclus Diadochus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, vol. 1-3 (Leipzig, 1904), vol. II, p. 117, ll. 12-13.

⁴⁹ Cf. Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz*, p. 296: 'Endlich ist darauf aufmerksam zu machen, dass bei Leontius die menschliche Seele so sehr als selbständiges Wesen erscheint, daß es, auch wenn Leontius kein προϋπάρχειν derselben angenommen hat, dennoch sehr begreiflich wäre, daß Gegner diese Annahme ihm unterstellt hatten.'

⁵⁰ Christian authors tend to use the term usually only to express that the human being is an independent agent, endowed with free will. The most famous example of this use is found in the writings of Apollinaris of Laodicea who juxtaposed the changeable αὐτοκίνητον of human beings with the ταὐτοκίνητον of God. Apollinaris was certainly no Platonist: he insisted strongly that the life of the soul is entirely dependent on God's will, cf. [224], Ps 118, 50, ed. E. Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare aus der Kettenüberlieferung*, vol. 1-3 (Patristische Texte und Untersuchungen, 15, 16, 19, Berlin and New York, 1975-78), I, p. 88, ll. 1-14.

⁵¹ Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Iulianum*, I.2, ed. F. Diekamp, *Analecta patristica* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 117; Rome, 1938; repr. 1962), pp. 228-29, cf. D. Krausmüller, 'Faith and Reason in Late Antiquity: the Perishability Axiom and Its Impact on Christian Views about the

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was attacking pagan Platonists but a similar line seems to have been taken in anti-Origenist texts. In his *Ambigua* Maximus points out to the Origenists that the rational soul is not ‘self-movement’ (αὐτοκίνησις) because it ‘suffers being moved’ (πάσχει τὸ κινεῖσθαι) just like all other ‘generate beings’ (γενητά);⁵² and the anonymous Nestorian author whose work is preserved in Leontius’ of Jerusalem’s *Contra Nestorianos* states that self-movement should be attributed not to the soul but to the human compound in order to rule out the possibility that the soul might have existed before the body.⁵³

At this point one could object that were the proposed interpretation correct, Leontius would have made no distinction between human souls and God at all. Yet this was certainly not the case. Even pagan Platonic philosophers regarded the soul as an effect of a higher principle,⁵⁴ and the Christian Platonist John of Scythopolis, a contemporary of Leontius, states in his *scholia* to the Pseudo-Dionysian *De divinis nominibus* that the souls are brought forth by God and that they can be called ‘ingenerate’ (ἀγένητα) only in the sense that they have come into being before time.⁵⁵ However, there can be no doubt that in the sixth century even such a qualified ingeneracy was completely unacceptable for mainstream Christians. Moreover, nuances were regularly overlooked in polemical writings so that John could be attacked as a Manichean who believed that the souls were parts of God from whom they had broken away.⁵⁶ Thus one can argue that Leontius sought to avoid such attacks by formulating a statement that implied pre-existence but did not explicitly affirm it.

So far we have focused on the first part of Leontius’ response to the Nestorian objections. As we have seen this part seems at a first glance only to deal with the parallel theme of completeness and incompleteness. However, by deftly manipulating his arguments Leontius has managed to introduce the temporal aspect and thus to signal to his readers that he considers the soul to exist independently before its composition with the body. Now we need to turn to the second part of Leontius’ response in which he makes overt statements about the temporal aspect. The first argument reads as follows:

Origin and Nature of the Soul’, in J. Dillon & M. El-Kaisy (ed.), *The Afterlife of the Soul: Platonist Theories of the Soul in Christianity, Judaism and Islam* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 47-67, esp. p. 51.

⁵² Maximus, *Ambigua*, PG 91, 1073B14-C2.

⁵³ Leontius of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos*, I.51, PG 86, 1513B8-D1.

⁵⁴ Cf. e.g. Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, ed. Diehl, vol. 2, p. 117, ll. 11-14: ἔστι δὲ γένεσις ἐπὶ τῆς ψυχῆς οὐχ ἢ κατὰ χρόνον ..., ἀλλ’ ἢ κατ’ οὐσίαν πάροδος ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν αἰτίων.

⁵⁵ Cf. John of Scythopolis, *Scholia in Scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae librum de Divinis Nominibus*, PG 4, 373A6-C9. For a discussion cf. D. Krausmüller, ‘Faith and Reason in Late Antiquity’, pp. 64-65.

⁵⁶ Cf. Basil the Cilician, *Contra Johannem Scythopolitanum*, summarised in Photius’ *Bibliotheca*, codex 107, p. 87a34 - p. 88b14, ed. R. Henry, vol. 1-7 (Paris, 1959-1977), vol. II, pp. 74-78.

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Καὶ τοῦτο δὲ παρασημήνασθαι χρή, ὅτι τοῖς τῶν πραγμάτων ὅροις οἱ χρόνοι οὐ συμπαλαμβάνονται, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ οἱ τόποι. Τῶν γὰρ ὧν οὐκ ἄνευ καὶ μόνον λόγον ἐπέχουσιν.⁵⁷

This, too, must be remarked as an aside that the times are not included in the definitions of things, just as also the places. For they have merely the status of (sc. factors) without which (sc. things) do not (sc. exist).

This very technical statement must be understood against the backdrop of the Aristotelian *Categories* where specific differences, which constitute first substances or ‘things’, are juxtaposed with the other categories. In the sixth century this distinction had entered the theological discourse: Patriarch Anastasius of Antioch, for example, explains in his treatise against Philoponus’ *Arbiter* that ‘it is not possible to conceive of a body without also imagining together with it a suitable place and the other things without which it does not subsist, even if the body does not have its substantial constitution in the place itself’ (σῶμα μὴ ἐπινοῆσαι δυνατὸν ἄνευ τοῦ καὶ τόπον αὐτῷ συνεπινοῆσαι κατάλληλον καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὧν ἐκτὸς οὐχ ὑφέστηκε καίτοιγε οὐκ ἐν αὐτῷ ἔχει τῷ τόπῳ τὴν οὐσιώδη σύστασιν τὸ σῶμα).⁵⁸ Leontius appeals to this conceptual framework in order to justify his decision not to consider the temporal aspect. However, the list of categories that are non-substantial but are nevertheless indispensable for concrete existence includes not only ‘time’ (χρόνος) and ‘place’ (τόπος) but also ‘relation’ (πρὸς τι). As we have seen this last category was the focus of the immediately preceding passage. There Leontius distinguishes between two types of completeness, ‘one that is spoken about in isolation and one that is seen in relation’ (τὸν μὲν ἀπλῶς λέγεσθαι, τὸν δὲ ἐν σχέσει θεωρεῖσθαι), and then states that the divine Word and the human soul need to be considered both on their own and in relation to the flesh and to the human body.⁵⁹ In the case of relation, then, the lower ontological status was no obstacle to a consideration within the framework of the anthropological paradigm. This suggests that the different treatment of time and place is an arbitrary decision in order to conceal the author’s true beliefs about the coming-to-be of the soul.

This interpretation can be confirmed through analysis of a passage in Leontius’ later treatise *Solutiones*, which addresses the Monophysite claim that acceptance of two natures in Christ leads necessarily to acceptance of two separate hypostases. There Leontius restates his earlier position that ‘all things, which while being complete are assumed in the constitution of a thing, become parts of the whole that is constituted from such parts while remaining complete’ (ὅσα τέλεια ὄντα εἰς τινος σύστασιν παρείληπται ταῦτα τέλεια μένοντα μέρη γίνεται τοῦ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων

⁵⁷ CNE, PG 86, 1281D4-8, ed. Daley, p. 11, ll. 17-19.

⁵⁸ Anastasius of Antioch, *Contra Arbitrum* ed. S. N. Sakkos, *Anastasii I Antiocheni opera omnia genuina quae supersunt* (Salonica, 1976), p. 128, ll. 10-12.

⁵⁹ CNE, PG 86, 1281C10-12, ed. Daley, p. 11, ll. 10-12.

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μερῶν ὅλου).⁶⁰ However, the context is radically different. Leontius avers that it makes no sense to speak of two entities as divided if they have not yet been united. Instead one must distinguish between three stages, firstly things on their own, then their union, and finally their division.⁶¹ In this context he declares that ‘such (sc. things) are not spoken of in isolation but also in relation to something and when and where’ (οὐ γὰρ ἀπλῶς τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τι, καὶ ποτε, καὶ ποῦ) and then adds the explanation that this is so ‘because (sc. the things are) not without which (sc. they are not)’ (οὐ γὰρ χωρὶς ὧν οὐκ ἄνευ).⁶² It is evident that here Leontius appeals to the same philosophical concept as in his earlier treatise but that he does so in order to support his claim that one must consider the temporal aspect, which is now treated in exactly the same fashion as the category of relation. This shows clearly the arbitrariness of the decision to exclude the temporal aspect in *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that in *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* Leontius simply dismisses the temporal aspect because he adds one further argument, which reads as follows:

Ἔτι πᾶς ὄρος τοῦ νῦν πράγματός ἐστιν ὄρος, οὐ τοῦ ὕστερον ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀποβησομένου· ἢ οὕτω γ’ ἂν οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν γενέσει δέξοιτ’ ἂν ὄρον τοῦ εἶναι ὅπερ ἐστίν, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ μένει, ἀλλὰ μεταβάλλει πάντα εἰς πάντα τὰ ἐν γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ· ἀλλὰ καὶ αἱ λογικαὶ πᾶσαι οὐσίαι, τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον κατ’ ἀρετὴν ἐπιδεχόμεναι καὶ τὸ (ἀν τῷ?) νῦν μὲν οὕτως, νῦν δὲ ἐκείνως, ἔχειν, ἐν κινήσει θεωροῦνται· τὸ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἴστασθαι, οὐ τῆς κτιστῆς φύσεως ἴδιον, εἶπερ ἐπὶ θεοῦ καὶ μόνον τὸ <Σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ> κυριολεκτεῖται.⁶³

Furthermore, each definition is a definition of the present thing and not of the one that will later result from it for otherwise none of the things that come to be would admit a definition of being what it is, since the things that come to be and pass away do not remain but all things change into all things else. And all rational substances, too, which admit the more and less as regards virtue, are seen in motion insofar as they are at one time this way and at another time another way, for to remain static is not a property of created nature, since the verse ‘You are the same’ is properly said of God alone.

In this paragraph Leontius gives another reason for his decision not to consider time and instead to limit the discussion to the definition of being. However, the argument he presents seems flatly to contradict his previous statement. Whereas before he had affirmed that time is merely a necessary corollary of the existence of creatures and does not affect their definitions of being he now seems to admit that these definitions are themselves subject to time and change. He argues that there

⁶⁰ *Solutiones*, PG 86, 1937D2-4, ed. Daley, p. 91, ll. 26-28.

⁶¹ *Solutiones*, PG 86, 1937B1-C1, ed. Daley, p. 91, ll. 16-26.

⁶² *Solutiones*, PG 86, 1937B5-6, 14, ed. Daley, p. 91, ll. 8-9, l. 15.

⁶³ *CNE*, PG 86, 1281D8–1284A10, ed. Daley, p. 11, l. 19–p. 12, l. 6.

can be a change from one definition of being to another and then gives two examples to illustrate his point: firstly material beings, and secondly immaterial beings. In the former case one might first think that Leontius is referring to the fact that the matter of material beings changes continuously through ingestion of food and excretion of waste products. However, such a reading must be ruled out because a definition of being remains the same as long as a creature exists regardless of changes in the material substrate, in other words: a horse is always a horse and does not turn into a another species, not even in old age when its organs and faculties may no longer be complete. Indeed the statement ‘all into all else’ suggests that Leontius is rather considering matter as a constant, which can become the substrate for any number of different forms. Such an interpretation is confirmed through comparison with a treatise by the eleventh-century philosopher John Italos. Having stated that ageing is a change in matter because form is ‘unchangeable’ (ἀμετάβλητον) Italos concedes that in a certain sense one can also speak of ‘changes of form’ (εἶδους μεταβολαί) and then adds the clarification that such changes happen ‘not because we do not remain ourselves, since we are the form, but because everything changes and is submerged again in the limitless and indeterminate nature’ (οὐχ ἡμῶν μενόντων αὐτῶν, ἐπειδὴ τὸ εἶδος ἐσμεν, ἀλλὰ πάντα μεταβεβηκότων καὶ εἰς τὴν ἄπειρον καὶ ἀόριστον πάλιν βεβαπτισμένων φύσιν) from where then new forms arise.⁶⁴ It is evident that this concept lends no support to Leontius’ contention that forms change because as Italos points out the definitions of being themselves remain constant.

When we turn to the subsequent example of immaterial beings the argument becomes even more contrived. Here Leontius claims that immaterial beings are also subjected to change because they can become more or less virtuous. However, it was commonly accepted that such a change is merely accidental and does not affect the substances whose definitions of being remains stable and do in any case not admit of more or less.⁶⁵ Indeed, Leontius himself makes this point in his *Solutiones* where he declares that in members of the same species a specific difference such as sensible or intelligible ‘is not more or less but alike and common and in general of a kind that amounts to a definition’ (οὐχ τοῦ μὲν μᾶλλον, τοῦ δὲ ἥττον, ἀλλ’ ὁμοίως καὶ κοινῶς καὶ τὸ ὅλον ὀριστικῶς).⁶⁶

There can be little doubt that contemporary readers would have been thoroughly bemused by this strangely incoherent argument. This raises the question: why would Leontius have struggled to force together such disparate concepts and treat them as if they were all examples of the same general rule? At this point we need

⁶⁴ John Italos, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, ed. P. Joannou (Studia Patristica et Byzantine, 4, Ettal, 1956), p. 26, ll. 11-14.

⁶⁵ Cf. John of Damascus, *Dialectica*, 27, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 1-4 (Patristische Texte und Studien, 7, 12, 17, 22; Berlin, 1969-1981), vol. I, p. 92, ll. 12-14: ἡ μὲν διαφορά τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ τὸ ἥττον οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται, ἀλλὰ τὰ συμβεβηκότα.

⁶⁶ *Solutiones*, PG 86, 1921D4-5, ed. Daley, p. 81, ll. 10-12.

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to remember that according to the Origenist myth rational creatures did indeed change as a consequence of their fall when they became subject to movement and received a body. Thus one could argue that Leontius attempted to indicate that the diminution of virtue in incorporeal beings should be understood not merely as an accidental change but as a change of substance, which took place when the minds became souls and entered the realm of time and space. In this case there would be two paradigms for the incarnation: the minds would constitute a strict parallel for the divine Word, whereas the fallen souls would differ in certain respects. Such an interpretation could be reconciled with Leontius argument in the next section because the statement that the soul has ‘received passible faculties that are combined with it for its benefit’ (παθητικὰς πρὸς τὸ αὐτῆ συμφέρον συναρμοσθείσας λαβοῦσα) leaves it open when this divine act took place.⁶⁷

In order to understand why Leontius made his case in such a roundabout way we need to consider that in the sixth century the Origenist myth had come under attack by mainstream Christians who regarded it as irreconcilable with the notion of a changeless creation of perfect substances. John Philoponus, for example, objected that ‘there ... was no pre-existing soul, which then became something else at some other time and that no new species was therefore added to the universe’ (μηδεμιᾶς ... προὑπαρχούσης ψυχῆς λογικῆς, ἄλλης δὲ ἐν ἄλλῳ γιγνομένης χρόνῳ, οὐδὲν τῷ παντὶ πρόσφατον εἶδος πεισῆλθεν) after God’s initial creative act.⁶⁸ In support of their arguments anti-Origenists appealed to Aristotle because within Aristotelian philosophy the definitions of beings are indeed immutable. The authority of Aristotle was evidently so great that Leontius could not directly question it but had to content himself with combining various Aristotelian concepts in an attempt to subvert their traditional meanings. Significantly, the topic of change also surfaces in Leontius’ later treatise *Solutiones*. There he claims that the composition of the soul with the body is not a natural process but rather the result of a divine intervention.⁶⁹ Although the temporal aspect is not considered there can be little doubt that here, too, Origenism is in the background. In his *Ambigua* Maximus declares against the Origenists that the soul cannot pre-exist the body because ‘it is not possible for any species to change from species to species without corruption’ (οὐκ ἔστιν οὖν δυνατόν ἄνευ φθορᾶς ἐξ εἶδους εἰς εἶδος μεταβάλλειν τὸ οἰονοῦν εἶδος).⁷⁰ By introducing change ‘above nature’ (ὑπὲρ φύσιν) as an alternative to change ‘against nature’ (παρὰ φύσιν) Leontius can rebut this argument effectively because God’s acts could not have resulted in corruption.⁷¹ This suggests that by the time he wrote the *Solutiones* Leontius had given up as fruitless his earlier

⁶⁷ *CNE*, PG 86, 1284D11-13, ed. Daley, p. 13, l. 11-12.

⁶⁸ John Philoponus, *De opificio mundi*, VII.3, ed. G. Reischardt (Leipzig, 1897), p. 287, ll. 27-30.

⁶⁹ *Solutiones*, PG 86, 1940B3-12, ed. Daley, p. 92, ll. 8-20.

⁷⁰ Maximus, *Ambigua*, PG 91, 1101A4-6.

⁷¹ For this juxtaposition, cf. Leontius of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos*, I.23, PG 86, 1489B7-C9, and discussion in Krausmüller, ‘Origenism’.

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attempts at reconstructing Aristotle and had decided to rely on traditional Christian notions of divine omnipotence instead.

From the discussion so far it appears that Leontius was defending the notion of pre-existence in a milieu where such a position was regarded not only as heretical but also as absurd.⁷² However, it would be wrong merely to consider him as a champion of Origenism in a narrow sense. Here we need to remember that his Nestorian adversaries not only rejected pre-existence but also an active afterlife and in fact the very notion of a self-sufficient soul. Eutherius, for example, insists in his *Confutationes* that the soul is not complete ‘as regards operation’ (εἰς ἐνέργειαν).⁷³ At first one might think that he is only referring to activities such as speaking or walking for which the soul ostensibly needs the body. However, when he claims that both body and soul are incomplete parts ‘for if one of them were a complete nature as regards operation, it would do something even without the other’ (εἰ ... τι τούτων τελεία φύσις εἰς ἐνέργειαν, ἔπραξεν ἂν τι καὶ δίχα τοῦ ἄλλου) he seems to deny the soul any independent activity.⁷⁴ Even more explicit is the author of the Nestorian treatise preserved in Leontius of Jerusalem’s *Contra Nestorianos*. He claims that after death ‘the rational (sc. faculty) is completely inactive’ (πάντη ἡσυχάζειν τὸ λογικόν) and then explains that this is so ‘because there exists nothing that is moved through self-willed counsel, which has no sensation of anything at all’ (ἐπεὶ μηδὲν αὐτοπροαιρέτῳ βουλῇ κινούμενον μηδενὸς ἔχον ὄλως αἴσθησιν ἔστιν).⁷⁵ Here even the exercise of the properly mental functions is made dependent on the access of the soul to the organs of sense perception, and the subject of all activity is no longer the soul but rather the human compound as ‘one living being’ (ἐν ζῳον).⁷⁶ It is evident that here we are in the presence of a model, which is diametrically opposite to that set out by Leontius. Whereas Leontius claims that the soul is autonomous within the body and therefore also self-sufficient outside it the Nestorians aver that it is entirely dependent on the body and therefore comatose after death.

From the discussion so far it seems that Leontius does not engage with the conceptual framework of his adversaries. However, one last passage in *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* that has not yet been analysed may help us to correct this picture. As we have seen before Leontius defines the soul as a self-moved incorporeal substance, which has ‘a life that is separable ... and intrinsic’ (χωριστήν ... καὶ ἰδίαν ζωήν). However, this definition does not stand on its own but is complemented with two definitions of the body:

⁷² Cf. Krausmüller, ‘Conflicting Anthropologies’, pp. 413-447.

⁷³ Eutherius, *Confutationes*, ed. Treu, p. 44, l. 17.

⁷⁴ Eutherius, *Confutationes*, ed. Treu, p. 44, ll. 15-16.

⁷⁵ Leontius of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos*, I.51, PG 86, 1513D1-12.

⁷⁶ Leontius of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos*, I.51, PG 86, 1513C8-9; cf. Eutherius, *Confutationes*, ed. Treu, p. 44, l. 6.

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Τί δὲ (sc. λείποι) τῷ σώματι πρὸς τὸ εἶναι σῶμα; οὗ δὴ καὶ ἀποδιδόντες τὸν ὄρον φασί, σῶμα εἶναι τὸ τριχῆ διαστατόν, ἢ σῶμα φυσικὸν ὀργανικὸν δυνάμει ζωῆν ἔχον.⁷⁷

And what (sc. would be lacking) in the body for it to be a body? For those who provide its definition say that a body is that which is three-dimensional, or that it is a natural instrumental body, which potentially has life.

The first definition, evidently intended as a counterpart to ‘incorporeal substance’ (οὐσία ἀσώματος), applies to all bodies, whether animate or inanimate. By contrast, the second definition focuses more specifically on living beings. At first sight Leontius’ argument appears to be entirely straightforward: the soul is not only itself alive but also confers life on the body. However, a hidden dimension is revealed when we realise that what Leontius offers us is not a definition of the body at all but rather part of an alternative definition of the soul as ‘first entelechy of a natural organic body that has life in potentiality’ (ἐντελέχεια πρώτη σώματος φυσικοῦ, ὀργανικοῦ, δυνάμει ζωῆν ἔχοντος).⁷⁸ This definition is found in Aristotle’s treatise *De anima* where the relationship between body and soul is conceptualised as a special case of the general conceptual framework of form and matter. A body has the ‘potential’ (δύναμις) to come alive when it is organised in such a way that the soul can act through it. However, this does not mean that the soul is always active. While form implies ‘actuality’ (ἐνέργεια) it does so only in the sense of a ‘disposition’ (ἔξις): a human being has the ability to see things, to make things, and to think about things but it realises these abilities only when it is awake and not when it is asleep.⁷⁹ Moreover, according to Aristotle the soul as ‘entelechy’ is inseparable from the body and thus perishes with it.⁸⁰ This interpretation, which became a cornerstone of Peripatetic philosophy, met with strong reactions from the Platonists who insisted on the self-movement and immortality of the soul. Some of them rejected Aristotle out of hand whereas others attempted to re-interpret the term ‘entelechy’ in such a fashion that it could be identified with the Platonic soul.⁸¹ It is evident that Leontius follows the lead of this second group when he elides the term ‘entelechy’ because by doing so he gives the impression that the self-moved soul brings the body to life. However, this does not yet explain why he felt the need to introduce the Aristotelian concept at all.

In the following I will make the case that Leontius was doing so because his Nestorian adversaries built their arguments on Aristotelian notions, just as he

⁷⁷ CNE, PG 86, 1281B14-C3, ed. Daley, p. 10, l. 3 –p. 12, l. 2.

⁷⁸ Aristotle, *De Anima* II.1, 412a27–8

⁷⁹ Aristotle, *De Anima* II.1, 412a26.

⁸⁰ Aristotle, *De Anima* II.1, 413a4–6.

⁸¹ A typical representative of the latter approach is John Philoponus, cf. W. Charlton, *John Philoponus: On Aristotle On the Soul 2.1-6* (London and Ithaca, 2005)

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himself had recourse to Plato. Traditionally, Antiochene authors had shown little interest in Greek philosophy. Accordingly, philosophical arguments are almost entirely absent from Eutherius of Tyana's *Confutationes*. However, this situation changed radically in the sixth and seventh centuries. The Nestorian author whose treatise is preserved in Leontius of Jerusalem's *Contra Nestorianos*, for example, is well versed in philosophy. This knowledge permits him to subvert the Platonic notion of a self-moved soul by distinguishing between potential and actual self-movement and attributing the latter to the human compound.⁸² Significantly, this is an argumentative strategy that had already been used by Peripatetic philosophers several centuries earlier.⁸³ Aristotelian influence is also evident in another passage in Leontius of Jerusalem's *Contra Nestorianos*. There the Nestorian author claims that 'the soul stops functioning by necessity when the body turns to sleep' (ἡ ψυχὴ παύεται τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τοῦ σώματος εἰς ὕπνον τρεπομένου) and thus reverts to a state where it has its operations only 'in potentiality' (δυνάμει), whereas Leontius insists that 'great activity of the intellectual potential of the soul is produced during sleep' (τῆς νοεῖας τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεως πολλὴ ἐνέργεια κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους προάγεται) and mentions as examples dreams, theophanies and revelations of future events.⁸⁴ This exchange, too, has a counterpart in earlier controversies between representatives of different philosophical schools. The Peripatetics followed Aristotle's view that during sleep the soul is inactive. By contrast, Platonists such as Jamblichus turned Aristotle's argument on its head, claiming that the soul may mostly act through the body while we are awake 'but during sleep we are completely released as if from some fetters that shackle us, and experience the separated life of knowledge' (ἐν δὲ δὴ τῷ καθεῦδειν ἀπολυόμεθα παντελῶς ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τινῶν παρακειμένων ἡμῖν δεσμῶν, καὶ τῇ κεχωρισμένη τῆς γνώσεως ζωῇ χρώμεθα).⁸⁵

Of course, this does not mean that sixth- and seventh-century Nestorians were slavishly dependent on Aristotle. As we have seen they rejected Aristotle's view that the soul perishes with the body and insisted on its immortality.⁸⁶ However, even here their concept of a sleep of the soul could well have been influenced by Aristotle's understanding of sleep as a state of potentiality. If this interpretation is correct Leontius would have reacted against Nestorian adversaries who based their arguments on Aristotle's *De anima*. By leaving out the crucial term 'entelechy' he gave the impression that he was merely offering a definition of the body. As a

⁸² Leontius of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos*, I.51, PG 89, 1513C10-12.

⁸³ Pseudo-Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Dubitationes et Solutiones*, 55, ed. I. Bruns, *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora* (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca Suppl. 2.1; Berlin, 1887), pp. 101-86: Ὅτι μὴ αὐτοκίνητος ἡ ψυχὴ.

⁸⁴ Leontius of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos* I.14, PG 86, 1453A2-3.

⁸⁵ Jamblichus, *De mysteriis*, III.3, ed. É. des Places, *Jamblique. Les Mystères d'Égypte* (Paris, 1966), pp. 38-215.

⁸⁶ Leontius of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos*, I.51, PG 86, 1513C13-14.

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consequence the entity, which confers actual life on the body, is not the dependent form but rather self-sufficient Platonic soul, which is mentioned immediately before. By ‘Platonising’ Aristotle in this manner Leontius would have subverted the philosophical basis of his adversaries’ argument.

This article has focused on one passage in Leontius of Byzantium’s treatise *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* in which the author defends his use of the anthropological paradigm against Nestorian criticism. Besides offering an analysis of Leontius’ arguments it has sought to reconstruct the position of his adversaries and to identify the philosophical concepts on which he relied. Such in-depth study of the text has permitted the conclusion that while Leontius never explicitly states his belief in the pre-existence of the soul he has constructed an argument in which such a belief is implied. The clues that he gives can easily escape the attention of modern scholars but it is likely that they were picked up by contemporary readers, not only those who shared his views but also anti-Origenists. Cyril of Scythopolis’ comment that Leontius ‘while pretending to defend the synod of Chalcedon was recognised an Origenist’ (τῆς γὰρ ἐν Χαλκηδόνι συνόδου προίστασθαι προσποιούμενος ἐγνώσθη τὰ Ὀριγένους φρονῶν) may refer to such unsympathetic readers of *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*.⁸⁷

As we have seen, Leontius was confronted with a twofold argument against the anthropological paradigm. His Nestorian adversary claimed that the Word cannot be compared with the soul because it pre-exists the human nature and is a complete and self-sufficient being whereas the soul comes into existence at the same time as the body and is an incomplete part of the whole human being. At first sight Leontius seems to accept his adversaries’ point that in these respects the Word and the soul do indeed differ from one another. However, a closer look reveals that this is not his last word on the matter. In his response Leontius mentions the pre-existence of the soul despite the fact that it does not constitute a divergent feature, and he demonstrates that both Word and soul are both complete beings and incomplete parts, thus creating a strict parallel between the incarnation and the coming-to-be of human beings. When setting out his own approach Leontius then only speaks about the composition of the Word with a body and not as one would expect about the composition of the Word with a human being. Such a statement is possible because Leontius focuses exclusively on qualities that the Word shares with the soul and makes no mention of the fact that for mainstream Christians the Word and the soul differ insofar as the former is ingenerate and the latter has been created by God. The impression that Leontius considers the soul as an ingenerate being is further strengthened by analysis of the following passage. This passage ostensibly deals with the parallel theme of completeness. However, when Leontius’ defines the soul as a complete being he does not follow the lead of his Nestorian adversary

⁸⁷ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas*, 72, ed. Schwartz, p. 176, ll. 10-16; cf. also *Life of Sabas*, 83, p. 188, l. 28 - p. 189, l. 1.

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who had based his arguments on Aristotelian concepts. Instead, he switches to a Platonic framework, which permits him to present the soul as a self-moved being that continues to exist after the dissolution of the compound. Thus Leontius introduces the temporal aspect into a context where at first glance it seems to be absent. Moreover, the manner in which he speaks about the soul implies that it existed not only after but also before the body. By comparison, Leontius is more circumspect in the second part of the section, which deals directly with the temporal aspect. Here he supports his refusal to consider this aspect through recourse to philosophical concepts. At first his argument seems persuasive but comparison with the *Solutiones* shows that Leontius has made an arbitrary distinction, excluding the non-substantial qualities of time and place but including the equally non-substantial quality of relation. The last part of the section is taken up by a curiously convoluted argument about the changeability of material and immaterial beings. Close analysis suggests that Leontius was obliquely alluding to the Origenist notion of a substantial change that turned pre-existing minds into embodied souls. Taken together, these observations leave little doubt that was indeed an Origenist. However, his quotation and subsequent manipulation of the Aristotelian definition of the soul raises the possibility that Leontius was engaging in a wider debate about the nature of the soul and its relation to the body. The fact that at his time the self-sufficiency of the soul was no longer universally accepted reminds us that the terms of the debate had changed radically since the first Origenist controversy in the early fifth century when only the specific notion of pre-existence had been an issue.