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***Paideia* and Theology: Aspects and Perspectives in the Education Process**

Abstract: This paper approaches the educational process making a correlation between the philosophic concept of *paideia* and the Christian pedagogy present in the patristic teaching. *Paideia* as a teaching but also, at the same time, as a method of acquiring perfection from a human perspective, represents a culture of the spirit, which, once appropriated, also involves the practice of virtues. Certainly, in this state, from a philosophical perspective, man enters an atmosphere of the divinity, because moral perfection is the attribute of the transcendent world. Analyzing the features of the education specific of Seneca's philosophy, we discover a completion of it by its combination with the Christian theology, which became a pedagogical art in the thinking of Clement of Alexandria and then in the one of Origen. The Great Pedagogue described by Clement of Alexandria – the Logos or Jesus Christ, the Embodied Son of God –, is the One Who educates and leads man to gnosis but especially towards practicing it. The aim of education is to transform man according to his Model, the Logos, which from a Christian perspective means the state of being sanctified and holiness.

Key words: *paideia*, theology, pedagogue, Logos, Christ, *gnosis*

Povzetek: ***Paideia* in teologija: vidiki in perspektive v vzgojnem procesu**

Ta članek je posvečen vzgojnemu procesu in obravnava soodvisnost med filozofskim konceptom *paideia* in krščansko pedagogiko, navzočo v nauku cerkvenih očetov. *Paideia* kot nauk in obenem kot metoda za doseganje popolnosti s človeškega zornega kota pomeni kulturo duha; ko postane sprejeta, vključuje tudi vajo v krepostih. S filozofskega stališča človek v takšnem stanju nedvomno vstopa v okolje božanskega, saj je moralna izpopolnjenost lastnost transcendentnega sveta. V okviru analize vzgoje, značilne za Senekovo filozofijo, odkrivamo njeno dopolnitev in izpolnitev v kombinaciji s krščansko teologijo, ki je v misli Klemena Aleksandrijskega in nato Origena postala pedagoška veččina. Veliki Pedagog, kakor ga opisuje Klemen Aleksandrijski – Logos ali Jezus Kristus, učlovečeni božji Sin –, je tisti, ki človeka vzgaja in vodi k spoznanju, *gnosis*, zlasti s tem, da se v spoznanju vadi. Cilj vzgoje je, spremeniti človeka glede na njegov vzor, Logos, to pa s krščanskega stališča pomeni stanje posvečenosti in svetost.

Ključne besede: *paideia*, teologija, pedagog, Logos, Kristus, *gnosis*

1. Definition of terms and theoretical and practical implications: *Paideia* and Theology

For the thinking of the world of the Antiquity, the concept defining humanism was somewhat synonymous to what we nowadays call education. By *paideia* the Greeks were defining the reality and the aristocratic method by which man can acquire perfection, as transformation through inner modelling. By *paideia* education, the soul discovers its ideal form, and the acquisition of this form actually represents an accomplishment of man's aim in the world. *Paideia* with the Romans was defined by *humanitas* or *cultura animi* equivalent to humanistic education. This similitude between education and humanism is no longer possible today, because the humanism proposing to man only the human values, concerned mainly by man as an individual, is unable to encompass the whole influence and sphere of education, which also has a transcendental dimension.

Paideia is

»the classical Greek system of education and training, which came to include gymnastics, grammar, rhetoric, poetry, music, mathematics, geography, natural history, astronomy and the physical sciences, history of society and ethics, and philosophy the complete pedagogical course of study necessary to produce a well-rounded, fully educated citizen« (Tarnas, 1993, 29–30).

Paideia involves the art of pedagogy, i.e. leading the child towards knowledge (*pais*, *paidos* – child; *agoge* – lead, guide). With the Greeks, the pedagogue (*paidagogos*) was the slave in charge with accompanying his master's child to school. The Romanian word for pupil, namely *elev*, came in the Romanian vocabulary from French (*élève* – pupil; *élever* – to lift), coming from the Latin *elevare*, which means lifting from the ground, lifting up from a state. In other words, the teaching, especially the Christian one, is meant to lift the disciple from his biological state to the dignity of the man called to perfection.

As basic works defining education, both from a philosophical but also from a Christian perspective, we shall remind of: *Letters to Lucilius* written by Seneca and *The Pedagogue* of Clement of Alexandria. Seneca and Clement of Alexandria both know well the classical Greek Antiquity, yet each of them is trying to come with a vision in which the classical *paideia* is rendered according to the spirit of the epoch and of the environment in which they lived.

»Although the history of Greek thought is that of a progressive emancipation from mythical knowledge (mythos) to science (logos), the former played a seminal role in ancient Greek culture (*paideia*). As showed in Werner Jaeger's *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, which is the most comprehensive study about classical Greek culture, there was neither a written code of laws, nor a system of ethics in ancient Greece. Guidance was provided by the life of model heroes as well as by proverbial wisdom

handed down from one generation to another. Myths embodied both of them. This is the reason Homer and Hesiod became the main educators of ancient Greek society, and why the Iliad was its Bible.» (Friasa et al. 2015, 596)

As far as the notion of »theology« is concerned, it appears for the first time in the philosophy of the Greeks of the Antiquity, designating the words uttered towards a certain God (Plato 1986, 59; Aristoteles 1965, 167), but being connected to mythology and to the agnostic mysticism concretized in magic, a fact that, for the sake of differentiation, led to the use, in the Christian context, of the syntagm »true philosophy«, designating the action of study, knowledge, explanation and transmission of the truths of the Revelation.

The term *theology* was first used by Plato in *The Republic* where he speaks about three types of theology: 1. *epos*, 2. *melos*, 3. *tragedy*, these being the representations of the gods, necessary to the instruction of the citizens of a city, in contrast with the gross representations circulating among the people.

With Aristotle, the term »theologians« (1965, 173) is used for the poets and prose-writers of yore: Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus. They are the ones who theologize, or who know the life of the gods. In contrast with these theologians considered a sort of philosophers, Aristotle situates the physicists of the Antiquity or those who study or speak about the world's principles, for instance Empedocles. Saint Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, is the first to use the word »theologize« in *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, actually meaning God's word or revelation to man, without defining by it theology as Christian teaching, the latter being called by him »the only true and useful philosophy«. (Justin 1980, 92–94)

2. Aspects and perspectives on the education process from the thinking of Seneca to that of Clement of Alexandria

The first public school was that of Alexandria, known towards the end of the second century, attested as well by the historian Eusebius of Caesarea, who in his book *Church History* (V, 10) shows that it had been operating for a long time. The apologist Athenagoras is considered the first professor of the School of Alexandria, and Pantaenus around the year 180 is its first great pedagogue. Pantaenus's successor is Clement of Alexandria. (Călugăr 1976, 107) Clement of Alexandria was an erudite writer both in the Christian theology, and in the Greek philosophy. For a good definition of the concept of *paideia* we shall briefly present Seneca's thinking (2007) correlated to that of Clement of Alexandria.

Studying Seneca's thinking, one can observe three great essential concepts: Good, Reason and Nature. Around these principles is shaped the moral character of education, as well.

Seneca's philosophic-educational system has the following principles:

1. The aim of education is to acquire perfect goodness (*sumum bonum*);
2. Attaining the aim of education calls for the absence of passions (*apatheia*);
3. Perfect goodness is acquired by cultivating reason (the divine spirit in man);
4. Education needs to be realized turning to good value the opportune moment (*kairos*);
5. It is necessary to correlate theory (*contemplatio*) to practicing virtue (*actio*);
6. Possessing perfect goodness brings along the joy of living (*gaudium*).

With Clement of Alexandria (1982a; 1982b), *paideia* is mainly related to the work of the divine Logos, therefore his theology has a marked Christian educative character, expressed by his fundamental doctrinal-theological ideas:

1. The birth of the Logos is an act of the eternity and in conclusion He is the beginning of the moral world, but also the Supreme rational Good;
2. The divine educator (the Logos – Christ) guides man towards the light of faith, which generates virtue and the gnostic state;
3. Man, the image of the divinity is rational and tends towards perfection, continually advancing in knowledge to become united to God, his Creator;
4. Man's mysterious educator, the Logos, helps man be aware of his own rationality and thus go beyond his empiric-temporal existence.

»They should hear from us that Adam was not perfect regarding his structure, but had the capacity of acquiring virtue. Because there is a difference between possessing virtue and being capable of virtue. However, God wants us to get saved based on our own decision. Such is the nature of the soul: it shall move out of his own initiative. Then, because we are rational beings, and philosophy is related to reason, it results that we have a certain kinship with philosophy; and the fact that we are capable of virtue means that in us there is a movement towards virtue, yet not virtue itself [as acquired].« (1982a, 440)

Clement of Alexandria's theology highlights the following education principles:

1. The aim of education is to acquire the likeness of the divine Logos;
2. Divine education supposes the passage from the protreptic to the pedagogical moment and is concluded with the didascalical moment;
3. Education is efficient only if there is collaboration between man and the divine Logos.

The three educative stages are actually states, namely: protreptic, pedagogical and didascalical. Man has as inherent aim of his life the contemplation of heaven.

This need is given by the soul, which ceaselessly tends towards the divine likeness. It consists in the participation of our logos to the divine Logos, which according to the Christian economy is: to be adopted as God's sons, through the Son's mediation. »Our aim is to become as much as possible like the righteous Logos and reestablish our perfect adoption through the Son«, says Clement (1982a, 179). Likeness is a dear ideal, dominating his whole thinking and action: »O, you, who are all [in God's] image but not all [in God's] likeness, I would like to straighten you according to the model, so that you may become like Me!« (1982b, 155)

The three stages are necessary to lead man to the philosophical life. The protreptic moment aims to change one's habits, the pedagogical moment aims to change one's action and the didascalical moment aims to change one's passions. Clement makes a difference between Pedagogue (as educator of the newly initiated) and Master (the teacher of those advanced on the way of faith and knowledge). To reach mystical knowledge, the Pedagogue's activity is not enough. He only prepares the way for the Master. The Truth is beyond the letter of the Scripture and only the Master can initiate in this mystical knowledge. In the end, the gnostic, at the end of his good deeds, imitates the Lord, as much as people can, because he took for the Lord a feature helping him reach the likeness of God. Clement's thinking is not just a speculative one, but especially positive. The idea of education, in his thinking is involved in the process of the union of man with the divinity; in theology, it is defined by salvation, without remaining at this practical aspect – education – is systematic and depends on the relation with the divine Logos – Christ.

3. The pedagogical logic of Origen's doctrine

The most renowned auditors of Ammonios Sakkas in the School of Alexandria were Plotin (205–270) and Origen (185–254), the first being called the last great philosopher of the Antiquity, and the last the first great Christian philosopher. He was at the same time a passionate admirer of Plato and of the Christian faith, which made him try to erect a philosophy based on reason and at the same time on faith.¹

Consequently, Origen was the author of the first treaty of Christian theology (*On Principles*) and the first systematic and comprehensive exegete of the Biblical texts, realizing by this an excellent pedagogical work. Actually, he was an excellent professor at the School of Alexandria. This aspect was particularly important because they permitted the penetration of Christianity in the erudite environments of the world of those times (which at the same time held the political power as well).² As a man, he was a strong personality, being called »the diamond man« by his contemporaries, because of his intelligence and his character.

¹ He realized it by a process of absorption of the philosophy in the structures of the Christian spirituality.

² Origen believed that the simple believers only need to believe, but the erudite ones do not content themselves only with believing so that it is for them that he wrote his books.

His philosophy, however, cannot claim to be fully unitary, especially as many times he makes exaggerated affirmations. This is not very important, however, from his perspective, because he understands by Christianity rather a state of spirit than a dogma.

From the perspective of his researchers, the problem becomes, however, quite difficult, especially as there are many issues unclarified as far as he is concerned.³ His book *On Principles* (1982b) constitutes, however, an exception in the series of Origen's writings, being a doctrinal, systematic presentation, with a rational and philosophic argumentation, which uses the dialectic method. It contains four parts. The first part, called »On God and Celestial Beings«, deals with the supersensible realm, lived by rational essences – intelligible, according to Origen. They possess free will, which makes their fall possible; this fall once occurred triggers the appearance of matter, of the visible cosmos. The second part, »World, Humanity, Embodiment and Eternal Life«, deals with problems of cosmology,⁴ and with the issue of salvation, and approaches the role of Jesus Christ⁵ and the role of the Holy Spirit. The third part, »Freedom and Grace«, has in view man, the being possessing, he too, free will.⁶ This free will, if it permitted man's fall, permits at the same time his rising. Finally, in the fourth part, »The Authority of the Scripture«, the author claims that his doctrine relies on the Holy Scripture, which at the same time justifies his interpretation.⁷

»The literal interpretation is not contradicted by the typological one; it is only its limits that are showed. The interpretation of the Old Testament according to the coming of Jesus could have gained shape only from the perspective of a Christian author. The goal was to find in the Old Testament the foreshadowing of Christ and the events related to Him, but for this to happen one should have had access to these events first. Therefore, the typological interpretation was a historically determined one. The Christian apologetics will try to distinguish between allegory and typology.« (Cordoneanu 2014, 201)

How was, however, the Scripture studied up to Origen? With the Hebrews, its interpretation concerned especially the search of signs, answers regarding the coming of the Messiah and this especially due to the interruption of the series of prophets from among them. Those in Palestina and in the East were giving it a literal in-

³ Are the demons fallen angels? What was before the present world and what is going to be after it? etc.

⁴ Problems such as: Is there a single cosmos or are there several cosmoses? If there are several of them, then do they follow one after the other? What is the reason of their birth and death?

⁵ Without Jesus Christ no one becomes clean before God, even if he were to imagine that he won his cleanliness by means of his own preoccupations.

⁶ Man's free will is a basic point of the Christian morals; without it, man's responsibility would have been meaningless.

⁷ In that environment where the colour of the sky joined with the waters of the sea and the murmur of the Nile hosted a civilization characterized by a continual endeavour to speak with the divinity, the interpretation of the Scripture took a special direction: the allegorical one. Origen himself adopted and systematized this method.

terpretation, whereas those in Alexandria and Egypt were giving it an allegorical interpretation, due to the fact that they were in a pagan environment strongly marked by the Greek philosophy and culture. The Christians had the first beginnings of explanation of the Old Testament right in the New Testament. Among them, in close connection with the divine service, fragments of the sacred texts were read, after which they were explained by apostles, bishops or even lay people.⁸

Their explanations were, however, usually literal historical. Clement of Alexandria was the first to have tried an allegorical interpretation, after which he was continued by Origen. He had all the qualities needed to do this, since he had encyclopedical knowledge for his epoch, a very fine critical sense, and a passionate study of the sacred texts. He observed that the strongest blows against Christianity were coming precisely from those interpreting the Scripture literally, thus blowing up its spirit.⁹

Before setting out in his approach, Origen also noticed that the study of the biblical texts is closely related to their authenticity. He therefore showed that the Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit. From here comes the very important consequence that it does not contain anything that is too much, anything that is not in harmony, anything that is not true and anything that is not complete. This means that all that seems to be not in harmony apparently, is only harmony for he who knows how to read in the truth of the revelation. Origen believes that »the Scripture is an immaterial paste on which God's wisdom has been impressed by the signs we find in the letters and the content of the holy books« (1982b, 104). The duty of the interpreter is therefore to catch its spirit, and one of the conditions of this thing is the prayer to God. If the Scripture is read only according to its letter, then it is precisely its essence that is lost. The letter only catches the light of the spirit, yet the spirit is alive and cannot be restrained only to the material letters. The spirit has a multitude of aspects and truths and the letter can catch them only fragmentarily.¹⁰

To prove that the spiritual sense of the Scripture exists, Origen gives examples of it that would be meaningless if it were to be interpreted only literally, but which acquire meaning if they are interpreted spiritually. Therefore, with the justifications reminded above, he goes on to the interpretation of the biblical texts.

According to his interpretation, God¹¹ is – like the principle in the Greek philosophy – one, simple, ineffable and perfect, because Origen affirmed:

»God, who is the principle or the beginning of all that exists, must not be imagined as if it were compounded as well, because, if we were to believe

⁸ Among them was also Origen later on; their effort constituted a strong blow to the enemies of the Church, both from outside it and from inside it.

⁹ »The letter does kill, but the spirit does make alive.« (2 Cor 3:6)

¹⁰ The words of the Scripture are the Word's apparel. Because in the Scriptures the Word has always been body, so that He may live among us.

¹¹ Origen removes the opposition between the God of the New Testament – the Redeemer – and the God of the Old Testament – the Legislator.

this, the elements that make up everything that we call »compounded« would be older than the principle or the beginning itself.«

Here, the Trinitarian dogma is introduced, affirming that God is the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit,¹² and yet One.¹³

The Father is the complete wisdom and contains in Himself the ideal models. The Son is the emanation of the Father. This emanation supposes the fact that the act of generation of the Son from the Father has no beginning and no end, but is an eternal act.¹⁴ Because the Son is consubstantial with the Father and consequently knows everything that is in the Father (the ideal models), He produces the other words, spirits that are free and equal among themselves.¹⁵ Consequently, the world is also created since eternity because it is absurd, says Origen, to believe in an inactive God Who all of a sudden decides to create. Out of these spirits, some have drawn closer to God, and others have drawn farther away from God by their free will. This gave birth to the hierarchy of the spirits governing the Universe: angels, animated stars, people, demons.

Man is therefore a spirit distanced from God, cooled and imprisoned in the body. Yet, this body is not just a prison of the spirit, because it is precisely with its help that the spirit can turn back towards God, through asceticism. Getting close to God again is possible due to the Son, the dual nature (man and God), Who was embodied, sacrificed Himself and so paid for the sin of man's first choice. Out of Christ's sacrifice, grace has been born, which, collaborating with man's free will, helps man get lifted to intelligible things and then be saved. Yet, not all people choose to draw close to God by means of a life of holiness.

Here, Origen launches the idea of successive worlds, in which the souls that once chose to draw close to God, are put to choose once again and then again until those who have always chosen the good may be completely separated from those who chose even for a single time the bad. In this way, the good would be separated forever from the bad – consequently the good would return to God and the bad would disappear by destruction. In this way, the original order of creation would be reestablished.

With this interpretation, Origen reaches a sufficiently coherent system of the Christian dogma, which is then submitted to the Ecumenical Synods which will take over from it »the Dogma of the Trinity«,¹⁶ »the Dogma of the Son's double nature« and »the Dogma of man's salvation«. Although many other ideas were condemned, the keeping of these dogmas which have become fundamental for

¹² Of the Father, the Son (the Logos) is born, of the same nature as the Father and then the Holy Spirit.

¹³ God is only One, because the Universe He has made is one.

¹⁴ Thus the clear distinction creation-emanation is no longer possible.

¹⁵ Here, one can see that the Son is a mediator between the simple and absolute Unity of the Father and the Multiplicity of the rational beings, Origen managing in this way to solve the difficult philosophical problem of the relation between One and Multiple.

¹⁶ This was first stated in the First Letter of John 5:7. For three are those confessing: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are One.

Christianism have probably justified sufficiently the use of the allegorical method and prove that his credo was profoundly rooted in the faith in the Lord Jesus and brought forth the right kind of fruit.¹⁷

4. Theology as an essential factor of religious education

An authentic education is realized by mutual permeability and not by »the ghettoization of religions« (Cucos 1996, 78). The most important moment in the development of the educational process was the reintroduction of religious education in school. The responsible factors realized that the Wise Solomon is right: »Train up the child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it.« (Prov 22:6) In this spirit

»the task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts. The right defense against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments. By starving the sensibility of our pupils we only make them easier prey to the propagandist when he comes. For famished nature will be avenged and a hard heart is no infallible protection against a soft head.« (Lewis 1974, 13–14)

Theology, having as object the Christian religion or the free and conscious relation between man and God cannot be defined only as a synthesis of the teachings about God, of God's relation with man and with the world – these being important as far as the epistemological side is concerned, yet not sufficient to know the divine mysteries, because knowledge in its deep sense means discovery of the one expressing a certain reality, in the religious-dogmatic sense meaning knowledge of God. But God cannot be known according to His Being, because, on the one hand, man does not have this capacity, and, on the other hand, by such a knowledge and definition, we would circumscribe Him, limit Him and therefore He could no longer be God. We know God according to the works springing from and having to do with His Being or according to grace, this is why theology involves receiving the grace that illumines man's mind (*gnosis*); illumination that transforms him (*metanoia*) and makes him active according to the mystic experience that he has reached, which he cannot define or conceptualize, because he »comprises the uncompromised«, the apophatic in which the human logic meets the antinomy.

Taking into account this mysterious experience, the Orthodox Church has always taught that theology is actually first of all a way of living and not a science, and theologian is not he who talks about God, but he who talks with God, to whom the »unseen and the mysteries« of the transcendent are revealed, about which he talks afterwards using the elements of the immanent, yet this does not mean dissecting and exhausting what he actually knows.

Theology is a reality of the relation between man and God, of prayer and of contemplation, this is why Saint Evagrius Ponticus teaches that »he who loves God

¹⁷ If in the world the Sun does not shine, no tree and no grasses sprout, grow and bring fruit; similarly, if, in the faithful act, faith does not shine, no act pleasant to God can be accomplished.

is forever talking with Him as one would talk with one's father,« and concludes »if you are a theologian (one is dealing with the contemplation of God unto true knowledge), pray truly and if you pray in truth you are a theologian« (1947, 81). In this sense, the great writer of the Church, Origen, in the epistle to his disciple Saint Gregory Thaumaturge, advising him on how to understand the mysteries of the Holy Scripture says:

»My distinguished son, be careful when you read the Holy Scriptures, because we who are reading the Scriptures need to be careful, in order not to teach or believe anything reckless about them. With much attention and care when reading the holy writings, but also with a faith with thoughts dear to God, knock on the hidden doors of the Scripture and the porter that Jesus has taught us about will open for you. Yet, to understand the holy things, it is not enough only to knock and search, but prayer is very necessary, as well.« (1857, 89–92)

The central point from which the process of Christian understanding begins is the Person and the Work of Christ, the Embodied Son of God, or the Logos by Whom God completed all the reasons of the creation. Yet, the process of knowledge in Christ is full of life, full of grace, and, for this reason, it cannot be reached within the discursive knowledge relying exclusively on the powers of reason, because it remains in the sphere of the creation, while it is necessary to go beyond the creation, by faith, by the contemplation of the visible things, by which one reaches a direct, simple understanding, in which the mind descended in the heart is illumined by the divine grace. The work of the Holy Spirit, giving life and the light of Christ's knowledge is inherent to the teandric ecclesial community, in which grace descends in a continual Pentecost under »the guise of the tongues of fire«, as a manifestation and presence of the Trinitarian love. The grace-given key of knowledge (Luke 11:52) offered by Christ to those who unite themselves with Him leads to understanding the spirit of life of the Scripture and not to a speculative appreciation of »the letter that kills« (2 Cor 3:6). Knowing and living »the New Testament« – Jesus Christ – puts theology in a direct connection with the revelation, in which the initiative belongs to God, entrusting at the same time to man the free answer of faith and of love. Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae, following Saint Maximus the Confessor, shows that Christ,

»God's Word or Reason pervades man's entire being by virtue and knowledge, making these fruitful. It is a penetration that occurs in time, not in one moment. The Word of God, persisting in man, in his conscience, pervades man's reason, which consequently begins to conform to God's reasons. From the conscience, it organizes, rationalizes man's physical movements, then illumines his understanding, finally permeating him entirely. The two reasons are intimately connected, yet remain two, the human one following the divine one, just as the word of God unites to Himself, as answer, our word, without annulling it, in a dialogical union.« (Maximus 1983, 144)

Man is accomplished by education. For this reason, »the school's care, as an institution called to give man a complete education, will need to tend to the child's body and soul« (Ghibu 1995, 10). Bearer of the divine image, man tends towards happiness, towards the likeness of God. The aim of education is to lead to the development of reason, of taste, to the adoration of the beautiful, to the development of the moral conscience, to in-depth knowledge of the truth, to likeness with God.

In the 21st century, the four pillars of education are: »learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together« (Delors 2000, 24).

But, as Saint John Chrysostom teaches us:

»Educating means cultivating spiritual cleanliness and the children's and the young people's good sense, educating the child to be moral and pious, taking care of his soul, modelling his intelligence, training an athlete for Christ, namely taking care of his salvation. Education is like an art, because if all the arts bring a benefit for this world, the art of education is realized to win the world of eternity.« (John Chrysostom 1862, 456)

The unique and true educator of mankind is Christ. The Saviour Jesus Christ expressed his teaching prophetically and expressively using aphorisms, allegories and illustrations avoiding the philosophical approach of his contemporaries, especially Greeks and Latins. The Saviour Jesus Christ does not impose »definitively formulated doctrines or enigmatic exegeses with ambiguities, but wants to reveal the force of God, which is hidden to the people«. (Bria 1992, 48)

Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae, in his studies dealing exhaustively with Christ the Saviour's teaching and work, remarks the fact that in Christ's words there are divine powers, presented using a human voice, thus:

»None has uttered since the beginning of the world such wise words by their content, which refer to the life in the Kingdom of Heaven presented by the parables. /... / This is why He assumed a human mouth, to present it [His teaching] to the people with divine power.« (1991, 99)

Jesus Christ, as the Holy Scripture presents Him, is the Great Pedagogue, and this is the name by which the apostles and the multitudes were calling Him, and this is how we ought to call Him, too, because He really is the world's Light and Luminary. (Matt 14:21-23)

5. Conclusion

True education springs from the divine revelation. In this sense, religious education is a synergic and teandric act, implying *sui generis* communication, as the first element of the communion, of the relation with God and with one's fellows.

Religious education has a supernatural imperative going beyond the possibilities of conceptual expression, aiming to lift each human person to the state of holiness, to perfection. According to the Christian teaching, this is realized through Christ, as He is the Great Pedagogue Who, by the Church and the Holy Mysteries, lives by grace in our being, this is why the Christian education makes permanent what is noble in our soul, Christ the Man-God, anchoring us even since this life in the true existence, making us bearers of God.

The efficiency of the Christian teaching is maximal only when it is lived in the daily life as our Saviour Jesus Christ has shown to us: »For I have given you an example, that just as I have done to you, you also are to do.« (Matt 11:29; John 13:5)

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