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Nicaean Ontology in Nemesius of Emesa's Anthropology and Christology

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1. Introduction: the missing link between Nemesius and Nicaean Ontology

In Nemesius, bishop of Emesa's work *De natura hominis*¹ (henceforth *De nat. hom.*), which came to light in the very last decade of the IVth century² in the Antiochene area of Christianity in the Roman Empire,

- 1 The critical edition we refer to is Moreno Morani's version (Teubner, Leipzig 1987). Regarding the modern translations we refer to, for Italian: Nemesio di Emesa, *La natura dell'uomo*, ed. Moreno Morani – Giulia Regoliosi (eds.), Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 2018; for English: Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man*, Robert William Sharples – Philip Jan van der Eijk (eds.), Liverpool University Press, Liverpool 2008.
- 2 The large majority of the scholars involved in the scientific debate about the dating of Nemesius' work has placed the *De nat. hom.* to the end of the IVth century and we agree with this chronological placement – here we avoid dwelling on the topic. One remarkable exception is represented by Eduard Zeller in his canonical history of philosophy (*Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, O.R. Reisland, Leipzig 1919, III/2, p. 509 ff.), where he upholds the thesis according to which Nemesius' work has to be dated around the middle of the Vth century because of its Christological lexicon, namely the German scholar mentions the presence of the formula

we find, what someone called, the first Christian anthropology or even the first authentic anthropology in the history of thought.³ Less immediately and looking deeper into Nemesius' text, we find some important and ground-breaking Christological ideas strictly linked to the anthropological issue and countless philosophical and scientific sources. Nevertheless, we do not find an attempt to explain God's essence and the world's structure ontologically. This considerable absence in a work of a Christian author, which concurrently has theological, philosophical, and even cosmological demands, cannot be left unexplained. Hence, our primary purpose on the following pages of this paper is to call into question this significant deficiency: whether it is a sheer deficit or if this void lets us see something else about Nemesius.

We must acknowledge in advance that neither anthropology – that is, the research of human nature and the ontological status of man – nor Christology is conceivable without a wider and all-embracing worldview. How may it be possible to explore the relation between God and Man, between the transcendent and the worldly things, without the knowledge of what *is* divinity? This last question requires an answer that reaches the heart of the Being: it must have

ἀσύγχυτος ἔνωσις. Therefore, it clearly shows the chronological proximity to the great Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon.

- 3 Several scholars upheld this thesis, such as William Telfer, "The Birth of Christian Anthropology", in *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (1962), 347-354; Gerard Verbeke, *La dignité de l'homme dans le traité "De hominis opificio" de Grégoire de Nysse*, in "Annales de Philosophie" 27 (1979), 139-155; David Amand, *Fatalisme et liberté dans l'Antiquité grecque. Recherches sur la survivance de l'argumentation morale antifataliste de Carnéade chez les philosophes grecs et les théologiens chrétiens des quatre premiers siècles*, Hakkert, Amsterdam 1973, pp. 549-569; David Lloyd Dusenbury, *Nemesius of Emesa on Human Nature. A Cosmopolitan Anthropology from Roman Syria*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021; B. Domanski, *Die Psychologie des Nemesius*, Münster 1900 (Dissertation), p. XVI.

an ontological nature. Therefore, we have realized that we must resort to a hermeneutic artifice to bring to light what is just an assumption rather than an absent *tout court* if we cannot ascertain a stated ontology in Nemesius. We will do that by rebuilding the cultural context in which the author worked; these contents sometimes get into the author's work, not entirely consciously. As stated by F. Schleiermacher, the hermeneutic must have the claim to understand the writer even better than what he understood himself, discovering things of which the writer himself is occasionally unaware.⁴ After such research, it ought to be evident that what in Nemesius is just assumed has already been elaborated, investigated and conceived by the great coeval theology, within which Nemesian anthropology is included as a part of the whole. Not surprisingly, the *De nat. hom.* has been attributed, throughout the Middle Ages and the early centuries of the Modern Era, to the mind of Cappadocian Father Gregory of Nyssa, hence conceived as a valuable branch, part and parcel of his thought. The philological mistake made for a very long time is nonetheless highly remarkable. The Nemesian doctrines have to be seen as pieces which contribute to the shaping of the great doctrinal structure of the Christian *Weltanschauung* created in the IVth century, which we can rightfully call "Christian or Patristic philosophy". Moreover, if this expression can generally be taken as "signifying a set of logical and ontological concepts underlying the articulation of doctrinal statements";⁵ this implies that Nemesius' anthropological and Christological project stands on these foundations; not unlike, for instance, the doctrines of Theophrastus which stand on the totality of the Aristotelian philosophical system.

4 Cf. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism. And other Writings*, Andrew Bowie (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, pp. 228-229.

5 Johannes Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocians to John of Damascus*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, p. 3.

Thus, the first step of our study is to look at the historical and cultural context of the period.

2. *The IVth century: from Ontology to Christology*

With no fear of denial, we can affirm that, especially during the second half of the IVth century, the Christian system of thought reaches its *apex* and appears with a certain doctrinal unity to the world. As a great Italian scholar said, the achievement of a «theological *koiné*»⁶ in the Christian world occurs at the end of the century. There is no exaggeration to call this period the “Axial Age” of Christianity. The West is overwhelmed by the colossal Augustinian literature and by the theological authority of the Bishop of Hippo – although, at that time, the deep political crisis and the recurrent invasions affected the theological stability of the West – while, in the different atmosphere of the East, more interesting for our topic, «in the final decades of the fourth century, the most influential philosophical system in the history of Eastern Christianity was created».⁷ This is clearly about the Cappadocian theology, which is not just the culmination of Christian speculation;⁸ however, notably in the work of Gregory of Nyssa, in the wake of Basil of Caesarea’s ideas, the Cappadocian legacy became “the classical form not only of trinitarian theology but of Christian philosophy”.⁹ Thus, it became the theoretical basis of all the following debates on Christology, anthropology, soteriology, and cosmology in the later generations of Eastern thinkers. Therefore, what defines this new-born classical form of Christian philosophy? What is its

6 Manlio Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo*, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, Roma 1975, p. 559 (translated from Italian to English by the author).

7 J. Zachhuber, *The Rise*, cit. p. 15.

8 Cf. Claudio Moreschini, *Storia del pensiero cristiano tardo-antico*, Bompiani, Milano 2013, p. 747.

9 J. Zachhuber, *The Rise*, cit. p. 46.

philosophical nucleus?

Given the vastness of the subject, we will focus on the most relevant point: the philosophy of the Cappadocians. Its fulcrum, throughout the speculative activity of Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, is the struggle against the Arian heresy and the strenuous defence of the decision of Ist Nicaea in the year 325 through an imposing theoretical apparatus. To recall the Arian theory, in the wake of its teachers Arius and Aezius,¹⁰ Eunomius denied the consubstantiality established in Nicaea between the Father and the Son, arguing that the substance of the Father is not that of the Son. The substance of the former is identified by the attribute ἀγέννητος, while the latter, being generated, cannot be made of the same substance as the Father: consequently, only the Father is the true God, unbegotten substance, simple and eternal, whereas the Son has to be subordinate to Him. Against this idea of divinity, the Cappadocians developed a complete philosophical and theological system around the ὁμοούσιον, culminating in what we now call “Trinitarian ontology”. In short, especially in the work of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, the *Contra Eunomium*, they affirmed, against the heretic, the substantial identity (ὁμοουσία) between the Father and the Son in the claim of the Divine Oneness; then, they introduced the ontological novelty in recognition of the relation (σχέσις) as “original co-principle along with the substance”¹¹ in the claim of the plurality of Persons. “We say that the Father is ranked prior to the Son in terms of the relation (σχέσιν) that causes have with what comes from them,

10 Eunomians are generally considered “Arians of the third generation”. Their first one is represented by the founder Arius himself, then we have Aezius in the first half of the IVth century and, lastly, Eunomius (ca. 330-400). He adhered to a particular form of Arianism called “anomeism”, that is to say, a doctrine which supported the absolute difference of nature between the Father and the Son.

11 Giulio Maspero, *Essere e relazione: l'ontologia trinitaria di Gregorio di Nissa*, Città Nuova, Roma 2013, p. 10 (translated from Italian to English by the author).

not in terms of a difference of nature or a pre-eminence based on time. Otherwise, we will deny even the very fact that God is the Father since the difference in substance precludes their natural connection”,¹² writes Basil, turning against the heretic.

Furthermore, the doctrine of the ὁμοούσιον has another expression, which is its application in the Christological; therefore, in the anthropological field the scholars conventionally refer to the late use of the Nicaean *homoousion* in Christology as the “double *homoousion*” doctrine.¹³ The identity of the essence is not confined to the intra-divine sphere, but the ὁμοουσία pours out its effects on the world and Man. The absolute detachment between God and humanity no longer exists through the effort of Christ’s¹⁴ mediation. The two instances are enclosed in a single ontological order; therefore, since one is the essence of the Father and the Son, there can be no ontological differences between the two natures of Christ, real God and real man.

«The Mediator of God and men», as the great Apostle calls him (1Tim 2,5), has not the same meaning as the title “Son”, since it balances equally the two natures, the divine and the human. The same one is both Son of God and became Son of Man by economy, so that by his own sharing in each he might join together elements distinct in nature. If it were the case that in becoming Son of Man he did not participate in human nature, it would follow that in being Son of God he does not share in the divine being.¹⁵

12 Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*, I,20. Cf. even Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate*, 5,5,6: “Wherefore, although to be the Father and to be the Son is different, yet their substance is not different; because they are so called, not according to substance, but according to relation, which relation, however, is not accident, because it is not changeable”.

13 Cf. J. Zachhuber, *The Rise*, cit. p. 103.

14 Cf. 1Tim 2,5.

15 Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Eunomium*, III,91-92. On the figure of Christ as σὺνδῆσμος see Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica magna*, 32,40-46 and 54-61.

Commenting on the famous Johannine verse, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”,¹⁶ Augustine affirms that He is the “way” to divinity *because of* His humanity: Word and man are one in the Person of Christ.¹⁷ In a vivid passage where the aforementioned verses of Paul and John are jointly interpreted, Gregory says that the mediation by Christ is the key – or the “way” – to understand the inner nature of God and human nature at the same time.¹⁸

It is widely known that the roots of and main influence on the abovementioned arguments of the Cappadocian theology, on the Christian side, were mainly the thoughts of the School of Alexandria, mainly the ones of Athanasius and Origen: the former, with his foresight of Christological doctrines strongly related to the defence of the Nicaean Creed,¹⁹ and the latter, firstly through the investigation of the Christian and Scriptural truth by means of Greek rationality, and secondly, through the introduction of a still crude Trinitarian terminology, that is, οὐσία–ὑπόστασις.²⁰ Nevertheless, at this point, we do not want to deepen the study of this influence which has been studied extensively by several distinguished scholars throughout the last decades. Rather, we want to draw attention to another, less explored aspect of the history of Eastern Christianity: that is to

16 Gv 14,6.

17 Cf. Augustine of Hippo, *In Evangelium Ioannis*, LXIX,3-4.

18 Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Illud*, 21,7-12 – unlike in the Augustinian commentary, in this case there is a clear eschatological purpose. Cf. Giulio Maspero's comment on the passage in *La trinità e l'uomo. L'Ad Ablabium di Gregorio di Nissa*, Città Nuova, Roma 2004, p. 167.

19 Cf. C. Moreschini, *Storia*, cit. p. 723; in particular, we refer to his work *De incarnatione Verbi Dei*.

20 The first aspect can be found in works such as *Contra Celsum* and, above all, in *De principiis*; while the latter aspect can be found in his pivotal scriptural commentaries.

say, the Christological implications of the Trinitarian ontology,²¹ so getting closer to Nemesius' philosophy.

Firstly, we ought to mention the fact that with the summarising and systematising nature of Cappadocian thought, the traditional antagonism dating back to the IIIrd century between the School of Alexandria and the School of Antioch,²² tends to fade so that, as we had anticipated, the Christian philosophy tends to homogenise. In short, the antagonism was focused on the Alexandrian enhancement of the divine element in Christ through the presence of *Logos* at the expense of complete humanity *versus* the Antiochene enhancement of the human part of Christ. The first Christological perspective of Alexandria's influence was already testified by the Council of Antioch in 268, where this approach was taken by the Arians. Eustathius of Antioch, who was "heir to a tradition that had always enhanced to the utmost the humanity of Christ in his relationship with the divinity, and hence his integrity",²³ fought against that. Subsequently, this approach was resumed precisely in the Antiochene area by Apollinarius of Laodicea in the second half of the IVth century.²⁴ Despite being a supporter of Nicaea, the new heretic argued that the human nature in Christ must be "incomplete" of the highest part of the soul, *i. e.* νοῦς, to make room for the complete divine nature through the *Logos*. The starting point of Apollinarius' thesis is the impossibility of the coexistence of two perfect or complete natures in

21 Cf. J. Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa. Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2014, p. 212.

22 Cf. Hugo Rahner, *Antiochenische Schule*, in *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche* 1 (1957), pp. 650-652; Manlio Simonetti, *Antiochia. Scuola*, in *NDAC* 1 (2006), coll. 356-359.

23 Cf. Manlio Simonetti, *Studi di Cristologia postnicena*, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, Roma 2006, p. 368.

24 Cf. the classic Johann Dräseke, *Apollinarius von Laodikeia. Sein Leben und seine Schriften*, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1892, where Apollinarius' doctrine is frequently compared to Nemesius' *De nat. hom.*

one substance²⁵ in such a merely juxtaposed way. Instead, the aim was to ensure a steady presence of the divine in Christ without any other guiding principle.

Nevertheless, the Laodicean's position was fought and soon assimilated to Eunomius' in Gregory's *Antirrheticus*, and across Antiochene Christianity in Nemesius' *De nat. hom.*, and in Theodore of Mopsuestia's *De incarnatione*, as we will see. Narrowing down the issue to its heart, the convergence of the two heretical positions detected by the Fathers against the orthodoxy of the ὁμοούσιον was the ontological hiatus between Godhead and humanity in a soteriological perspective.²⁶ How can Man be saved or, in other words, get to God if, for the Arians, the saviour's Godhead is lower than the Father's and His substance is *beyond* the Son, the human nature and all the created world? Moreover, how can Man be saved if, according to Apollinarius, the human nature of the saviour is incomplete, missing what traditionally makes him "human", thus greater than a mere animal and akin to God, the rational soul?

Therefore, we have to see how the ontological and Trinitarian doctrine of the ὁμοούσιον arose in Alexandria and developed in Cappadocia, was received by Antiochene Christianity at the end of

25 This may have an Aristotelian foundation according to the following passage of *Metaphysica*, 1039a 3-4 ss.: "ἀδύνατον γὰρ οὐσίαν ἐξ οὐσιῶν εἶναι ἐνυπαρχουσῶν ὡς ἐντελεχεῖα".

26 Cf. the Athanasian source of the subject in *De incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 1: "You must understand why it is that the Word of the Father, so great and so high, has been made manifest in bodily form. [...] He has been manifested in a human body for this reason only, out of the love and goodness of His Father, for the salvation of us men", and 8: "For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God entered our world. In one sense, indeed, He was not far from it before, for no part of creation had ever been without Him Who, while ever abiding in union with the Father, yet fills all things that are. But now He entered the world in a new way, stooping to our level in His love and Self-revealing to us".

the century, becoming the theoretical ground for the new, widespread Christological and anthropological debates (now against both Eunomius and Apollinarius) in the area.

2.1. Ontology and Christology in Antioch: the example of Theodore of Mopsuestia

Although we encounter in the Cappadocian philosophy the ultimate ontological expression of the Nicæan Symbol, to measure the Christological and anthropological consequences of this ontology in the Cappadocian philosophy, we have to shift our gaze to the Syrian areas of the empire. All things considered, “the Cappadocians did not genuinely have strong Christological concerns”.²⁷ Since the IIIrd century, though, Antiochene Christianity has always had a strong tradition according to which there was a tendency to enhance the theological role of humanity. Thus, after the quite general but not always peaceful acceptance of the Nicæan Symbol in the Syrian provinces and the ascending political and theological authority of the Cappadocians, the Antiochenes set the new ontology as a basis of their anthropological and Christological concerns. This theoretical broadening is not a second-rate fact. At the end of the IVth century, the Christian philosophy took up all the space once filled only by the pagan and Greek philosophical thought, thus becoming an overall outlook of the world, an actual *Weltanschauung*, from the essence of God to that of Man.

First, let us look at some historical hints regarding the link and theological relationship between the two key centres of the story, Cappadocia (Nicæa) and Antioch. There were various intermediary figures between the two groups. In the first half of the IVth century

²⁷ J. Zachhuber, *Human Nature*, cit. p. 212. Although we have to point out Gregory of Nyssa’s great anthropological concern in his *De hominis opificio* and the presence of mature Christological hints in Gregory of Nazianzus’ works.

in the city of Nemesius' bishopric, Eusebius of Emesa, who was considered the "founder" of the School of Antioch,²⁸ was the theologian that, in the spirit of his tradition, restricted the Trinitarian issue to the God-Christ relationship, restating that the full assumption of humanity did not involve any divine changes in Christ. Moreover, he dealt with many purely anthropological topics such as free will and the status of man's Soul. He was Eusebius of Caesarea's pupil, the well-known protagonist of the Nicaean creed's drafting and previous supporter of subordinationism. More interesting is the obscure figure of Libanius of Antioch, a cultured and esteemed thinker who, despite his paganism and his crucial relationship with the emperor Julian, was the master of both Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Cappadocian Basil of Caesarea. We know this last information thanks to one valuable letter of Gregory to Libanius,²⁹ wherein the Father shows an unusual appreciation and respect for such an anti-Christian thinker and friend of a persecutor. Libanius could have also been a crucial figure for the philosophical and classical education of the aforementioned Christians, among the most educated in Greek literacy. As a last striking data and in the context of many Arians, we cannot fail to mention the final approval of the Nicaean *ὁμοούσιον*, which was carried out in the synod of Antioch in 363 and chaired by Meletius: from that moment on, Eastern Christianity joined the Nicaean banner and the Cappadocian Trinitarian ontology became the doctrinal cornerstone in the Syrian areas.

Before moving on our line of argument to Nemesius, we want to refer to the emblematic figure of Christian Antioch, Theodore of Mopsuestia. He can be seen as a bridge between the Cappadocian Trinitarian ontology and its application in Christology and anthropology. As already noted, he was one of the most influential

28 Cf. *supra*, note 22.

29 Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistula* 13.

exegetes and theologians of Late Antiquity, second in fame perhaps only to Origen.³⁰ His key relevance in the topic arises from three reasons. First, he was an adherent of Cappadocian authority and the Nicaean symbol, a strong opponent of the Eunomian and Laodicean heresy; second, he was close to the Cappadocian theological environment and was an acknowledged theologian to whom Nemesius refers to as a distinguished scholar;³¹ and, lastly, we find an unconventional and reiterated theological attention for human nature³² in his works. He became an ordained priest in 383 and bishop in 392, during which he initially upheld the Christian faith in a treatise against Julian the emperor; then, he strongly argued against Eunomian and Laodicean Christology in his major theological work, the *De incarnatione*. His thesis against the heretics restates the ontological unity between Godhead and humanity through the contemporary coexistence of the two natures in Christ with a soteriological aim.

30 Cf. Augusto Guida, *Introduzione*, p. 11, in Teodoro di Mopsuestia, *Replica a Giuliano Imperatore*, ed. Augusto Guida, Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, Bologna 2019.

31 Nemesius mentions Theodore (*De nat. hom.*, 44,15-16) in order to distance himself from him, nevertheless he refers to the Antiochian including him in the formula: “[...] as it is thought by some influential men (ὡς τισι τῶν ἐνδόξων ἀνδρῶν δοκεῖ)”.

32 For instance, the several passages which point out human nature in Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Adversus criminationes in Christianos Iuliani imperatoris*, fr. 6,5: “εἰ δὲ σὺ τὴν φύσιν ἡμῶν ὑπερβαίνων [...]”; fr. 6,8: “[...] ὁ πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν φύσιν [ἡμῶν] νομοθετῶν;”; fr. 8,5: “ἐπεὶ οὖν καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κατὰ τὴν σάρκα τὴν ληφθεῖσαν ἀνθρώπος ἀληθῶς κατὰ φύσιν ἦν ἐκ τῶν πατέρων καταγόμενος, λογισμῶ καὶ κρίσει πολιτευόμενος [...], δειλιᾷ τὸν θάνατον κατὰ φύσιν ἀνθρώπων καὶ εὐχεται καὶ ἐνισχύεται ὑπὸ ἀγγέλου”. For his emphasis on the human element in Christ’s activity and the excessive emphasis on the separation of the two natures in the Son, Theodore was later regarded as the father of Nestorianism – likely unfairly. The heresy rejected the hypostatic unity in Christ, therefore leaning to the idea of “two natures, two persons”, then it was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431.

Regarding the Eunomian doctrine, the difference of essence between the supreme ἀγέννητος God the Father and the generated Son hinders man's salvation through the Mediator, because man can never reach God, given that divinity and humanity belong to two different and irreconcilable ontological orders. On the other side, Apollinarius clearly stated in his Christology, that there is no point of contact between divinity and complete human nature. Therefore, formally accepting the Nicaean *homoousia*, he categorically rejects its Christological and anthropological consequences, such as the ontological unity of God and Man, thanks to the mediation of Christ. This kind of unity is inadmissible for Apollinarius since man is *homoousios* to man, and God is *homoousios* to God, which means that the distance between the Creator and the creature, the not-generated and the generated, is unbridgeable.³³ Therefore, as Theodore says in *Hom.* 13,9 against the heretic, he “mutilates our salvation into imperfection”. Thus, from two different perspectives, the two heretics destroy the main heart of the Divine Trinity, which is the ontological unity, *homoousia* of the Father and the Son, and therefore of God and Man: Eunomians miss the human element in God while downgrading the Son, Apollinarius misses the divine element in Man not including the νοῦς.

Finally, we can point out how the undisputable foundation of the anti-heretical Christology of Theodore stands on the whole inhabitation³⁴ of the Godhead in Christ, and, at the same time, the

33 Cf. Till Jansen, *Die Christologie der Fragmente De incarnatione*, p. 178, in Theodore of Mopsuestia, *De incarnatione*, Till Jansen (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin 2009.

34 Theodore talks about “ἐνοίκησις κατ'εὐδοκίαν”, an expression which can be translated like “inhabitation” or “indwelling according to [God's] willingness”. The Christian explains his doctrine with the following words, *De incarnatione*, VII, fr. 6: “[...] it is neither possible to say that God accomplishes indwelling with the essence, nor with the active power. But what remains at this point?”

full humanity of the Saviour, which includes God and Man in a single ontological order, is the ontological background of Nicaean-Cappadocian *homoousia*. The only salvation lies in the ontological interpenetration and conciliation between Godhead and humanity, as stated in the insightful Athanasius' passage: "He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God. He manifested Himself by means of a body in order that we might perceive the Mind of the unseen Father. He endured shame from men that we might inherit immortality".³⁵

3. *The anti-heretical controversy in Nemesius*³⁶

Up to this point, we highlighted the ontological foundation – Nicaean and Cappadocian – of the rising Christology and anthropology *via negationis* concerning the heretical doctrines of Eunomius and Apollinarius. Our concern is to underline the unity of the divine and the human as the main consequence of the Cappadocian understanding of Nicaean *homoousia*, not limited to the intra-divine unity between the Father and the Son.

What term shall we use that really preserves the appropriateness in this respect? It is now obviously appropriate to say that the indwelling takes place with the good pleasure (εὐδοκία). «Good pleasure» is the name given to the best and most beautiful will of God, which He cherishes when He finds pleasure in those who make an effort to be devoted to Him, because it seems good and excellent to Him towards them. [...] It is therefore proper to speak of indwelling in this way. Since God is infinite and unlimited according to His nature, He is present in all. But with good pleasure, He is far from some and near to others. (Translated from German to English by the author).

³⁵ Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 54,3.

³⁶ In this paper, due to constraint of space, regrettably, we have not dealt with the philosophical foundations of Nemesius' anti-heretical polemics, which are furthermore predominant in the treatise.

We can pursue our research by stating that the birth of Christian anthropology, which marked the second half of the IVth century through works such as Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*, Nemesius' *De natura hominis* and Augustine's *Confessiones*, *De libero arbitrio*, and *De magistro* among others,³⁷ should be understood within the ontological Trinitarian paradigm through the Son's status, a coherent and necessary prosecution of the Christian philosophical *Weltanschauung*. Namely, the existence of a universal divine *nature* (φύσις) or *essence* (οὐσία) is the prodrome and the *raison d'être* of the very existence of an equally universal human *nature* (φύσις) or *essence* (οὐσία), where the nature or essence provides the only universal ontological order in which Godhead and humanity are included. The possibility of an anthropological argument is inscribed in this ontological conception of God. The theological and philosophical foundations of Nicaean and Cappadocian thought in the IVth century will be those of all the theoretical models in the history of thought, which will draw their spiritual sap from the Christian speculation of this period.

Nemesius' anthropological and, to a lesser extent, Christological model is entirely part of this current – although, as we said above, there is a lack of references to Nicaean *homoousia* and a lack of an overt ontology, contrary to the example of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who openly mentions the authority of Nicaea and the Fathers. His polemical targets are the same as the ones of the tradition of the Nicaean writers such as Athanasius, Gregory, Basil, and Theodore of Mopsuestia, that is to say, Eunomius and Apollinarius. However, this time we should first mention the near-total absence of ferocious theological hate against the heretics, whose ideas are debated and then philosophically refuted; and second, the argument is carried out entirely in anthropological terms. On the issue, Nemesius

37 Cf. G. Verbeke, *op. cit.* p. 140.

clearly introduces his view in the very first sentence of the treatise: “It has been the opinion of many good men that man is eminently constructed of an intellectual soul and a body, indeed so well that he could not have come to be, nor be composed, well in any other way”.³⁸ Man (ἄνθρωπος) is the result of the perfect and whole combination or union – the medieval Latins will later call it *unio inconfusa* – of an incorporeal soul (ψυχή), composed of a rational (λογική) and an irrational (ἄλογον) part, and a material body (σῶμα) whereby the first is axiologically greater, being the guide and the master of his instrument.³⁹

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the body is axiologically connoted as “evil”; on the contrary, it is God’s gift in pair with the soul,⁴⁰ it contributes to man’s perfection,⁴¹ and it is the manifestation of the divine through the excellence of its structure.⁴² For these reasons, man “came to be last”, as Moses said “in his exposition of the creation”⁴³; he is the synthesis (σύνδεσμος) of all the universe, because he carries in himself the two main components of the All, intelligible and sensible. He is the being, who stands “on the boundary between intelligible and perceptual being (ὡσπερ ἐν μεθορίοις ἐστὶν νοητῆς καὶ αἰσθητῆς οὐσίας). He is joined together with non-rational and inanimate beings in virtue of the body and bodily powers, and to

38 Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, 1,1-5.

39 Ibid, 26,4-6: “So there is also a need for the soul to take care of the body, in order to make it an instrument fitting for itself”.

40 Ibid, 9,22-23: “Man received these two special privileges [...]”.

41 Ibid, 15,20-16,2: “But lest we seem to some to be writing a vulgar encomium of man and not merely setting forth his nature, which was our project, let us leave the account at this point, even if in stating the greatest advantages of his nature we describe this very nature. So, if we know in what noble birth we share and that we are heaven-born”.

42 Ibid, 46,15-16: “But man has them all and perfect, and in such a way that it could not have been well otherwise”.

43 Ibid, 4,24-5,1.

incorporeal beings in virtue of reason".⁴⁴ The idea of man as σύνδεσμος and μεθόριος⁴⁵ is a classical *topos* of ancient thought, starting with the Platonic tradition in the *Timaeus*, by way of Posidonius⁴⁶ and Philo of Alexandria,⁴⁷ eventually brought in the Christian anthropology, mostly owing to Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*: "[...] the man is medium (μέσον ἐστί) between the divine and immaterial nature, and the irrational life of the animals".⁴⁸ Here is a beautiful display of Nemesius' Christian anthropology:

Who, then, could rightly be surprised at the nobility of such an animal that binds together in himself mortal and immortal elements, and joins the rational with the non-rational; who carries in his own nature the image of the whole creation, for which reason he was also called a microcosm; who was thought worthy of so great divine providence; for whom is everything that is now and is to be, and for whom indeed God

44 Ibid, 2,24-3,3.

45 For a complete treatment of the subject Cf. Beatrice Motta, *La mediazione estrema. L'antropologia di Nemesio di Emesa fra platonismo e aristotelismo*, Il Poligrafo, Padova 2004, pp. 45-112.

46 The influence of Posidonius on Nemesius has been extensively studied by Werner Wilhelm Jaeger, *Nemesios von Emesa: Quellenforschungen zum Neuplatonismus und Seinen Anfängen bei Poseidonios*, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin 1914.

47 Philo of Alexandria, *De opificio mundi*, 135: "Τοῦ δ' αἰσθητοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ μέρους ἀνθρώπου τὴν κατασκευὴν σύνθετον εἶναι φήσιν ἕκ τε γεώδους οὐσίας καὶ πνεύματος θείου· γεγενῆσθαι γὰρ τὸ μὲν σῶμα χοῦν τοῦ τεχνίτου λαβόντος καὶ μορφήν ἀνθρωπίνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ διαπλάσαντος, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἀπ' οὐδενὸς γενητοῦ τὸ παράπαν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ἡγεμόνος τῶν πάντων· ὃ γὰρ ἐνεφύσησεν, οὐδὲν ἦν ἕτερον ἢ πνεῦμα θεῖον ἀπὸ τῆς μακαρίας καὶ εὐδαίμονος φύσεως ἐκείνης ἀποικίαν τὴν ἐνθάδε στειλάμενον ἐπ' ὠφελεία τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν, ἵν' εἶ καὶ θνητὸν ἐστί κατὰ τὴν ὁρατὴν μερίδα, κατὰ γοῦν τὴν ἀόρατον ἀθανατίζηται. Διὸ καὶ κυρίως ἂν τις εἴποι τὸν ἄνθρωπον θνητῆς καὶ ἀθανάτου φύσεως εἶναι μεθόριον ἑκατέρας ὅσον ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι μετέχοντα καὶ γεγενῆσθαι θνητὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀθάνατον, θνητὸν μὲν κατὰ τὸ σῶμα, κατὰ δὲ τὴν διανοίαν ἀθάνατον".

48 Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio*, 16. Gregory, in agreement with Nemesius, claims the equal dignity of body and soul simultaneously created and pre-contained in the *pleroma*, Cf. G. Verbeke, *op. cit.* pp. 143-146.

became man; who ends in incorruption and escapes mortality? He is king over the heavens; being born in the image and likeness of God, he communes with Christ, is a child of God, and surpasses all principalities and powers. Who could express the advantages of this living thing?⁴⁹

The quiet and brief controversy against the heretics allows us to understand the subject further. Nemesius states that Eunomius⁵⁰ regards man's soul as “«an incorporeal substance»” from truth – referring to Plato –but «created in a body» from the teaching of Aristotle. The latter represents the centre of the controversy since, with this expression, the heretic seems to assign to the soul a simultaneous birth with and inside the body, thus a temporal origin which means making the incorporeal soul “perishable and mortal”. Nemesius, by supporting a kind of Origenian pre-existence of the human soul,⁵¹ and by making reference to *Gen 2,2*⁵² considers the creation as completed; therefore, souls do not occur as soon as a body is generated. “If someone were to believe that the soul came to be after the body because the soul was inserted after the formation of the body, he errs from the truth. For neither does Moses say that it was created then when it was inserted in the body, nor is that in accordance with reason”. Apollinarius,⁵³ instead, supports a sort of traducianism since he believes that “souls are born from souls, as bodies are born from bodies. For, he holds, soul progresses by transmission from the first man into all his progeny, just like bodily transmission”. The antitheses are identical. In this way, the creation is still not complete and “if all

49 Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, 15,3-12.

50 Ibid, 30,18 ff.

51 On the topic Cf. B. Motta, *op. cit.* pp. 190-200; Alberto Siclari, *L'antropologia di Nemesio di Emesa*, La Garangola, Padova 1974, p. 102: “The Emesan is clearly an advocate of the preexistence of the soul”.

52 “Since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing, he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken”.

53 Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, 32,3 ff.

things that are born successively from each other have been shown to be mortal – which is why they beget and are born, so that the race of mortals may persist – then this man also must either say that the soul is mortal, being born from reproduction, or that souls are not born successively from others”.

Either way, we dive into the most interesting theoretical concepts shifting our focus from anthropology to the – few but remarkable – Christological hints that are featured in *De nat. hom.* As it has already been pointed out, the uniqueness of Nemesius' project lies in his anti-heretical *modus operandi*, which goes from anthropology to Christology, and not inversely, as, for instance, in Gregory of Nyssa. He theologically subordinates the anthropological issue of the unity between soul and body to the Christological problem of the divine-humane union in the Son.⁵⁴ Then, as we said, man is the perfect and interpenetrating unity of soul and body, intelligible and sensible, thereby he is the link (σύνδεσμος) and the boundary (μεθόριος) of the creation. Moreover, regarding “how (πῶς) the union of a soul and a soulless body comes about”,⁵⁵ Nemesius rejects the philosophical solutions of combination, juxtaposition or adjacency and mixture,⁵⁶ since they do not give an account of the unity of an incorporeal and a material substance. He resorts to the so-called “Ammonius (Porphyry?) solution”,⁵⁷ the one of Plotinus's master, according to which being an immaterial soul does not follow the bodily rules; therefore, it cannot be in the body as in a physical place: in such a way, the soul will alter his nature becoming corruptible and might not dominate the body. “Therefore, the soul is not altered in unification” because “it has been shown that intelligible things are unalterable in their substance”, then “it necessarily follows that even when they

54 Cf. C. Moreschini, *Storia*, cit. p. 840.

55 Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, 38,12-13.

56 Ibid, passim in the first half of the treatise.

57 Cf. Ibid, 39,16-17.

are unified they do not perish together with the things with which they are unified. The soul is, then, unified, and is unified to the body without being compounded with it". Nemesius illustrates his solution as follows: "So, when it is said [the soul] to be in a body, it is not said to be in a body as in a place, but as in a relationship to it (ὡς ἐν σχέσει) and by being present, as God is said to be in us". The union between an intelligible and a material substance does not take place by means of corporeal categories, but occurs through the category of σχέσις, which we have already met in a Trinitarian context,⁵⁸ to signify the relationship of the Persons. Although the actual source of the idea is purely Neoplatonic: Porphyry affirms in his *Sententiae* that "the incorporeals themselves, since they are not spatially present in bodies, are there present when they want to be, in the sense that they lower themselves down to them as far as it is in their nature to lower themselves. And, not spatially present, they are present in relation to bodies (τῇ σχέσει παρέστιν αὐτοῖς)".⁵⁹ Hence, "being in a relationship to (ἐν σχέσει)" consists of a way (πῶς) of union untied from spatial and corporeal categories which belong solely to intelligible substance, ensuring an all-pervading unity in the compound. At this stage, through this pagan and Neoplatonic category, the author operates the aforementioned key transition from anthropology to Christological issue by applying the principle of the unity between the incorporeal divinity of the Word and human nature, and body and soul. It is worth quoting the entire passage.

This account would fit more clearly and best with the union of God, the Word, with man, in which, while united, He remained uncompounded and uncontained, but not in the way the soul is. For the soul, being one of the things which are complex, seems both to be affected with the body in a way through its affinity with it, and sometimes to master

58 Cf. supra.

59 Porphyry, *Sententiae*, III.

it, sometimes to be mastered. But God, the Word, is not in any way Himself altered by this affinity that concerns body and soul, nor does He share in their weakness, but by giving them a share in His divinity He becomes one with them while remaining one as He was before the unification. This kind of mixture or unification is more novel. He both is infused and remains altogether unmixed, uncompounded, uncontaminated and unchanged, not affected with them but only acting with them, neither perishing with them and altered with them, but increasing them without being Himself diminished by them, in addition to remaining immutable and uncompounded, since He is also pure and without share in any alteration. Porphyry, who raised his own voice against Christ, is a witness to this: the testimonies of enemies on our behalf are strong and permit no reply. Now this man Porphyry in the second book of his *Miscellaneous Investigations*⁶⁰ writes in the exact words that follow: «It is not to be denied that a certain substance can be received for the completion of another substance, and can be a part of [this] substance while retaining its own nature together with completing another substance, and, while becoming one with another, can retain its own unity and moreover, while itself untransmuted, it can transmute those things into which it comes so that they gain its activity by its presence». He says this about the unification of soul and body. But if this account is true of the soul because it is incorporeal, still more is it so in the account of God Who is more uncompounded and truly incorporeal. This directly stops the mouths of those who try to attack the unification of God with man.⁶¹

The passage is quite clear: Nemesius holds a sort of dyophysitism, namely the twofold nature of Christ in keeping with the Antiochene tradition, and like we have already seen for Theodore of Mopsuestia. Nevertheless, Nemesius does not only want to emphasise the twofold presence of the Godhead and humanity in the Son, preserving the

60 Cf. Porphyrios: *Symmikta Zetemata*, Heinrich Dörrie (ed.), C.H. Beck, München 1959.

61 Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, 42,9-43,12.

mutual difference, but he is also keen to stress the absolute and essential unity between God and man. Unlike Theodore, who speaks of union in terms of “[God’s] consent [to it] (εὐδοκία)”, the Nemesian Christology “is characterised by the emphasis on the naturalness of the «mode» of union, which does not depend on God’s favour”⁶². By matching anthropological and Christological arguments, as well as the union between soul and body in man, it is not pure conjunction or mixture but a substantial and unconfused union; similarly, the unification of God with man is substantial⁶³ or “natural” using Nemesius’ term: “But the means of the unification is not [God’s] consent [to it], as is thought by some influential men, but nature is the cause (ἀλλ’ ἡ φύσις αἰτία). For one may plausibly say that the reception of the body came about by consent, but that it is united without composition is through God’s own nature (κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ φύσιν) and not by grace”.⁶⁴ The topic of the explicit comparison between the relationship of incarnated Logos with the humanity of Christ and the relationship of man’s soul and body may be diffusely found in the IVth century,⁶⁵ either in the Fathers’ Orthodox works or, with different purposes, in unorthodox works. Within the Orthodoxy, and in agreement with the spirit of the *homoousia*, we can mention the following effective Augustinian passage: “The Son of man has soul and body. The Son of God, which is the Word of God, has man, as the soul has body. And just as soul having body does not make

62 A. Siclari, *op. cit.* p. 125 (translated from Italian to English by the author).

63 Cf. Marie-Odile Boulnois, *L’Union de l’âme et du corps comme modèle christologique, de Némésius d’Emèse à la controverse nestorienne*, in *Les Pères de l’Église face à la science médicale de leur temps*, Véronique Boudon-Millot – Bernard Pouderon (eds.), Duplicates, Paris 2005, p. 452.

64 Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, 44,15-18.

65 Cf. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *La filosofia dei Padri della Chiesa*, vol. 1: *Spirito, Trinità, Incarnazione*, Paideia, Brescia 1978, p. 326 (or. ed. *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. 1: *Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1956).

two persons, but one man; so the Word, having man, makes not two persons, but one Christ. What is man? A rational soul, having a body. What is Christ? The Word of God, having man".⁶⁶

Claiming what is reported, Nemesius inscribes the *ontological possibility* of the Godhead-humanity union in the very God's *nature* or *essence* and in human nature capable of receiving it. Thus, the anthropological union of soul-body is realised κατ' οὐσίαν, as well as the God-man union in Christ. The refutation of Eunomian Christological doctrine takes place in this respect since Eunomians state that "God the Word is united to the body not substantially but through the powers of each. For it is not [they say] the substances that are united or mixed, but the powers of the body are mixed with the divine powers".⁶⁷ The Eunomians' argument relies on two Aristotelian principles.⁶⁸ First, as detected by Nemesius himself, they assume the Aristotelian definition of human "powers (δυνάμεις)" discussed in *De anima*,⁶⁹ such that the divine δυνάμεις will join only the body and not the entire man. Then, as the Apollinarians will do later, they assume another Aristotelian principle according to which a single substance cannot consist of two entire substances.⁷⁰ However, the "σχέσις solution" lets Nemesius reiterate the perfect and not-confused unity between the incorporeal divine Word and man's body-soul compound:

So it is better to say, as we said before, that the union of the substances comes about without composition through the proper nature of the incorporeals, the more divine suffering no harm from the lower, while this is benefited by the more divine. For the purely incorporeal nature

⁶⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *In Evangelium Ioannis*, XIX,15.

⁶⁷ Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, 43,16-18.

⁶⁸ Gregory of Nyssa has already ascribed the mistakes of the Eunomian heresy to the Aristotelian philosophy. Cf. A. Siclari, *op. cit.* p. 223.

⁶⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *De anima*, 416b.

⁷⁰ Cf. *supra*, note 25.

pervades the whole unchecked, while nothing pervades it. So they are unified because it pervades all, but because nothing pervades it, it remains unmixed and uncompounded.⁷¹

Finally, Nemesius comes to criticise even Apollinarian anthropology and its Christological consequences. The heretic adopted the Plotinian trichotomy of man composed of body (σῶμα), soul (ψυχή) and spirit or intellect (νοῦς), and “for he laid this down as the – anthropological – foundation of his own opinion and built on the rest in accordance with his own doctrine”.⁷² We have already talked about the way Apollinarius used his anthropology to declare human imperfection in the incarnation of Christ – just to remind, by replacing νοῦς with the divine Word – and we have just mentioned the Aristotelian principle of the impossibility of the coexistence of two substances in one, which lays underneath his doctrine as well as in the one of Eunomius. At this stage of the research, it is worth spending a few words regarding this convergency uncovered by Nemesius between Plotinus and Apollinarius, to whom we can assimilate Eunomian heresy as well,⁷³ given that their God’s conception is in opposition to the *homoousian* ontology silently advocated by Nemesius. Actually, Nemesius’ objection to Apollinarian-Plotinian trichotomy is not restricted to anthropology, indeed, but is also turned against the idea of God and the *Weltanschauung* that this anthropology underlies.

Primarily, the three parts νοῦς-ψυχή-σῶμα are not merely components of man, but, in either Plotinus or Apollinarius, they are characterised by a different axiological significance. The transition from one to another is a progressive distancing from the

71 Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, 44,9-15.

72 Ibid. 1,12-14.

73 Concerning this convergence of Plotinus and Eunomius in respect of God’s conception Cf. Panayiotis Papageorgiou, *Plotinus and Eunomius: “A Parallel Theology of the Three Hypostases”*, in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 37 (1992), pp. 215-231.

pure incorporeal and supreme essence of God, such that the switch from νοῦς to ψυχή, and from ψυχή to σῶμα shall be considered as a derivation in a pejorative sense⁷⁴. Therefore, according to Apollinarius, the only presence of the soul, which is *inferior* to the intellect, in Christ does not make him human, and Godhead is still anything other than man. Consequently, again both in the Neoplatonic and heretical anthropological model, there is an *ontological leap* between νοῦς – divine element – and ψυχή – specifically human element – that reflects the ontological leap and distance between Godhead and humanity which are essentially irreconcilable: they belong to two different ontological realms. *Versus* the ontological unity established by the concept of *homoousia* and thanks to its Patristics interpretations. The God of Plotinus, indeed, is beyond (ἐπέκεινα) the concept of οὐσία⁷⁵ and every intellectual category. It can never, by nature (κατὰ φύσιν) or by essence (κατ'οὐσίαν), get to man, nor this last can reach God. Even the intermediary *hypostaseis* such as νοῦς and ψυχή cannot bridge the gap with the One. Thus, the two realms, divine and human, are separate. Separation, which is fully kept whether in Apollinarius' Christological model – where the mediation between man and God in Christ does not come to light missing human completeness – or in the one of Eunomius – where the ἀγέννητος Father is inaccessible to the Son, subordinate to the supreme divinity, thus does not make the mediation. As already noted by distinguished scholars, there is a residual gnostic taste in these ideas,⁷⁶ since the dualistic gnostic religion, devaluating the world,

74 Cf. Hans Jonas, *Gnosi e spirito taroantico*, ed. Cristian. Bonaldi, Bompiani, Milano 2010, p. 1018 (or. ed. *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1988). Using a powerful expression Plotinus speaks of “apostasy” in the intelligible descent, Cf. Plotinus, *Enneades*, VI,9,5: “ὁ νοῦς [...] ἀποστῆναι δέ πως τοῦ ἐνὸς τολμήσας”.

75 For instance, Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.*, V,3,12-13.

76 Cf. M. Simonetti, *Studi*, cit. pp. 2-3.

material reality and humanity could not allow the union between God and man in a soteriological perspective because the corrupted world can never be saved. “To this restrictive interpretation that the Gnostics gave of Christ’s redemptive work, the Christians opposed the wholeness of man’s salvation, even of the material body destined to resurrect on the last day; and on the basis of the same axiom: Christ assumed all that he redeemed, they also presented the incarnation of Christ in a more integral manner, *i.e.* complete with body as well”.⁷⁷ With Nemesius, the statement of unity between God and man *by essence* (κατ’ οὐσίαν) carries an idea of *ontological totality* in which, being ontologically compatible, both Godhead and humanity coexist; an idea that lies at the heart of Nicæan *homoousia* and of its Patristic theoretical developments as we have seen.

Conclusion

With the theology of the IVth century, Christian thought assumed the overall vision of the world, and took up all the space which was once the exclusive field of Ancient pagan thought. This phenomenon occurred not only for the spiritual power of the new religion, which embraced the large masses of people in difficulty in the crisis of the empire, but also for the exhaustion of paganism.⁷⁸ Moreover, this progressive replacement takes place within a philosophical scenario where Christianity inherits the truthful claim that belonged to the ancient Greek philosophy and is now deep-rooted in the heart of Christian religious experience.⁷⁹ As we attempted to explain, the demand and theoretical core of this Christian *Weltanschauung* is the statement of Godhead-humanity mediation and unity through

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Just remember the vivid Augustinian argument against the pagan thought and religion in the first book of *De civitate Dei*.

⁷⁹ Cf. M. Simonetti, *Studi*, cit. p. 1.

the concept of *homoousia* and through its Christological and anthropological development, thus restoring an idea of ontological totality not far from Ancient Greek ontology.⁸⁰ The key concepts of Christian speculation, Hegel acutely observed,⁸¹ are those of “reconciliation” because God is the one Who reconciles Himself with the world by means of the incarnation of the Son, and “mediation” which “consists of the fact that man sees his origin in God: origin, however, in the sense that man himself has to complete the process to reach his root, his truth”. For this reason, therefore, “between God and man there is no estrangement, no gulf to be bridged: on the contrary, there is a mutual affinity and a common participation”, in order that Christology appears as a realised anthropology, an *exemplum* of a new man.⁸² Concluding with the words of the German philosopher, “The Church Fathers maintained the unity of divine and human nature, [...] and in this consciousness they stood opposed to the Arians. This is the principal determination of Christian Orthodoxy”.

80 Cf. J. Zachhuber, *The Rise*, cit. p. 9.

81 Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. III: *Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, R. F. Brown (ed.), University of California Press, Berkeley 1990, pp. 17-34.

82 Cf. Vito Mancuso, *Hegel teologo e l'imperdonabile assenza del «Principie di questo mondo»*, Garzanti, Milano 1996, pp. 101-102 (translated from Italian to English by the author).

Abstract

Nemesio di Emesa viene generalmente considerato come uno dei primi pensatori antichi a cui è possibile attribuire una vera e propria antropologia cristiana sciolta dai vincoli scritturistici. Tuttavia, nonostante nella sua misteriosa opera *De natura hominis* non rinveniamo un'esplicita ontologia e una chiara teologia trinitaria, è possibile dimostrare che le sue originali idee in campo antropologico e Cristologico sono profondamente collegate con l'ontologia Nicena. In particolare, l'unità e l'identità sostanziale tra il Padre ed il Figlio, e la contigua unità tra Dio e l'uomo sono determinate dall'innovativo uso della nozione greca di οὐσία all'interno del contesto cristiano della dottrina dell'ὁμοούσιον. Quest'ultima funge da sfondo ontologico essenziale per l'antropologia di Nemesio. La presente ricerca tenta di portare alla luce, sia storicamente che filosoficamente, il modo in cui l'epocale antropologia cristiana di Nemesio può essere propriamente compresa solo ed esclusivamente all'interno della dottrina Nicena dell'ὁμοούσιον. Al fine di raggiungere questo scopo, nel testo si farà riferimento alle fonti spirituali di Nemesio (soprattutto la filosofia cristiana dei Padri) e dei suoi – e di Nicea in pari tempo – avversari (Ariani ed Apollinaristi).



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