

“LUCIAN BLAGA” UNIVERSITY OF SIBIU
“ANDREI ŞAGUNA” ORTHODOX THEOLOGY FACULTY

**THE HUMAN NATURE ON THE BORDER BETWEEN
FREEDOM AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE.
THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF NEMESIUS OF EMESA**
(Summary)

Scientific leader:

Archdeacon Prof. PhD IOAN I. ICĂ JR,

Candidate:

NEDELICU PETRU CIPRIAN

SIBIU, 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
I. Introduction.....	5
1. Short introductory considerations	5
2. The argumentation of the proposed theme for research	8
3. The antithesis of various philosophical theories of time with the theme of research	9
4. Objectives of the proposed research	10
5. Current state of research	12
6. Methodological explanations	14
II. The anthropological treaty <i>De natura hominis</i>. The History of a Controversy	18
Introduction.....	18
1. The personality and work of Nemesis	19
2. The purpose and character of the work	26
3. Working method used by Nemesisius	29
4. <i>De natura hominis</i> : fundamental theses. A brief presentation	32
5. The History of a Controversy: Nemesisius of Emesa or Gregory of Nyssa?.....	37
Conclusions	41
III. The structure of the human nature at Nemesisius of Emesa	42
Introduction	42
A. <i>The man – an intelligible being</i>	45
1. The problem of the nature of the soul as the ‘magna quaestio’ of antiquity	45
2. The origin of the soul and the theory of preexistence	54
3. Criticism of Eunomie and Apolinarie’s conceptions of the origin of the soul	58
4. The substantiality of the soul	63
5. The bodyless of the soul. Criticism of the manichean teaching	74

6.	The immortality of the soul	76
7.	The trihotomy of the soul	79
8.	Classification of faculties of the soul	82
9.	The difference between <i>nous</i> (νοῦς) and <i>psyche</i> (ψυχή).....	84
10.	The Soul of the World and the Individual Souls	88
	Conclusions	90
	<i>B. The man – a sensitive being</i>	92
1.	Nemesius and christian reception of Galen	92
2.	'Element Doctrine' and elementary physiology of Galen reflected in the nemesian treaty	95
3.	The relation between κράσις (krasis) and soul.....	98
4.	Complex structure and behavior of the physical body	101
5.	The main organs of the human body	102
6.	Imagination(φανταστικόν).....	104
7.	Memory (μνημονευτικόν).....	105
8.	The relation between diet and human body	107
	Conclusions.....	109
	<i>C. The microcosmic unit</i>	110
1.	Classical Perspective on the union between body and soul	110
2.	Man as a microcosm and mediator at Nemesius	114
3.	Relation between body and soul reflected in the nemesian treaty	118
4.	Hypostatic union as a model of union between body and soul	121
	Conclusions.....	123
	IV. The problem of human freedom in relation to divine providence	126
	Introduction	126
	<i>A. Human freedom</i>	129
1.	Freedom as a sign of human dignity	129
2.	Scope of action and the limits of freedom	133
3.	Fulfillment of human nature in its free movement toward God	137
4.	Freedom and responsibility	138

5.	Προαιρέσις (proairesis) “versus” κρᾶσις (krasis).....	143
6.	Limitation of freedom	147
B. Human will		153
1.	Free Will - an attribute of rational creation	153
2.	Reason and will in human nature	156
3.	Free Will.....	158
4.	The problem of evil in the context of freedom of choice	170
5.	Anti-fatal polemics. Nemesius's criticism against determinism	174
C. Divine providence		179
1.	Providence of God or "destiny" ?	179
2.	Providence <i>over</i> and <i>in</i> existence	185
Conclusions.....		194
V. General Conclusions		197
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....		206
1.	Edition of the Holy Scripture	206
2.	Patristic literature	206
3.	Literature of classical philosophy	207
4.	Lexicons and dictionaries.....	208
5.	Secondary literature	209
6.	Studies and articles	213

SUMMARY

Keywords:

Nemesius of Emesa, anthropology, human nature, soul, freedom, free-will, human will, divine providence, responsibility.

I. INTRODUCTION

In our modern world, where science, in addition to helping people in their everyday activities, often contributes to the process of dehumanizing the society we live in. Instead of a face to face relationship, we prefer the relationship with other human subjects through technology, losing the essence and the importance of personal relationships. That is why the Church has the great duty in the twenty-first century to ‘reactivate the idea of Greek patristics regarding the human person as a mediator between heaven and earth, as a cosmic liturgy, as the priest of creation’.¹ So, we note the need for a return to patristic authors in order to see exactly the importance they bestowed upon the human person in its entirety, for a realization of the special role that man has in this Universe, for seeing the duty and responsibility that man has within Creation.

Any discussion of anthropology in the early period of Christianity cannot omit Nemesius of Emesa. His treatise *De natura hominis*/Περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου (‘On Human Nature’), considered by many to be the first Christian anthropological treatise, is of great interest in itself because it provides a full Christian account of the understanding of human nature and the relationship of man with God and the cosmos, a perception particular to the fourth century, at the same time with the theological reflections of the Cappadocian Fathers

My purpose in this PhD thesis, titled ‘Human nature on the border between freedom and divine providence. The anthropological perspective of Nemesius of Emesa’, is to bring Nemesius, former Christian bishop at the end of the fourth century, into the Romanian theological space. At this moment any reference to this person is almost entirely missing from

¹ Kallistos WARE, *Orthodox Theology in the Twenty – First Century*, Ed. World Council of Churches Publications, Geneva, 2012, p. 43.

Romanian theology. This text is little known in the present-day academic environment, whereas its importance makes it available on the most visible shelves of the great open access libraries of universities everywhere. It is a treatise written by a Christian bishop, passionate about psychology, metaphysics, medicine, and theology.

Nemesius's fundamental treatise 'On Human Nature' represents for many specialists the first complete compilation of Christian-oriented theological anthropology, which later influenced, as we will show in this thesis, both Byzantine and Latin spirituality and philosophical theology.

The creation of man as a sensible and intelligible being is not reflected in Nemesius's anthropology through an intellectualist approach, but by identifying the iconic structure of man with concrete attributes that characterize the spiritual nature of man. Hence, this approach is not built on a simplification in the spirit of ancient philosophy, inside the antithetic pair: spirit - matter / body - soul, taken over uncritically from the same cultural pattern.

The existential identity of man is the gift of being free from any constraint and of not being subjected to any outside forces; man has an independent will that decides according to what he thinks is best, offering the possibility for a virtuous life. Consequently, man is permanently placed before an existential option, which leads human existence to 'choice' and 'progress'. In this sense, one can say that any relationship of the created with the uncreated / Godhead is carried out in the sphere of freedom and holiness. Human nature is a mixture of divine and human, of the spiritual and the bodily, a sum of intelligible and sensible possibilities which, once activated, binds man to God without canceling his sensibility (a characteristic that is both human and cosmic). The complexity of his nature connects him to the whole cosmos and man's relationship with creation is the concrete framework of the dialogue between God and man.

In this context, Nemesius perceives human nature as an entity comprising body and soul, rejecting the Manichaean view that separates the body from the soul, the Eunomian heresy that states that souls are created by God as bodies, or Apollinarius's theory that souls are inherited from the souls of one's parents. Although both authors claim that the soul and the body are created individually, Nemesius remains rather dependent on ancient philosophy regarding the theory that the soul is created before the body.

Our author believes that the body has a strong positive role. From his work it becomes apparent that Nemesius possesses a wealth of knowledge in the field of medicine (he gets much of his information especially from Galen), since he discusses the different anatomical functions of the body, the way in which the different dysfunctions of the body influence the good harmony of the soul, or how the various organs of the body correspond to certain parts of the soul.

Human will, the decision to choose is determined firstly by the mind, and the power to self-select a decision is a property of reason. Man is alone responsible for his failure, that is, for the fall. Nemesius seeks to pin the responsibility for the existence of evil on man and not on God. Paradoxically, the freedom that was given to him as the most precious gift was the basis of man's fall, for man by his own will estranged himself from God.

Nemesius rejects the philosophical idea of an exclusively general providence, but not that of an individual one. He insists on the idea that God is actively present in creation, expressed by the so-called 'providence within the world'. Ultimately, human freedom and divine providence are not contradictory, but coexisting. God is the creative source of everything that exists. Through His providence, He takes care of everything that is created and guides them so that one cannot speak of the possibility of there being a more perfect universal order.

Nemesius's influence is not very wide-spread in the first centuries after his death, but neither is he completely ignored. It seems that for nearly two centuries his treatise was hardly known, and it was probably discovered by St. Maximus the Confessor who makes extensive use of Nemesius, especially in his teachings on 'passions' and 'divine providence'. The use of Nemesius by Maximus is also reflected in St. John of Damascus in his 'Dogmatics' which cites Nemesius with precision, again without mentioning him. Anastasios of Sinai in his 'Questions and Answers' mentions Nemesius. He is also mentioned by Michael Glykas in the twelfth century and by Nilus Doxopates. Thus knowledge of Nemesius passed into the Byzantine general consciousness. Old translations of his treatise into Syriac, Arabic, Armenian or Georgian suggest a spread and interest in Nemesius in the extreme Christian East.

As with other Christian authors in the early Church, Nemesius's treatise 'On Human Nature', stands at the threshold between the pagan and Christian philosophical cultures, and thus has a role to play in the later relationship between them.

Two extremely important issues in the study of the Nemesian text over time need pointing out. Firstly, since the Nemesian treatise is one of the pillars of the transmission of

ancient philosophy to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Nemesius is one of the few Christian intellectuals who are well acquainted with Aristotle's treatise *On the soul*, whose theories he transfers to medieval culture, integrating them into a Platonic cosmology with stoic elements. Secondly, the Nemesian treatise is important because it testifies to a cultural simultaneity that is little discussed in the present day. The text comes from the milieu of Syriac Christianity and attests to the transmission of Greek philosophical and medical culture to the world of the Orient.

From the Renaissance to our times, the Nemesian treatise went through several editions with different degrees of philological precision: editio princeps by Nicasius Ellebodus (Antwerp, 1565), editio secunda of John Fell (Oxford, 1671), editio tertia by Christian Frederick Matthaei (Halle, 1802), and editio quarta by researcher Moreno Morani (Leipzig, 1987).²

Especially since the nineteenth century, the Nemesian text has begun to be regarded with great interest by many scholars of theology and philosophy. One important mention is that in the modern age, most of those who studied the Nemesian treatise in detail come from the German academic environment.

In 1900, Boleslaw Domanski published his doctoral thesis on the study of human will as described in the *De natura hominis*. The author's conclusion was that the key element in Nemesian psychology is the free will with which the human being is endowed. Werner Jaeger edited a work dedicated to Nemesius in 1914 and his main goal was to identify in detail the sources Nemesius had and used in his treatise. A work based on the same interest as Jaeger's was published by Henrich Koch in 1921. Although they had the same goal, Jaeger and Koch arrived at different conclusions, each bringing arguments in favour of their claims. In 1925 A. Kallis published a book dedicated to Nemesius, in which he treated the image of man in the Cosmos and his role as a 'microcosm'. In 1959, Heinrich Dorrie dealt with the Nemesian perspective on the union of body and soul. Also in 1959, Friedrich M. März published the first paper in which the entire Nemesian anthropology is presented as reflected in the *De natura hominis* treatise. This work is the reflection of a philosopher, not of a theologian, and this fact can be easily noticed in the work. The presentation of Nemesian anthropology will also be a preoccupation for Alberto Siclari, who in 1974 published one of the most complete treatises on Nemesius. Emil Dobler, in three very thorough studies (2000, 2001, 2002), identifies all the elements taken over by Toma

²Moreno MORANI, *La tradizione manoscritta del „De natura hominis” di Nemesio*, Ed. Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 1981, pp. 63- 67.

de Aquino from Nemesius's treatise. A very interesting work is that of Martin Streck (2005), in which he analyzes the conception of the human will in both Nemesius and Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

Thoroughly argued introductory studies and editions can be found with most of the translators of Nemesius' work, be it the German translation of Emil Orth (1925), Telfer (1955) and P.v.d. Eijk / W. Sharples (2008), in Latin (1975) by G. Verbeke and J.R. Moncho, or by Moreno Morani in Italy (1982). I have studied the entire bibliography dedicated to Nemesius, and apart from studies that looked only at certain aspects of the Nemesian anthropological system, I yet to identify any exhaustive, critical, and complete study on the anthropology of the Bishop of Emesa, viewed from an Orthodox perspective. For this reason, a need arises for the Nemesian treatise to be addressed from an Orthodox Christian perspective.

II. The Anthropological Treatise *De natura hominis*.

The History of a Controversy

In this chapter I first present the personality, the work, and the anthropological perspective of Nemesius of Emesa and the central theses of the *De natura hominis* treatise, and in the end I aim to clarify the mystery surrounding the author of this treatise, which over time has raised heated discussion around its author: the text circulated both under the name of Nemesius and under the name of Saint Gregory of Nyssa

I argue throughout this thesis that the Nemesian treatise represents the reflections of an educated man who, besides theological knowledge and solid knowledge of philosophy and medicine, wrote in a cosmopolitan environment: Emesa was at the borders between Paganism, Christianity, and Judaism. Nemesius manages in a felicitous manner to provide a detailed, complex and technical examination of human nature, succeeding in associating his anthropological treatise with the philosophical-medical perspective on man.

On a careful examination of his work, one can see that Nemesius created a bridge between non-Christian and Christian thinking, and that we are dealing with a highly educated man, whose culture was on a high level for the end of the fourth century. Nowadays modern criticism considers the Nemesian treatise to be the first philosophical anthropology systematized according to a pagan model and written by a Christian.

Over time, to the little information we have about the author of this treatise were added many interpretations and assumptions about the author of the work, about the time of writing, the sources of the composition, and its intended audience. In this context, I considered it appropriate to clarify the originality of this work, which I have addressed in this chapter. Paradoxically, the confusion regarding the author of this work by Nemesius resulted in its notoriety throughout history, as it was often mentioned in the version of many manuscripts attributed to St. Gregory of Nyssa.

However, as I show in greater detail further down, nowadays the thesis of the Nemesian authorship of *De natura hominis* has acquired a rigorous demonstration accepted by most researchers (mainly due to M. Morani), which is why the supposition of its lack of authenticity has come to be seen with suspicion.

The lack of sufficient clear information about the person and work of the one who was Nemesius of Emessa in no way reduces the value of his treatise. Its importance for the further consolidation and development of Christian anthropology remains the same.

In the patristic and post-patristic era, the Nemesian treatise penetrated into different cultural and spiritual environments, exerting a greater or lesser influence on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, although relatively absent in the earlier theological era, the influence of Nemesius of Emesa was never completely ignored or left without echo. The fact that the first ones to use the work of Nemesius were St. Maximus and St. John Damascene, most probably both of Syrian origins could be due to the original manuscript of Nemesius being associated with Syriac spirituality.

For most scholars, *De natura hominis* is an anthropological project unique in the way it was developed by Nemesius, based mainly on the traditional matrix of the Christian culture of its time. For a writer who lived at the turn of the fifth century, it does not seem difficult to achieve a harmonious synthesis between Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine. It should not be forgotten that even though Nemesius had at his disposal a venerable tradition of philosophical elaborations, there was no Greek philosophical anthropology, but only 'very different anthropological doctrines, ranging from an exaggerated dualistic spiritualism to thorough materialism'.³ Thus, the Bishop of Emesa had to opt for certain philosophical trends and

³Gerard VERBEKE, „Foi et culture chez Némésius d'Emèse. Physionomie d'une synthèse”, *Studia Patristica Mediolanensia*, nr. 10 (1979), Milano, p. 513.

doctrines, which he considered might help to elucidate the message of the Revelation. Also, before critically evaluating the Nemesian treatise, we must remember the following: in the patristic literature before Nemesius, there was unfortunately little and inconsistent preoccupation for what we call ‘anthropology’. Thus, given the fact that no complete anthropological treatise either from a philosophical point of view or from a Christian perspective had been written before Nemesius, the *De natura hominis* treatise, despite its many failings, deserves a prominent place in the history of Christian literature.

III. The Structure of the Human Being for Nemesius in Emessa

This chapter discusses the unity of the human person, the spiritual character of the soul and its union with the body – the problem of the nature of the soul as the ‘magna quaestio’ of ancient psychology. Although the soul, having an intelligible nature, is unchanging and indestructible, there is a close connection between spiritual activities and the human body. In the early Church it was difficult to conceptualize the union of the incorporeal soul with the corporeal, sensible body in one nature – the human one, because the soul’s substantiality always had to be accounted for.

Therefore, the starting point of the approach taken in this chapter was precisely the analysis of the essence of the soul and its immortal character, as well as the way in which the unity of human nature is achieved. I considered man as ‘the image of God’ and discussed what this implies in view of the theme to be treated. I also counter the views regarding the soul existing in that era, which were at the time still in contradiction to the teaching of the Church: the theories of Apollinarius (the souls were inherited from their parents), Pelagius, Eunomius (souls are created by God at the same time as bodies), Manichean theories claiming that the individual soul is part of a universal soul, or the Platonic theory (later borrowed by the Neoplatonists, and through them also by some Christian authors like Origen) that the souls would atone for a kind of punishment being thrown into bodies here on earth, the latter of which will be discarded at some point, after they have been cleansed. I also discuss the different analogies between divine and human unity, but also the limits of this analogy.

I further analyze the complex structure and the behaviour of the physical body with regard to the various human activities. The analysis was centred on the microcosmic character of

human nature. Nemesius dedicates almost half of his work to this theme. This is connected by specialists to the vast knowledge of medicine that he possessed. Thus this part deals with the elements that make up the human body, imagination, memory, the senses, the pleasures, the emotions, and how these influence not only the human body, but the whole of human nature, because we are talking about man as a body-soul entity.

From the beginning of his treatise, Nemesius expresses his admiration for man, created by God as a complex unity of the entire reality: *intelligible* or immaterial, and at the same time *sensible* or material, as an image of the whole universe, or, in other words, as a small world (*microcosm*) in the big world (*macrocosm*).

In this chapter I argue that in order to describe the union of the body with the soul, Nemesius denies that it could be the result of a blend (σύγχυσις), overlap (παράθεσις) or mixture (παράθεσις). He affirms that the soul is attached to the body on the basis of a ‘unmixed union’ (ἔνωσις ἀσύγχυτος) the components of which intertwine to form a new entity without one being transformed by the other.

Nemesius, like many Christian authors, still tries to reconcile the different categories of evidence: the philosophical, which unanimously held that the soul comes from a higher sphere than that of the bodies, the medical, which argued for the existence of an animated being formed in the womb of the woman, and also the exegetical, which narrated the creation of Adam as body and soul. Thus, embracing the pre-existentialist theory which relied on the completion of creation after the sixth day, unlike Eunomius, and refusing to believe like Apollinarius, that human souls come from that of Adam, Nemesius of Emesa proceeds from the premise that God created all souls at the moment of creation of the sensible world and that from this reservoir He takes out souls to animate the bodies that appear over time. Even though elements of this theory of the paradisiacal preexistence of souls can be partially accepted and brought into agreement with the doctrine of the Church, there remains a great distance between this theory and the Christian anthropological doctrine, which lays a great emphasis on the existence of a personal Creator God.

The Bishop of Emesa is the first patristic author to examine the qualities of the soul with competence and acrimony, calling them ‘senses’. Unlike some of the ancient philosophers or other Christian authors, he seems to open up the possibility of a positive assessment of the passional faculties.

On a careful analysis, one notices that the Nemesian conception of the soul's trichotomia or the classification of the faculties of the soul later influenced the trichotomic interpretation of St. Maxim the Confessor and of St. John Damascene.

The careful study of the Nemesian treatise reveals that in his approach the author was guided by three main ideas, which he supported with his own arguments: 1. the soul is both incorporeal and immortal; 2. the soul is neither body nor harmony, nor mixture nor any other particular quality; 3. the soul is a certain incorporeal substance, since all of us agree that the soul really exists.

In his anthropological project, I noticed that Nemesius did not just analyze the human being spiritually, but he also provided a series of anatomical and physiological data regarding the body, concluding that this bodily structure is perfect.

For the Bishop of Emesa, the idea of structuring the body according to the capacities of the soul has a very important role: the immaterial is expressed in matter. It is precisely this that will allow him to deal in detail with many somatic aspects of the human being; starting from the medical and philosophical sources he had access to – besides the Hippocratic Corpus, especially Galen and Aristotle – he develops a holistic anthropology of psycho-physical unity.

Through his body, man is on the highest stage of the material world, and through his soul man is connected with the spiritual world. Thus man is on the border between the sensible and the intelligible world, two worlds that coexist at the same time in the human being.

This is precisely the intention of Nemesius – to emphasize the kinship that exists in the universe between all its composing elements, to highlight the good and rightful actions of a single Creator God, who took care that among the different forms of existence in the universe there should be relatively small distances.

Nemesius's approach is important for Eastern Christianity, not only because it accepts the classical conception of man as a *microcosm*, in which the things in the universe (the *macrocosm*) are reflected on the inside as in a mirror, but especially because it tries to reconcile the tension between the understanding of created man in the image of material creation and the idea that man was created in the image and likeness of God. Nemesius's anthropology is an attempt of the author to show that both the body and the soul are the work of the same Creator, thus highlighting the dignity with which man was endowed in its entirety.

In the spirit of ancient learning, viewed from a triple perspective: theological – philosophical – medical, the human being receives in Nemesius's anthropological treatise the deserved attention and consideration, in an optimistic and positive vision that refuses not only dematerialized spiritualism, but also materialistic determinism: the rationality and freedom of the person establish harmony between body and soul through education, but not in spite of, but in the sense of the laws and of a harmony between God, man, and the cosmos. This Nemesian perspective will find its full ascetic-mystical development especially in the cosmic anthropology of St. Maximus the Confessor.

IV. The Issue of Human Freedom in Relation to the Divine Providence

In this chapter, the discussion unfolds around three great themes: human freedom, human will and divine providence.

With regard to freedom, the following aspects are analyzed: human actions (voluntary or involuntary); the notion of the choice of decisions; man as a real principle of certain acts or as a 'field' of our free initiatives and, lastly, free will. Nemesius had to respond to the fatalistic conversations underway in his contemporary era. Thus, in the doctrine of the Stoics, the term 'order' was equated with providence or destiny. The succession of events is subject to destiny. There are no random events. There is no hazard. This vision seems to deny the free will. If the divinity prescribes everything that happens at a given moment, if the divinity knows in advance everything that will happen in one's life or more generally in the world, if the divinity is omniscient, it means that the individual does not have the possibility to exercise his free will. One of the most difficult topics to address is precisely the relationship between God's omniscience and man's free will. Since the divinity knows in advance everything that someone will do, every decision someone will make, everything that will happen to him, it follows that the existence of that person is under the strict rule of providence.

From Nemesius's point of view, human freedom and divine providence are not contradictory but coexistent. He rejects from the start the pagan idea that one can speak only of a general providence, not of an individual providence. God is the creative source of everything that

exists. But man, with his finite mind, is unable to understand fully this divine leadership of the universe.

In this chapter I emphasise that the two basic elements around which the Nemesian discourse on freedom is built are the *human autonomy* and the *human responsibility* for our actions.

Nemesius begins his argument on human freedom by examining on the one hand *voluntary* acts which, beyond any determination, have as their cause or principle the very acting subject, on the other hand, *involuntary* acts perceived as a result of coercion or ignorance. Natural activities, such as the process of growth or digestion, are neither voluntary nor involuntary, because our author considers that the natural process does not lie in the realm of our initiative. By defining the voluntary and the involuntary, our author wonders whether there is an identity between the deliberate choice and the voluntary act. Remaining faithful to the thought of Aristotle, Nemesius gives a negative answer: ‘deliberate choice’ (*proairesis*) is identified neither with the voluntary or desire, nor with opinion or deliberation, but is a composite: a mixture of decision, judgment and desire. For the Bishop of Emesa, *deliberate choice* relates only to ‘contingent’ events and has as a principle the ‘inner world’.

With regard to human freedom, Nemesius had to solve two major problems: firstly, relating human activity to the divine providence, and secondly, assessing whether our behaviour is influenced by our corporeality. Our author admits that human freedom is not limited, but intertwines with the providential work of God.

For our author, the keystone of the human being is the freedom with which he is endowed at the moment of creation, which is at the same time the most valuable gift received by man from the Creator. This freedom, which accompanies man throughout his existence, gives him a privileged place among all the elements of the created world. No other subject created by God is afforded this dignity with which man was endowed, the one destined to be the eternal associate of the Creator.

According to Nemesius, since the human being has creative freedom, its ultimate goal is that of moving away from evil, following and choosing the good. Man is the architect of his own life through the manifestation of his free will to do one thing or another.

Even when man considers himself his sole master and does not recognize God as his Master, his freedom continues to remain a reality that God does not want to cancel because he

does not want to impose a unique way of using it or to cancel the humanity of human nature. Freedom is given to human nature as a possibility of growth and free spiritual development; but it can also turn into a 'fatal gift'.

Nemesius, like many other patristic authors, does not begin his anthropological discourse from the state of fallen man, but from the primordial state of man. In this way, man's relationship with God no longer appears as an oppression of the free manifestation of his will, but as a natural expression of his natural state, which allows man to aspire to the likeness of God and to acquire his true spiritual freedom.

The existence of free will within human nature is an ontological given in close connection with the existence of the will of man, which can only be free. Freedom becomes an ontological prerogative of human nature over which God does not want to interfere, in order to preserve thereby both the integrity of His creation and the authenticity of His decisions.

The Nemesian outlook on free will is closely linked to his point of view on the relationship between body and soul. In his argument, one can see in Nemesius a twofold direction: on the one hand he wants to position himself against determinism of any kind, on the other hand, his analysis highlights the superiority of the human being among the things in the Universe, as one with the role of linking the tangible to the intangible.

If freedom is separated from responsibility, it will lead to ways of life that do not correspond to the call of God. Without using the freedom of choice in a responsible way, human nature enters a state of imbalance that can be manifested through a life marked by a passionate attachment to the body. This is why Nemesius emphasises that passions are manifestations of the body that weaken the power of the spirit and implicitly the responsibility that man has toward himself, but also towards God. The passionate man becomes a person without reflexivity, who turns into an object led by pleasures or inferior impulses.

Concerning the existence of evil in the world, Nemesius draws attention to the fact that vices do not belong to powers but to habits and choices. It is not power that guides us to a certain thing, but choice. Unfortunately, through our passions and sins, we often cause evil as a natural consequence of the way in which we have led our activities, and as a manifestation of our free will. Therefore, the Nemesian perspective on evil is a balanced, optimistic, and responsible vision. God is the Creator and the Provident of creation, and is the only uncreated and eternal

being. Evil begins to be felt when we freely estrange ourselves from God. Nemesius thus places the origin of evil in the drama of the creature's freedom of choice.

Nemesius links the existence of divine providence to the existence of God. In his conception, one without the other could not be possible. Our author sees it as a necessity that the one who creates things and the one who takes care of them are one and the same. If God did not exercise his providence, Nemesius considers, He would no longer be able to punish, but neither would he be able to reward those who do good. It is an undeniable reality for our author that after creation, in the world remains the Creator's care for his creation.

Divine providence does not only mean the support of existence that orders creation, but also help: the force by which God draws beings towards their purpose. Providence manifests itself as a continuous dialogue, as a 'free synergy'. Without breaking the will of man, God uses laws, situations, things, and freely directs them. Man is himself an instrument of providence because, as one who has the dignity to subdue the earth, he can freely use the laws of creation to organize his life and that of his fellows

Perspectives for Future Research

This thesis analyzes the Nemesian treatise from an Orthodox perspective and at the same time identifies the themes that were a landmark for certain Christian authors. In particular, I proposed at the beginning of this study to present and analyze Nemesius's anthropological perspective, not to produce a comparative analysis with the anthropological perspectives of other Christian authors.

Given that the controversy over whether Nemesius or Gregory of Nyssa was the author of the anthropological compendium *De natura hominis* has long existed in history, it would be interesting for the future to undertake a detailed parallel study of the anthropology of the two authors, based on their two treatises of anthropology: *On the Creation of Man* and *On the Nature of Man*.

I mention several times throughout this thesis that the Nemesian treatise was an important source of inspiration, in some aspects, for two great theologians of Eastern Christianity: St. Maximus the Confessor and St. John Damascene, but also for one of the most important Roman Catholic authors: Thomas of Aquino. It would be interesting in the future to identify in detail what doctrinal elements they take over from Nemesius, and given that he is a source of

inspiration for both scholastics and Eastern patristic authors, one might be tempted to answer the question of whether Nemesius could be seen as a link between spirituality in the West and East. Naturally, Nemesius's analysis finds support in both the West and the East, because it represents, to take a broader view, a synthesis of ancient Greek philosophy analyzed from a Christian perspective.