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Humiliation of the Wise?

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Abstract

The paper deals with the transformations of the ancient concept of paideia in the context of early Christianity in the form of a cultural-historical probe. It focuses on a few selected authors who created esteemed interpretive schemes, such as Tatian the Syrian's defence of barbarian philosophy, in which he included the Hebrew tradition and the Christian gospel, the spiritual dimension of the educational process in the Alexandrian exegeses and desert monks, or the mediation of Christian ethics and emerging orthodoxy in the work of Basil the Great.

Keywords: ancient culture, early Christianity, history of mentalities, history of pedagogy, history of philosophy

Introduction

The ancient world saw the importance of education in the cultivation of human personality and the gaining of social prestige (Svobodová 2013, 340-358). It was therefore closely linked to the definition of man in the Greek *polis* and Roman *civitas*. The basis of the Greek concept of paideia can be seen in Isocrates' description, which defines it as *thinking* and sharing values (Isocrates 1980). This way of education is consistent with the understanding of paideia as a process of leading from a low state of ignorance to a "higher" understanding or knowledge – hence the closeness to the content of the notion of arete or to Aristotle's ideal of the educated man – *kalokagathos*. The

Hellenic cultural circle also knows a less philosophical-moral definition: paideia as traditional education in the polis; for instance, in Sparta, it consisted of preparation for the life of a soldier. This dichotomy, as briefly outlined above, is an apt statement of the "eternal tension" between tradition and innovation in education: the philosophical demand for the conversion of the soul and its awakening through alignment with an ideal (in Plato as a complex stimulus and catalyst) is in fact opposed to and "corrects" tradition-laden education, the meaning of which does not always have to be profound; instead, it takes the form of formal ritualization. Aristotle also perceives the presence of tension and comments on the perceived differences in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and recommends adherence to man's rational nature.

In the Roman world, paideia is essentially taken and translated from the Greek tradition as *educatio/humanitas*: on the one hand, it represents the educational system (later *septem artes liberales* in Boethius and others) and on the other hand, a philosophical category (Pichugina 2018, 200). In the Roman culture, the cultural determination of education becomes more profound – if *humanitas* is an expression for the cultivation of humanity, then it is a concept intrinsically linked to the socio-cultural and legislative definition of man.[1] Priority is given to full citizens, while people on the margins are second-class citizens. The demand for general education (*enkyklios paideia*), with the central role of those who mediate it to society (Plato's Ruler as the "supreme" educator) remains limited to a select circle or group.

Early Christianity brought a change in meaning influenced by the text of the Septuagint, which works with paideia as a reminiscent memento of God's presence (Jaeger 1961, 7), *parousia*, and the evangelization of the Roman Empire. The expectation of the second coming of Christ, and thus of history ending soon, limited education to the minimum degree necessary (Eph. 6:4): *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."* Later, however, it developed into a new form as a result of the influence of evangelization, e.g. in the apocryphal Acts of Philip (Jaeger 1961, 12). The origin of this change can be found

in the epistles of St. Paul, who speaks of a change in the status of the wise (1 C 1:26-29): "*Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."* An education tainted by human criteria, the end product of which is supposed to be a cultivated and embracing wisdom, is inadequate for early Christianity; it is too immersed in "the world" and does not lead one to true knowledge. The central role is played by Christ, as Plato's new Ruler, in whom the source of knowledge (the Divine Logos) is found; he is therefore the source and ultimate goal of education; this is meant to inspire and uplift and serves almost exclusively as an analogy.

But for education to be truly uplifting, the one being educated must understand (Aurelius Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* IV: X, 25): "*and the best mode is that which secures that he who hears shall hear the truth, and that what he hears he shall understand."* Augustine's model refers to the twofold nature of the educational process, i.e. to hear the truth and fully understand it. In comparison to this model, the ancient paideia is seen as polysemic, chaotic and contradictory. Tatian comments on this in the 2nd century as follows (*Oratio ad Graecos* 25, 3): "*You follow the doctrines of Plato, and a disciple of Epicurus lifts up his voice to oppose you. Again, you wish to be a disciple of Aristotle, and a follower of Democritus rails at you. Pythagoras says that he was Euphorbus, and he is the heir of the doctrine of Pherecydes; but Aristotle impugns the immortality of the soul*." The emphasis on a single functional model comes from defining oneself against the "decadent" ancient culture. However, it could not be denied that this culture also arrived at certain common moral, ethical and educational principles. The unification of the two tensions (ancient tradition vs. early Christian innovation) is a theme of the Alexandrian school of exegesis, especially for Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

Ancient culture, similarly to Christian and Hebrew culture, had a common knowledge, which, however, diverged from its source, the Divine Logos, through the history of the Greek polis and the Roman Empire (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata I*, 5): "*Accordingly, before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration*." The Logos subsequently appears in the Christian gospel to bring those who err to the original path of understanding (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata I*, 5.): "*Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring "the Hellenic mind", as the law, the Hebrews, "to Christ". Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ*." The task of educators is to understand both ancient philosophy and the gospel, with an emphasis on the truth revealed by Christ through the so-called divine scriptures. But the Logos does not always permeate the texts of the divine scriptures clearly, as the confusion of antiquity shows; it is necessary to look for the hidden meaning, the true meaning of what is described. While Clement points to the "flowery meadow" of Gnostic meanings, Origen comes up with a new method: allegorization of texts (Hanson 2003, 235). Although we may be tempted to philosophical musings about the nature and meaning of what is communicated, the educator – as Augustine defines it – leads us away from this ignorance to an awareness of reality. It is this rational-spiritual movement that brings a change of content, the essence of which is the transcendental goal of education through metanoia.

The new Christian paideia thus contributes to the history of pedagogy by its repeated emphasis on ethos, i.e. in what social environment the educational activity is carried out, on the role of the educator who supports the process of leading one out of ignorance (superficial philosophy) into (self)-awareness, and on ending the self-centredness of paideia. Obviously, this set of demands directs paideia towards the theological category of *theia paideia*, which, however, ultimately resonates in the necessity of

the lifelong moral and ethical cultivation of educators to the present day.

1. Tatian's polemic with Greek wisdom

Tatian the Syrian was the author of *Oratio ad Graecos*, in which, in the spirit of the early Christian tradition, he addressed the problem of the relationship of ancient, especially Greek, and Christian wisdom. We only have limited accounts of his activity in the 2nd century, preserved rather in quotations from Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus of Lyons and Epiphanius of Salamis. Although he departs from orthodoxy and orthopraxy (especially in his view on marriage) (Woodbridge 2010), hence also in the list of heretics in Irenaeus and other later authors, he anticipated this discussion (not only) in the Alexandrian school of exegesis by his critical reflection on the categories of wisdom and education.

The work is distinctly confrontational. Tatian is not a supporter of integration, even if it is symbolic. He refers to the topoi of antiquity of Hebrew scholarship, which is then, in a logical sequence, developed and surpassed by Christianity. His teacher Justin Martyr is more compromising in this regard (*1 Apol.* 44, 10n): "*Moses is more ancient than all the Greek writers. And whatever both philosophers and poets have said concerning the immortality of the soul, or punishments after death, or contemplation of things heavenly, or doctrines of the like kind, they have received such suggestions from the prophets as have enabled them to understand and interpret these things. And hence there seem to be seeds of truth among all men [Hinc omnibus videntur inesse veritatis semina]; but they are charged with not accurately understanding when they assert contradictories*." The fact that pagan antiquity arrived at a positive version of knowledge (in Clement and in ethics) is mainly due to the workings of history. Paul Orosius, a disciple of Augustine, finds similar historical "roots" in his *Historiae adversus paganos*. In that, he summarized the workings of divine providence, including the prediction of a series of events, warning of the consequences of the Romans' behaviour, and also illustrated the manifestations of God's wrath. In addition to these exemplars, Paul had the narrative of a common Roman-

Christian history in mind. At the time of Christ's birth, auspicious signs and miracles in the broadest sense of the word appeared. According to Paul, it was no coincidence that the Saviour came into the world during the reign of Augustus, and he even saw a close connection between these events. Augustus, entering Rome after his return from Antioch, saw a cloudless sky, and at about three o'clock a rainbow-like circle appeared around the sun. In the city itself a spring of oil gushed forth, representing Christ as the anointed (*unctos*). All the miracles had a dual purpose: reporting the birth of Christ and predicting Augustus as the world's greatest ruler. The indisputable relationship between Christ and Augustus was further reflected in the civil law, for the Saviour, by being born in the Roman Empire, assured himself that he would be called a Roman citizen (PAULUS OROSIUS, *Hist. adv. Pag.* 6, 22:8). Clement of Alexandria, who attributed the mutual divergence of ancient and Hebrew-Christian interpretations of knowledge to the failure of historical memory, also thought of common history in a similar way (Šedina 2007, 7-8).

Tatian contemplates a similar syncretism only in a somewhat unprecedented comment on the similarity of the incarnation of Logos (*Oratio ad Graecos* 21, 1-2): "*We do not act as fools, O Greeks, nor utter idle tales, when we announce that God was born in the form of a man. I call on you who reproach us to compare your mythical accounts with our narrations. Athené, as they say, took the form of Deïphobus for the sake of Hector, and the unshorn Phoœbus for the sake of Admetus fed the trailing-footed oxen, and the spouse thus came as an old woman to Semele.*" However, he rejects their allegorical interpretation and direct relation to the Christian gospel, so it is more of a metaphorical device for interpreting the "transformation of the body" (not in the Aristotelian sense; on this, cf. e.g. Eco 2014, 95). He perceives Greek philosophy, which defines itself against myths, as contradictory, immoral and unable to find a unified position. Philosophers are victims of their own self-conception and wisdom is divided over – for Tatian – useless rhetorical and grammatical quarrels.

The basis of this dispute, however, lies at the apologetic level. Tatian deduced from the analysis the clear hypocrisy and

falsity of ancient values, because Christians themselves do not harm anyone and only point out the obvious moral and ethical distinctions culminating in education. This hypocrisy of ancient scholarship was another *topos* frequently used in early Christian literature, and is also found in martyrological texts, e.g. in the second and fourth chapters of *The Martyrdom of Pionius*. Polemon, the guardian of the temple, is tasked with seeking out Christians and forcing them to sacrifice to the ancient gods and eat sacrifices: "*Pionius, it would be wise for you to obey and offer sacrifice like everyone else, so that you may not be punished*." The priest Pionius responded to this appeal by addressing his speech to the witnesses present at the agora: "*Men of Greece, it behoved you to listen to your teacher Homer, who counsels that it is not a holy thing to gloat over those who are to die*." He similarly quotes from Exodus 23:5: "*If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help them with it."* Later he commented on a passage from Proverbs – all to testify that as Christians we must not commit injustice. Even in the next part of his speech, when he referred to the list of evidence for the end of the world, Pionius selected well-known events from both "worlds", the Jewish/Christian and the ancient: "*Consider, too, the partial conflagrations and floods, such as you know of, for example, in the case of Deucalion, and we in the case of Noah*." The rhetor Rufinus responded to his speech, to which Pionius replied: "*Is this your rhetoric? Is this your literature? Even Socrates did not suffer thus from the Athenians [...] Were Socrates and Aristides and Anaxarchus and all the rest fools in your view because they practised philosophy and justice and courage?"* In essence, this interpenetration is an effort to understand each other in the categories of faith, religion and law – even pagans who cannot detect the motives behind the behaviour of Christians should understand the martyrs and avoid false accusations. *Martyria* also mention quite unexpected expressions of pagans who feel a certain empathy with the tortured Christians (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*): "*For who would not admire their nobility and patience and love of their Master? For some were torn by scourging until the mechanism of their flesh was seen even to the lower veins and arteries, and they endured so that even the bystanders pitied them and mourned."*

Compassion was also shown by the pagans to Bishop Fructuos, whom the author of the Martyrdom of Saints Fructuos, Augurio and Eulogius characterizes as a vessel of grace and a teacher of the pagans. The actions of Emperor Decius in the Acts of Acacius are completely unexpected. The story begins with the standard declaration of loyalty to the emperor (*Acta Acacii* 1, 3): "*We pray for him daily and continually that he may live happily in this world, that he may rule the nations justly, and especially that there may be peace under his reign; we also pray for the welfare of the soldiers and for the preservation of the empire and the world*." (Kitzler 2009) What follows is a discussion of the nature of God, since Acacius refused to sacrifice with the others. Administrator Maricianus leads the debate, and after an initial explanation of who God is, he labels the Christian's arguments as idle philosophical speculation – to which Acacius responds by treating the pagan gods as figments of the human imagination, adding that (*Acta Acacius* 2, 6): "*if one were to approve of their actions today, he would surely not escape your strict laws – and yet you command to worship in some what you condemn in others?*" The whole case, which is also a kind of insight into the functioning of Roman law with regard to Christianity, is surprisingly concluded by the emperor (*Acta Acacius* 5, 6): "*When Decius had read of all that had taken place, he marvelled at the famous disputation, and laughed (...) he had such admiration for Acacius that he left him his convictions and his faith*."

According to Tatian, the search for wisdom therefore consists of rejecting this hypocrisy and confusion and preferring the antiquity of Jewish learning (*Oratio ad Graecos* 29, 2): "*I was led to put faith in these by the unpretending cast of the language, the inartificial character of the writers, the foreknowledge displayed of future events, the excellent quality of the precepts, and the declaration of the government of the universe as centred in one Being*." Evidence for this is found, for example, in the contradictory chronology of the lives of Homer and Moses (*Oratio ad Graecos* 31): "*Let us, then, institute a comparison between them; and we shall find that our doctrines are older, not only than those of the Greeks, but than the invention of letters (...)*." A similar argument is found in Tertullian[2] and in more detail in Paul Orosius. The proof of antiquity testifies to the direct

authenticity of wisdom, which does not fall into immorality (Tatian also deals with this issue in terms of art), uselessness and falsity. This wisdom does not favour a particular age or appearance (*Oratio ad Graecos* 32): "*Not only do the rich among us pursue our philosophy, but the poor enjoy instruction gratuitously; for the things which come from God surpass the requital of worldly gifts. Thus we admit all who desire to hear, even old women and striplings; and, in short, persons of every age are treated by us with respect, but every kind of licentiousness is kept at a distance.*"

Philosophy represents the content of the category of wisdom as open and useful knowledge. But it is not its ancient "type"; Tatian will refer to it as the "barbarian philosophy" of which he is a follower and adherent. The designation of barbarian philosophy will henceforth become an ironic phrase contrasting with the artificiality of ancient scholarship. Unlike Clement and Origen, Tatian does not pay much attention to its formal and factual anchoring (Thomson, 2014, 135), or by not admitting in the theory of *logoi spermatikoi* the contribution of ancient philosophy to the formation of knowledge; he does not even see the essence of his polemic in this (*Oratio ad Graecos* 42): "*These things, O Greeks, I, Tatian, a disciple of the barbarian philosophy, have composed for you [...] Henceforward, knowing who God is and what is His work, I present myself to you prepared for an examination concerning my doctrines, while I adhere immovably to that mode of life which is according to God.*"

2. Kristus – Paidagogos

The Alexandrian school of exegesis dealt with the crucial problem of the value of ancient philosophy in the process of *praeparatio evangelica* and bringing people to Christ. In the spirit of Justinian apologetics, the school inclined to the theory of a dispersed Logos and its manifestations in history. Unlike Tatian, it did not reject the totality of ancient philosophy, but saw its role in contextualizing the gospel and achieving a certain positive morality (which is explicitly developed in the oft-quoted Stoics) and in learning about the world.

On this basis, Clement of Alexandria established a certain analogy between the Torah – the gospel on one hand and

philosophy – the gospel on the other. In both cases it is a preparation for a higher (understanding of) what is being communicated (*Stromata* I, V, 28, 1-3): "*Accordingly, before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration. [...] For God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily, as of the Old and the New Testament; and of others by consequence, as philosophy. Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks.*" He found the justification for the use of ancient philosophy both in the Exodus when the Israelites departed from Egypt and in the very nature of the search for truth, as witnessed by Christ in the New Testament.

It could not be denied, however, that finding truth through rational proof entailed the necessity of choosing a particular philosophy, since the whole of ancient philosophy was contradictory and inconsistent, as Tatian comments. Space was therefore devoted to defining the *method of* selection so as not to confuse those who hear the gospel (Vopřada 2015, 61-67). Above all, the listener must not be tempted by the lure of philosophy (in the metaphorical form of the sirens) and must cultivate the ability to detect the gnostic element of the text (*Stromata* I, V, 33): "*We merely therefore assert here that philosophy is characterized by investigation into truth and the nature of things (this is the truth of which the Lord Himself said, "I am the truth"); and that, again, the preparatory training for rest in Christ exercises the mind, rouses the intelligence, and begets an inquiring shrewdness, by means of the true philosophy, which the initiated possess, having found it, or rather received it, from the truth itself.*" The one who brings out of ignorance is Paidagogos – Christ through an apt interpretation of a particular teacher and the application of the Gnostic method (*Paidagogos* 1, 3): "*As, then, for those of us who are diseased in body a physician is required, so also those who are diseased in soul require a pædagogue to cure our maladies; and then a teacher, to train and guide the soul to all requisite knowledge when it is made able to admit the revelation of the Word. Eagerly desiring, then, to perfect us by a gradation conducive to salvation, suited for*

efficacious discipline, a beautiful arrangement is observed by the all-benignant Word, who first exhorts, then trains, and finally teaches." Therefore, the educational activity that is carried out cannot rely entirely on ancient models; it must balance the rational and spiritual meaning of education. In order to distinguish the two meanings, it is necessary to hierarchize the selected ancient philosophy as propaedeutic and Christian theology as an extension of paideia. Ultimately, such a listener will be able to unravel the mysteries of knowledge and thus be recognized as worthy of divine guidance and instruction (*Eclogae propheticae* 34). (Zahn 2016)

Origen took the relation of philosophy and theology from Clement and further developed it into *theia paideia* (Harris 2019). The *Paidagogos* – Christ remains on the highest level, with the teacher in the dual role of a disciple of Christ and an educator. The Gnostic method of allegorical interpretation of the text is to be used, which reveals the spiritual meaning of Scripture and makes it possible to understand the apparent contradictions in a literal reading and to discover its hidden meaning. Nevertheless, wisdom can only be attained through Christ and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.[3]

Parallel to Clement and Origen, the spiritual dimension of the teaching of the Desert Fathers developed. Their *paterikas* or collections of *apophthegmata* testify to a rather developed didactic method (Leloir 1995; Larsen-Rubenson 2018), which arose from the need to explain the principles of a koinobitic/eremitic life to isolated monastic communities, with an emphasis on asceticism, the cardinal virtues (especially humility) and *lectio divina*. Meditative reading and contemplation directly required pedagogical supervision with didactic principles of illustration and coherence. They were probably based on Origen's exegetical method with a specific spirituality (*Arm* 12, 1 B:III, 148): "s*end Moses to me to instruct me in the meaning of these words,"* (Leloir, 1976) Anthony asks, and God was to send an angel to interpret the relevant passage in Leviticus to him. Isaac the Syrian even warns anyone (Isaac the Syrian 329, XLV) (Wensinck 1923, 220) who would attempt to read the Scriptures without proper prayer – for only here does he consider the key to seeing the truth. It is only later that the distinction between

allegorical, moral-ethical and anagogical meaning comes coherently.

Given the limited number of biblical and theological texts, a typological method was developed to preserve the spiritual dimension of the monks' teaching (Kasprzak 2014). This method facilitated the memorization of texts and, thanks to its clarity, enabled the desired harmony between the Old and New Testaments to be found. Unlike the Alexandrian Fathers, the Desert Fathers did not see themselves as disciples of Christ and teachers of monks, giving much more space to simple exemplarity in understanding the contradictory parts of Scripture, *hesychia* and meditation. Because of this, they were criticized by the late ancient philosophers and labelled as uneducated. Moreover, the uneasy coexistence of the Christian and other ("pagan") populations produced frequent clashes, e.g. at the time of the murder of the philosopher Hypatia (Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII, 15): "*There was a woman at Alexandria named Hypatia, daughter of the philosopher Theon, who made such attainments in literature and science as to far surpass all the philosophers of her own time. Having succeeded to the school of Plato and Plotinus, she explained the principles of philosophy to her auditors, many of whom came from a distance to receive her instructions [...] After tearing her body in pieces, they took her mangled limbs to a place called Cinaron, and there burnt them. This affair brought not the least opprobrium, not only upon Cyril, but also upon the whole Alexandrian church. And surely nothing can be farther from the spirit of Christianity than allowing massacres, fights, and transactions of that sort."* The author of this description of the event, Socrates Scholasticus, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, further described the way of life of the desert monks as the fulfilment of a true philosophy, similarly to Eusebius of Kaisereia (*Historia Ecclesiastica* IV, 23): "*The Alexandrian Macarius, while in all respects resembling his Egyptian namesake, differed from him in this, that he was always cheerful to his visitors; and by the affability of his manners led many young men to asceticism. Evagrius became a disciple of these men, acquired from them the philosophy of deeds, whereas he had previously known that which consisted in words only*." The philosopher who loves wisdom

becomes an ascetic, living rigorously in the spirit of the gospel. This new definition would later be contradicted by the proponents of *mores maiorum*, e.g. Libanios (a rhetor) or Quintus Aurelius Symmachus.

The specific spiritual dimension of the anagogical function of education would naturally resonate in the era of iconoclastic disputes in the Byzantine Empire. Both John of Damascus and Pope Gregory I the Great would agree on the importance of the pedagogical effect of images or icons (Chazelle 1990, 138-153). In a letter to Bishop Sereno, the Pope explicitly explains: "*And then, with regard to the pictorial representations which had been made for the edification of an unlearned people in order that, though ignorant of letters, they might by turning their eyes to the story itself learn what had been done, it must be added that, because you had seen these come to be adored, you had been so moved as to order them to be broken.*"

Thus, although the Christian apologetics of the 2nd century gradually rehabilitated ancient philosophy and selectively became part of the theological schools defining orthodoxy and orthopraxy, the 3rd-century crisis in the Roman Empire intensified the persecution of Christianity. After a series of toleration edicts by Galerius, Licinius and Constantine, the situation calmed down, but new pressure would be put on the "pagan" population, including philosophers. The failure of Iulian's (re-)conversion increased this pressure in the 4th century. The Alexandrian school of exegesis in this "age of anxiety" comes up with a more optimistic view of history and contemporary events (Jaeger 1961, 64). Uplifting teaching should therefore lead to the harmonization of philosophical propaedeutic and the Gospel.

3. Basil the Great's School of Human Souls

The Cappadocian theologian Basil the Great was the author of several fundamental writings of the so-called Eastern (later Orthodox) Christianity. He was interested in natural philosophy, monasticism, moral and trinitarian theology. Together with Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus and Athanasius, he contributed to the definition of the work of the Holy Spirit and the relationship of the essences of the Father

and the Son, thus succeeding in defining himself against the heresies of 4th-century Arianism and Anomoianism. In Athens, he received a general education (*enkyklios paideia*) and became acquainted with classical ancient philosophy. Although he worked during the reign of Emperor Iulian, this did not show in his texts, unlike the texts of his contemporaries. Together, however, they came to the conclusion that it is beneficial to use ancient philosophy as a propaedeutic discipline that enables (not only) catechumens to understand the Gospel (Leemans - Cassin 2014, 335-368).

After the pagan (re-)conversion, the official imperial policy towards the pagan-Christian issue escalated. Gradually, public haruspices, the examination of omens in general, and sacrifices to the gods were banned, and eventually the question of closing temples permanently was addressed. Rhetor Libanius, a contemporary of Basileus, reacted especially to the third of the above threats. In his speech in defence of the temples (*Pro templis*), he argues in favour of their preservation; the text is emotional and urges Emperor Theodosius to preserve sanctuaries at least in the countryside *for memory's sake* and in cities for the sake of cultural heritage (*Pro templis* 9): "*Emperor, the temples are the soul of the country; they were the first original of the buildings in the country, and they have subsisted for many ages to this time; and in them are all the husbandman's hopes, concerning men, and women, and children, and oxen, and the seeds and the plants of the ground."* Elsewhere he is extremely scathing about Christian philosophers and theologians (*Pro templis* 31): "*Let then any of them tell me, who have left the tongs and the hammer and the anvil, and pretend to talk of the heavens, and of them that dwell there, what rites the Romans followed, who arose from small and mean beginnings, and went on prevailing, and grew great; theirs, or these, whose are the temples and the altars, from whom they knew by the soothsayers, what they ought to do, or not to do?"* In the 5th century, Rutilius Namatianus would return to this topic in *De reditu suo*, describing monks as hostile, deluded victims of their own fanaticism.[10]

In the context of these tensions, Basil suggests in his sermon *Address to Young Men On Greek Literature* that

Christians should indeed engage with "pagan" philosophical writings, for by their structure and interpretive schemes they train their minds for a much more sophisticated understanding of Old and New Testament texts. He quotes Hesiod, Homer, Solon and other classics, perceiving their affinities and ultimately their usefulness. He uses the metaphor of a tree: *"With what now may we compare these two kinds of education to obtain a simile? Just as it is the chief mission of the tree to bear its fruit in its season, though at the same time it puts forth for ornament the leaves which quiver on its boughs, even so the real fruit of the soul is truth, yet it is not without advantage for it to embrace the pagan wisdom, as also leaves offer shelter to the fruit, and an appearance not untimely."* Surprisingly, however, he rejects Origen's method of allegorical interpretation, which, in his view, helps to spread heterodoxy and heresy, and in so doing puts into context the lack of unity of philosophical schools. The fulfilment of the Torah and the spread of the gospel therefore have either a theological or a cultural-historical context; while the identification of allegory can cultivate human reason, it distances one from faith. He subsequently used the methods of illustration, exemplification and paradoxography in the *Hexaemeron,* a text about the creation of the world in six days.

A collection of nine sermons on the first chapters of Genesis is built around a dialogue between Basil and his audience, the aim of which is to demythologize the beginning of history and to interpret the creation of the world correctly. It responded to the Gnostic demonization of matter and the creation of a new narrative of salvation history, i.e. the struggle between light and darkness, in the reduced form of the "strife of the soul with the body". The last third of the sermon has a very strong pedagogical character: Basil engages in a strong interaction with his listeners, implicitly giving them tasks and encouraging them to discuss them informally, e.g. at the end of the seventh homily (*Hexaemeron* VII, 6): "*Whilst taking your food may the conversation at your table turn upon what has occupied us this morning and this evening. Filled with these thoughts, may you, even in sleep, enjoy the pleasure of the day, so that you may be permitted to say, "I sleep but my heart waketh," meditating day*

and night upon the law of the Lord, to Whom be glory and power world without end. Amen."

Gradually, in the seventh to ninth sermons, he takes up the themes of aquatic, terrestrial and flying animals, but his interpretation, not being purely naturalistic, deals – in a language that is understandable to the layman – with more complex topics such as the human soul and the ethics of interpersonal relationships (*Hexaemeron* VII, 3): "*What difference is there between the last fish and the man who, impelled by devouring greed, swallows the weak in the folds of his insatiable avarice? Yon fellow possessed the goods of the poor; you caught him and made him a part of your abundance. You have shown yourself more unjust than the unjust, and more miserly than the miser. Look to it lest you end like the fish, by hook, by weel, or by net. Surely we too, when we have done the deeds of the wicked, shall not escape punishment at the last.*" with special regard to morality in marriage, and of course to dogmas (*Haxaemeron* VIII, 6): "*Note and retain, I pray you, this point in the history of birds; and if ever you see any one laugh at our mystery, as if it were impossible and contrary to nature that a virgin should become a mother without losing the purity of her virginity, bethink you that He who would save the faithful by the foolishness of preaching has given us beforehand in nature a thousand reasons for believing in the marvellous*."

In her introductory study, Růžena Dostálová described the *Hexaemeron* as a vision of the earthly world as a school of human souls (Korteová - Dostálová, 2004). She thus aptly captured the "ever-present" pedagogical goal of the homilies, which seemed to be regularly associated with the explanation of natural phenomena and the categorization of animal species. But this coincidence is only the result of the rhetorical intention and construction of the whole collection. The moral dimension is also quite explicit, constantly reminding the laity of the principles of Christian gospel ethics. Basil was thus able to convey what was also the intention of the Alexandrian exegetes, despite the rejection of allegorical reading. His teaching methods are simple and effective, including his choice of classical rhetoric to fulfil the goals of Christian paideia using philosophical propaedeutic.

4. Conclusion

The educational process is essentially metanoic with a transcendental dimension: it is meant to help reveal the mystery of the world and, in a narrower sense, of Christ. In this process, the acquisition of man's (self-)awareness as *Imago Dei* takes place. With the development of the early Christian communities, the responsibility for "methodical" guidance changed significantly, especially for the catechumens, who had to explain the moral and ethical principles of Christian life and the gradually emerging orthodoxy. In parallel, apologetics sought to clarify who Christians are and what/who they believe. The polemical works of the apologists and subsequently the Church Fathers of the 2nd to 5th centuries turned to ancient philosophical, historiographical and literary authorities, pointing either to their consistency with Christianity's view or position on the matter or, on the contrary, refuting their generally accepted validity.

The dynamics of Roman-Christian (or possibly pagan-Christian) relations divided the elites of both sides in their approach to the question of mutual tolerance and cooperation. Tatian the Syrian's somewhat extreme position reacted to a similarly heated assessment of Christianity as a decadent superstition (Ovadiah – Mucznik 2014, 417-440). Justin Martyr perceived the situation differently, and, like Clement of Alexandria, he recognized the value of ancient thought in the acquisition of certain knowledge through philosophy and the identification of ethically binding norms.

In a certain simplification, education is therefore a process of initiation into the discovery of the relationship between the "confused" antiquity (or its disparate philosophical trends) and the gospel. The establishment of a model in which philosophical propaedeutic is followed by a theological superstructure helps find meaningfulness in this relationship. Ultimately, this reveals the Truth represented by the logion in the Gospel of John (14:6): "*I am the way and the truth and the life*." Wisdom, therefore, is not a matter of intellectualism; it is the transformation of those who are able to relativize their level of education and who are humble and moral (Aurelius Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* II: XLI, 63): "*[...] so poor is all*

the useful knowledge which is gathered from the books of the heathen when compared with the knowledge of Holy Scripture, For whatever man may have learnt from other sources, if it is hurtful, it is there condemned; if it is useful, it is therein contained. And while every man may find there all that he has learnt of useful elsewhere, he will find there in much greater abundance things that are to be found nowhere else, but can be learnt only in the wonderful sublimity and wonderful simplicity of the Scriptures."

NOTES

[1] "*...´humanitatem´ appellaverunt id propemodum, quod Graeci paideian vocant, nos ´eruditionem institutionemque in bohas artes´ dicimus. Quas qui sinceriter percupiunt adpetuntque, hi sunt vel maxime humanissimi. Huius enim scientiae cura et disciplina ex universis animantibus uni homini data est idcircoque ´humanitas´ appellata est. Sic igitur eo verbo veteres esse usos, et cumprimis M. Varronem Marcumque Tulllium, omnes ferme libri declarant*." (Aulus Gellius 1927, XIII, 17, 1)

[2] Tertullianus, *Apol.* 19: "*Their high antiquity, first of all, claims authority for these writings. With you, too, it is a kind of religion to demand belief on this very ground. Well, all the substances, all the materials, the origins, classes, contents of your most ancient writings, even most nations and cities illustrious in the records of the past and noted for their antiquity in books of annals – the very forms of your letters, those revealers and custodians of events, nay (I think I speak still within the mark), your very gods themselves, your very temples and oracles, and sacred rites, are less ancient than the work of a single prophet, in whom you have the thesaurus of the entire Jewish religion, and therefore too of ours. If you happen to have heard of a certain Moses, I speak first of him: he is as far back as the Argive Inachus; by nearly four hundred years – only seven less – he precedes Danaus, your most ancient name; while he antedates by a millennium the death of Priam. I might affirm, too, that he is five hundred years earlier than Homer, and have supporters of that view. The other prophets also, though of later date, are, even the most recent of them, as far back as the first of your philosophers, and legislators, and historians*." (Roberts & Donaldson 1995).

[3] Origen, *De principiis* 3: "*Now it ought to be known that the holy apostles, in preaching the faith of Christ, delivered themselves with the utmost clarity on certain points which they believed to be necessary to every one, even to those who seemed somewhat dull in the investigation of divine knowledge; leaving, however, the grounds of their statements to be examined into by those who should deserve the excellent gifts of the Spirit, and who, especially by means of the Holy Spirit Himself, should obtain the gift of language, of wisdom, and of knowledge: while on other subjects they merely stated the fact that things were so, keeping silence as to the manner or origin of their existence; clearly in order*

that the more zealous of their successors, who should be lovers of wisdom, might have a subject of exercise on which to display the fruit of their talents, – those persons, I mean, who should prepare themselves to be fit and worthy receivers of wisdom." (Roberts & Donaldson 1995).

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