

## IAMBlichus, DE ANIMA 38 (66,12–15 FINAMORE / DILLON): A RESOLVING CONJECTURE?\*

The treatise *Περὶ ψυχῆς* (*De anima*) by the third-century-CE Neoplatonist Iamblichus, Porphyry's dissident disciple, can be reconstructed, at least in part, from Stobaeus's excerpts, which the latter has preserved in his *Anthologium*.<sup>1</sup> Such a reconstruction is of remarkable value not only per se, but also in the light of the heavy influence that Iamblichus's psychology and anthropology exerted over the later Neoplatonist Proclus – not to mention the extremely interesting comparisons that one can draw with the Christian Middle / Neoplatonist Origen of Alexandria († 255 ca. CE), who had been Plotinus's fellow disciple at Ammonius Saccas' school in Alexandria.<sup>2</sup>

Now, an excellent reconstruction of Iamblichus's *De anima*, equipped with a valuable commentary, has been offered by John Finamore and John Dillon.<sup>3</sup> Given, however, the textual difficulty of a few crucial points, there is still some room, hopefully, for improvement.

In Chapter 38 of this treatise on the soul Iamblichus is offering a short philosophical doxography concerning the problem of the soul-body relation. First he reports the opinion of “most Platonists”, i. e. that the soul relates to the body (its instrument: *σῶμα ὀργανικόν*) directly (*εὐθύς*), that is, without any intermediary. Then he opposes to this view the opinion of “others”, presumably other Platonists, who posit some “wrappings” between soul and body; these serve as “vehicles” of the soul. Here is the relevant passage in Iamblichus's text as reported by Stobaeus, where a crux is nestled in the manuscript tradition of the *Anthologium*:

Οἱ δὲ μεταξὺ τῆς τε ἀσωμάτου ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ ἀγγειώδους αἰθέρια καὶ οὐράνια καὶ πνευματικὰ περιβλήματα περιαμπέχοντα τὴν νοερὰν ζῶην (τίθενται) προβεβλήσθαι μὲν αὐτῆς φρουρᾶς ἕνεκεν, ὑπηρετεῖν δὲ αὐτῇ καθάπερ ὀχήματα.

(De an. 38, p. 66, ll. 12–15 Finamore / Dillon)

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1) On the relevance of Stobaeus's *Anthology* to the reconstruction of ancient philosophy see at least G. Reydams-Schils (ed.), *Thinking Through Excerpts: Studies on Stobaeus*, Turnhout 2011 (*Monothéismes et philosophie*).

2) These will make the subject of a separate study and, however significant, need not detain us here.

3) J. Finamore / J. Dillon, *Iamblichus, De anima: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Leiden 2002 (*Philosophia Antiqua* 192).

Others (say) that between the incorporeal soul and the earthly (body) ethereal, heavenly, and pneumatic wrappings surrounding the intellectual life-principle are brought forth for its protection serve it as vehicles.

(transl. Finamore / Dillon, p.67)

Here the adjective ἀγγειώδους, meaning “vessel-like”, and therefore “earthly”, is a conjecture by Ferguson, received by Finamore and Dillon in their edition. But the two manuscripts both read ἀγγελιώδους, albeit with different articles: ms. F, followed by Wachsmuth in his edition of Stobaeus (Anth. 1,49,43, l. 48), has τῆς ἀγγελιώδους, certainly in reference to ψυχῆς. The other manuscript, P, retains what I believe to be the right (albeit incomplete) reading: τοῦ ἀγγελιώδους. It is worth remarking that ἀγγελιώδης, “angelic” or “angel-like”, is not attested in the LSJ, as correctly noted by Finamore and Dillon.<sup>4</sup>

The reading of ms. F, albeit accepted by Wachsmuth, is certainly incorrect because of the irremediably unsatisfactory meaning it gives rise to: the vehicles would be located “between the incorporeal soul and the angelic soul”. However, all those who speak of intermediate vehicles in ancient philosophy,<sup>5</sup> from the Platonists to the *Corpus Hermeticum*,<sup>6</sup> postulate it as intermediary between soul and body, and never between soul and soul. Moreover, no philosopher speaks of an angelic soul and opposes it to an incorporeal soul, as though the angelic soul were corporeal, but there are several and certain attestations of philosophers speaking of an angelic body, as opposed to the mortal, heavy, and gendered body of human beings.

Most notably, Origen spoke of this angelic body at length,<sup>7</sup> and Origen was probably well known to Iamblichus.<sup>8</sup> Origen deemed angels not bodiless tout court – since only God the Trinity is entirely incorporeal in his view –, but rather endowed with spiritual, light, and immortal bodies, not subject to passions or corruption.<sup>9</sup> Such are angelic bodies, and such were the bodies of all rational creatures or λογικά before some of them, as a result of their fall from the Good, had their

4) Finamore / Dillon (n.3 above) 184.

5) On the issue of the soul-body relation in Iamblichus see J. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Chico / CA 1985.

6) CH 10,17 (121,12–19 Nock / Festugière), where the intellect is said to have the soul as a wrapping when it must relate to a body, and the soul in turn is said to have a pneumatic vehicle as a servant for the sake of relating to the body.

7) See I. Ramelli, *The ἀρχή and τέλος of Rational Creatures in Some Origenian Authors: Preexistence of Souls?*, in: *Studia Patristica LVI*, vol. 4, Leuven 2013, 167–226.

8) See I. Ramelli, *Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism*, *VChr* 63 (2009) 217–63; eadem, *Origen the Christian Middle / Neoplatonist*, *Journal of Early Christian History* [formerly *APB*] 1 (2011) 98–130; E. DePalma Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution*, Ithaca / London 2012, devotes a special section to Iamblichus and reads his polemic against Porphyry in the light of a larger polemic on soteriology involving Origen as well. My review is forthcoming in *Adamantius* 20 (2014).

9) Their very food is spiritual: *De or.* 7,23,4 and 27,9–10.

angelic bodies changed into mortal, heavy, earthly, and corruptible bodies (in the case of human beings) or into immortal but dark and “ludicrous” bodies (in the case of demons).<sup>10</sup> At the resurrection, human mortal bodies will return to their angelic state. Ps. Caesarius in a text that comes very close to Origen claims that “angels are incorporeal in respect to us humans, but in themselves they do have bodies, like wind, fire, or air. Indeed, these are fine and immaterial bodies (λεπτὰ καὶ ἄϋλα), free from the density (παχύτης) of our own bodies”.<sup>11</sup> Likewise Cassian – probably the Sabaite, who was familiar with Origen’s writings – observes that angels “too have bodies, albeit much finer than ours (πολλῶ λεπτότερα τοῦ ἡμετέρου)”.<sup>12</sup> The terminology of fine angelic bodies is the same as Origen’s in reference to prelapsarian human bodies as reported by Procopius:<sup>13</sup> the human being in paradise already had a body, “fine (λεπτομερές) and suitable for life in Paradise”. Some of the allegorisers – including Origen in all probability – called this initial body “luminous” (ἀγγοειδές) and immortal. Mortal, heavy bodies were given to humans only after their sin: “Initially the soul used the luminous (ἀγγοειδεῖ) body as a vehicle (ἐπιφορεῖσθαι), and this body was later clothed in the skin tunics”.<sup>14</sup> Origen’s depiction of the spiritual body-vehicle as ἀγγοειδές is further confirmed by Gobar, the sixth-century theologian who reports this same adjective in this connection.<sup>15</sup> His use of the key-term ἀγγοειδές in his paraphrase of Origen reveals that Procopius, too, was referring to Origen when using it. The most important confirmation, though, comes from Origen himself, in two passages. One is of undisputed authenticity and preserved in Greek, where the bodies of angels are described as “ethereal” (αἰθήρια) and “luminous light” (ἀγγοειδές φῶς).<sup>16</sup> The other is preserved in Latin, but is of undisputed paternity too: “How great will be the beauty, brightness, and splendour of the spiritual body! . . . The nature of this body of ours . . . can be brought by the Creator to the condition of a finest, purest, and brightest body, as the condition and deserts of the rational nature will require”.<sup>17</sup> Here the risen body in the τέλος is described as “finest” (corresponding to λεπτομερές) and “brightest” (corresponding to ἀγγοειδές). In addition, the description of such a body as a suitable dwelling place for life in Paradise corresponds perfectly to Procopius’s passage.

Notably, Iamblichus himself reports that “the school of Eratosthenes, the Platonist Ptolemy, and others”<sup>18</sup> (who may include Origen) thought that souls do not receive a body for the first time only when they begin to ensoul the earthly, mortal body, but from the beginning had “finer” bodies (λεπτότερα). This is Ori-

10) Comm. Io. 1,17,97–98; 20,22,182.

11) Quaest. et resp. 47.

12) Seren. Prim. 86v. On Cassian the Sabaite see P. Tzamalikos, *A Newly Discovered Greek Father: Cassian the Sabaite eclipsed by John Cassian of Marseilles*, Leiden 2012, and id., *The Real Cassian Revisited: Monastic Life, Greek Paideia, and Origenism in the Sixth Century*, Leiden 2012.

13) Comm. Gen. 3:21 (PG 87/1,221A).

14) Τῷ δὲ ἀγγοειδεῖ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐποχεῖσθαι πρώτῳ λέγουσιν, ὅπερ ὕστερον ἐνεδύσατο τοὺς δερματίνους χιτῶνας.

15) Ap. Phot. Bibl. cod. 232,288a; see the whole passage at 232,287b–291b.

16) Comm. Matth. 17,30.

17) Princ. 3,6,4.

18) De an. 26 (p. 54, ll. 5–6 Finamore / Dillon)

gen's position and terminology. Plotinus, too, Origen's fellow disciple, admitted of a "finer" (λεπτότερον) body as a vehicle for the soul;<sup>19</sup> however, unlike Origen, he did not think that the soul is joined to it from the beginning. According to Plotinus, souls in their descent assume a "luminous vehicle" (αὐγοειδὲς ὄχημα).<sup>20</sup> There is a clear textual correspondence with Origen, who also designated the subtle, spiritual body of rational creatures as λεπτομερές and αὐγοειδές and an ὄχημα (as revealed by ἐποχεῖσθαι in the passage quoted above from Procopius).

The attestation of angelic bodies, but not angelic souls opposed to incorporeal souls, in ancient philosophy and particularly in imperial Platonism is also the main obstacle against the emendation proposed by Finamore and Dillon in their commentary<sup>21</sup> as an alternative to the text that they have printed and that is reproduced above. This is the emendation: μεταξὺ τῆς τε ἀσωμάτου ψυχῆς καὶ τῆς ἀγγελιώδους (καὶ σώματος), which means: "between the incorporeal soul and the angelic soul (and the body)". The vehicle of the soul must certainly be intermediate between the soul and the body, but in all of ancient philosophy there is no trace of an angelic soul as opposed to an incorporeal soul. In order to translate "between the incorporeal, angelic soul, and the body" (without a distinction between the incorporeal soul and the angelic soul) one should postulate a Greek μεταξὺ τῆς τε ἀσωμάτου ψυχῆς καὶ [τῆς] ἀγγελιώδους (καὶ σώματος). This, however, would imply not only the integration of καὶ σώματος, but also the expunction of τῆς before ἀγγελιώδους. The article, though, whether feminine (τῆς) or masculine / neuter (τοῦ), is attested with certainty by both manuscripts, as I have already pointed out.

What I rather suspect is that what dropped at a certain point in the manuscript tradition is not καὶ σώματος, but rather simply σώματος. This is indeed very likely to have occurred, due to a kind of saut du même au même with the preceding ἀσωμάτου. Therefore, the emendation I propose as possible is the following: μεταξὺ τῆς τε ἀσωμάτου ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ ἀγγελιώδους (σώματος), "between the incorporeal soul and the angelic (body)", the angelic body being the immortal, incorruptible and non-gendered body of which Origen, as I have mentioned, and other Platonists abundantly spoke. This is the body with which the rational soul is initially equipped, before acquiring a heavy and perishable body as a result of its wrong moral choices. This doctrine, as I am going to show in the next paragraph, is also clear in Proclus, who was very well acquainted with both Iamblichus's and Origen's ideas.<sup>22</sup>

Iamblichus indeed described the light and immortal body as an "ethereal, luminous vehicle", αἰθερώδες καὶ αὐγοειδὲς ὄχημα,<sup>23</sup> and contrasted the "finer bodies" (λεπτότερα σώματα) with the earthly "solid or hard-shelled bodies", στερεά or ὀστρεώδη σώματα. Note the lexical affinities with Origen's description of the light, luminous, and immortal body, and note also Iamblichus's use of two adjectives with an -ώδες neutral ending in reference to vehicles and bodies of different kinds: αἰθερώδες (ὄχημα) and ὀστρεώδη (σώματα). This makes it far more likely, I think, that in the passage at stake he used, or even coined, the analogous adjective

19) Enn. 3,6,5.

20) Enn. Treatises 14, 26 and 27.

21) Finamore / Dillon (n. 3 above) 185.

22) Ramelli 2011 (n. 8 above).

23) De myst. 3,14. See Finamore (n. 5 above).

ἀγγελιωδες (σῶμα). Hierocles, who – unlike Origen – upheld the preexistence of souls and metempsychosis, but only of human souls into other human bodies,<sup>24</sup> depicted the light body as a “luminous body” (ἀγγοειδὲς σῶμα) that is the “fine vehicle of the soul”, ψυχῆς λεπτὸν ὄχημα.<sup>25</sup> Proclus in turn spoke of the “first body” (comparable to the angelic body in Iamblichus’s passage under examination) as attached to the rational soul permanently, and described it, once again, as an ἀγγοειδὲς ὄχημα that is immaterial, impassible, immortal, and deprived of temporal origin.<sup>26</sup> This body is “perpetually and congenitally attached to the soul that makes use of it”, and is “immutable in its essence”, a “perpetual” (αἰδίων) body that “each soul” possesses and that “participates in that soul primarily and from its first existence”.<sup>27</sup> While the lower vehicle of the irrational soul is acquired only at a certain point and is to be discarded,<sup>28</sup> the luminous and immortal vehicle of the rational soul accompanies the latter forever. This is the same position as Origen’s – albeit Origen thought of a transformation of the luminous, immortal body into an earthly and corruptible body, and then of the opposite transformation at the resurrection, rather than the addition of the mortal body to the luminous one and then the shedding of the former – and is also a rejection of Plotinus’s doctrine of the preexistence of disembodied souls.<sup>29</sup> Origen too rejected that doctrine. Similarly to Origen, Proclus thought that divine souls – what Origen would identify as angels – have a body of that kind, immortal, luminous, impassible, and immaterial (for Origen, an angelic body); demons have in addition a pneumatic vehicle, made out of elements; human beings have yet another body in addition: the earthly, mortal body, at least for the period of their dwelling on earth.<sup>30</sup>

24) Ap. Phot. Bibl. 172b20.

25) In Carm. Aur. 478b Mullach.

26) Elem. theol. 196. See J. Trouillard, *Réflexions sur l’ὄχημα dans les Éléments de théologie* de Proclus, REG 70 (1957) 102–107; L. Siorvanes, *Proclus: Neoplatonic Philosophy and Science*, Edinburgh 1996, 131–133.

27) ... αἰδίως ἐξήρτηται τῆς χρωμένης αὐτῷ ψυχῆς καὶ συμφυῶς, ἀμετάβλητον ὃν κατ’ οὐσίαν ... πάσα ψυχή αἰδίων ἔχει σῶμα τὸ πρῶτως αὐτῆς μετέχον (Elem. theol. 207).

28) Proclus (In Tim. 3,297,21–298,2) distinguishes the first, immortal vehicle of the soul, the “connate vehicle” (σύμφυτον ὄχημα), from a second one, called “vehicle of irrational life” (ἡ ἄλογος ζωὴ καὶ τὸ ἐκείνης ὄχημα) and “mass” (called ὄγκος at l. 23 and ὄχλος at l. 28) derived “from the simple elements” (ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπλῶν στοιχείων), a “compound made of various kinds of tunics” (ἐκ παντοδαπῶν χιτῶνων συγκείμενον) which weighs the soul down. This is because a soul could not pass immediately from immaterial pneuma to the earthly body (ἀμέσως ἀπὸ τῶν ἀύλων πνευμάτων εἰς τὸδε τὸ σῶμα χωρεῖν). Therefore, “during their descent to earth souls receive, one after the other, different kinds of tunics (χιτῶνας) made of the elements, air, water, and earth, and only afterwards, in the end, enter this thick mass (εἰς τὸν ὄγκον τὸν παχὺν τοῦτον)”. The “second vehicle” (τὸ δεύτερον ὄχημα) appears again at In Tim. 3,320,20–22, where it is identified again with “the irrational mass (ὄχλος ἄλογος) drawn from fire, air, water, and earth”.

29) See I. Ramelli, *Origen of Alexandria: His Identity and Philosophy*, forthcoming, Ch. 3: *Origen’s Philosophical Anthropology*.

30) Theol. Plat. 3,5,125 ff.

Now, after the dropping out of σώματος in the Stobaean passage at stake reporting Iamblichus's *De anima*, when in the manuscript tradition there remained only μεταξύ τῆς τε ἀσωμάτου ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ ἀγγελιώδους – as P reads –, some scribe, trying to make sense of τοῦ ἀγγελιώδους, which by then was left without its noun, changed its article τοῦ into τῆς. Thus, τῆς ἀγγελιώδους – the reading of F today – looked at least grammatically correct, even if the meaning of the phrase “between the incorporeal and the angelic soul” is unacceptable from the philosophical point of view. For no philosopher postulated an angelic soul as opposite to the incorporeal soul, and a vehicle between the two. The conjecture that I have offered, on the contrary, is perfectly satisfactory from the grammatical, philological, philosophical, and textual historical points of view.

This is, then, the whole sentence according to the emendation I propose:

Οἱ δὲ μεταξύ τῆς τε ἀσωμάτου ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ ἀγγελιώδους (σώματος) αἰθέρια καὶ οὐράνια καὶ πνευματικά περιβλήματα περιλαμβάνοντα τὴν νοεράν ζωὴν (τίθενται) προβεβλήσθαι μὲν αὐτῆς φρουρὰς ἔνεκεν, ὑπηρετεῖν δὲ αὐτῇ καθάπερ ὀχήματα.

Others (maintain) that between the incorporeal soul and the angelic (body) ethereal, heavenly, and pneumatic wrappings surrounding the intellectual life-principle are brought forth for its protection and serve it as vehicles.

The vehicles are thus posited first between the intellectual soul and the angelic, light and immortal body. Then they also serve as intermediate between the soul and the mortal, heavy and diastematic body, which Iamblichus calls “solid body” soon after, in the immediate continuation of the above-quoted passage: συμμετρως δ' αὐτὸ καὶ πρὸς τὸ στερεὸν σῶμα συμβιβάζειν μέσοις τισὶ κοινοῖς συνδέσμοις αὐτὴν συνάπτοντα, “and they [sc. the vehicles] bring it [sc. the intellectual soul] together in due proportion also with the solid body, joining it thereto by means of certain intermediate common bonds”. If Iamblichus had already spoken of the “earthly body” (according to the conjecture ἀγγελιώδους) and not of the “angelic body” (according to my reading), he would not have said “also with the solid body”; that is, he would not have used καὶ before πρὸς τὸ στερεὸν σῶμα. The fact that he added καί, “also”, in reference to the earthly body is a further indication that three lines before he was not yet speaking of the earthly body, but he rather meant the angelic, immortal body. Then, Iamblichus goes on to say, the vehicles that join the rational soul to the immortal and light body can also join it to the mortal, solid, and diastematic body, once it is taken up.

In this way the conjecture that I have offered as possible would also set right an important point in Iamblichus's train of thought in the passage under investigation: the vehicles function as intermediaries not only between the intellectual soul and the mortal, heavy body, but also and already between the intellectual soul and the immortal, angelic, and luminous body.