



## ORIENTATION AND CONTENT OF EDUCATION [ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ/ΠΑΕΔΕΙΑ] AND HUMAN REDEFINITION OF THE MODERN SCHOOL

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### Abstract:

Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia], as the spiritual food of mankind and the light of man's life, is the first and foremost basic pillar of culture that starts its formal implementation at school. In particular, according to the remarkable saying of St. Basil the Great, who speaks of "useful education [Παιδεία/Paedeia]", distinguishing it from the "stupid and harmful" one, the cornerstone of educating the student today lies in its content and orientations. In our social environment, this kind of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia], introduces, or rather should introduce, the student into the world of one's own tradition and identity. This is considered extremely necessary today, since the prevailing spirit of globalization forcefully leads the future man to become a "globalized consumer" and not a global, universal person.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is known that in modern multicultural Europe that is trying to combine its ideology with a variety of current socio-political views, modern authorities do not hesitate to work for the alteration of man's identity. Their main drive is education, that seems to be pursued through the new school excuses of its "upgrade" and educational "reforms", which turn out to be the Trojan Horse that alienates the children's face.

Their uppermost goal appears to be the alteration of our Species, through modifying "identity" and our predestination. Therefore, in the altar of the international spirit of globalisation, the future man will have to be a "consumer", a "citizen of the world".



Since it is often officially said that everything is a matter of Education, I believe that it becomes necessary to investigate the content and orientations of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia], considering St. Basil's statement that "beneficial Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia]" is opposite to "foolish and harmful"<sup>1</sup> one.

## THE ORIENTATIONS AND THE CONTENT OF EDUCATION THROUGH CENTURIES

Various opinions about the orientations and the content of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia], have been expressed from time to time. In ancient times, Pythagoras considered that "*the illiteracy is the mother of all evil*"<sup>2</sup> while Democritus claimed that "*Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] in the world is a blessing for the happy and a shelter for the unhappy*"<sup>3</sup>. Plato mentions that "*the power of education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] can cure the soul*". He also considers that "*educating the children in virtue, is the safest way to create perfect citizens*"<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, Aristotle notes that "*Whatever the lawgiver actually deals with, regarding the education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] of the young, no one disputes. And if this does not happen it damages the states*".<sup>5</sup>

In the Old Testament and in the book of Proverbs, among others, it is mentioned that "*He, who loves education [Παιδεία/Paedeia], loves understanding*" (Prv.12,1). It is also mentioned that, "*The highway of the upright [Παιδεία/Paedeia] turns aside from evil; whoever guards his way preserves his life*" (Prv.16, 17). In the Psalms it is noted: "*Bring about education [Παιδεία/Paedeia]*" (Prv. 16, 17), as well as, "*Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge*" [Παιδεία/Paedeia] (Ps. 118,66).

In the New Testament, the holy Apostle Paul observes: "*fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline [Παιδεία/Paedeia] and admonition of the Lord*" (Eph.6, 4). At another point Apostle Paul mentions: "*every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for control, for correction, for training in [Παιδεία/Paedeia] righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, devoted to every good work*" (2 Tim. 3, 16-17). In Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, it is noted among others: "*All education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] for the present brings no joy, but sorrow. Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as his children...Later on, the fruit of peace for those who are deprived of it, it will become the rendering of justice*" (Heb.12, 7-12).

Based on the paternal thought, St. Basil the Great defines education as following: "*Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] is an exercise that is beneficial to the soul, cleaning it from many of the stains of evil*".<sup>6</sup> Moreover, St. John Chrysostom observes: "*Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] is the source of holiness*"<sup>7</sup> as well as: "*A pure life is what we receive from education [Παιδεία/Paedeia]*".<sup>8</sup>

1 St. Basil the Great, *On the Beginning of Proverbs*, 6, PG 31,397.

2 Stobaeus, *Anthologion*, 2.31. 96.

3 Democritus, *Quotes*, 180.

4 Plato, *Laws*, 1643d.

5 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1337a, 11-14.

6 St. Basil the Great 6, PG 31,396.

7 St. Chrysostom, *Sermon to Hebrews*, 29, PG 63, 205.

8 St. Chrysostom, *1 Timothy, Sermon 5*, PG 62,527.



He characterises Teaching as “*exercise*” since “*all education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] cultivates mankind to acquire principles and morality*”.<sup>9</sup>

In the wider Christian area and especially the European area, a multiform mutation of the content and orientation of education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] has been observed, which, according to St. Justin Popovic, as being superficial and external, “*transforms man into a typically polite and at the same time a wicked, anthropomorphic beast*”.<sup>10</sup> This situation is caused by the shift of the centre of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] from God-anthropocentricity and Christo-centricity, to the simply so-called humanitarian ideal, in which various perceptions of the so-called “*humanistic education [Παιδεία/Paedeia]*” can be found. It consists an attempt to establish an in-terpretative search for the meaning of life. At this point, the role of Western religious humanism contributes to St. Justin Popovic’s observation that constitutes “*the most decisive protest against the God-Man and His evaluation and criteria*”.<sup>11</sup>

The anthropocentric or Christocentric content and orientations of education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] derive from the fact that, according to St. John of Damascus, the God-Man Christ is “*the supremely new and supremely unique under the sun*”.<sup>12</sup> The above content and orientations of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] contribute so that, according to St. Justin Popovic, man knows “*the ‘God-like’ purpose and the meaning of his existence. He knows where the human being is going. In the ‘Godly’ world, through his life, in the ‘Godly’ life that is above death, it is eternal*”.<sup>13</sup>

Regarding the pedagogy and “*admonition of the Lord*”, St. Justin Popovic observes that it contributes to the children becoming “*complete*” people, “*who know the purpose of human life*” and this exists “*wherever the Lord is. And the Lord is always present in His God-Human Body; His Church. In His Church exist all His powers, which regenerate, transform, perfect, sanctify and lead each and every one separately, to reach ‘a perfect man, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ’ (Eph. 4:13)*”.<sup>14</sup>

According to St. Popovic, this education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] contributes to “*create the ‘new’ man, the Christ-like man. Because the holy man is the righteous man, the man ‘full’ of God’s spirit, the true man, the perfect man*”.<sup>15</sup>

He notes that a characteristic feature of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] is holiness. When someone “*does not find holiness, he knows that there is no education either*”<sup>16</sup>. In fact, “*education, separated from holiness, opposed to the Gospel, becomes a tragic futility*”.<sup>17</sup> As it is mentioned above, according to Justin Popovic, the only thing this education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] without “*Christ*” can achieve, is to alter the man, “*to a typically polite but tricky anthropomorphic beast*”.<sup>18</sup> On the contrary, from the depths of the soul of our Orthodox people the voice rises: “*without holiness there is no education, without the saints there are no pedagogues and teachers*”.<sup>19</sup>

9 St. Chrysostom, *Sermon to Hebrews*, 29, PG 63, 209.

10 Popovic 1987, 64-65.

11 Popovic 1987, 128.

12 John of Damascus. *About heresies in brief. Where they came from and where they happened*, PG 94, 984.

13 Popovic 1982, 33.

14 Popovic 1986, 318-319.

15 Popovic 1986, 319.

16 Popovic 1987, 63.

17 Popovic 1987, 64-65.

18 Popovic 1987, 64-65.

19 Popovic 1987, 64-65.



In relation to the above and based on the modern scientific concerns, regarding the content and orientation of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia], we note that there is no such thing as neutral knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Also, we notice that no science is “neutral”, not even those that are usually considered by definition not to have been contaminated by ideology, such as, for example the natural sciences. Every knowledge is produced by the convergence of different factors, such as, e.g. the theoretical starting point of the scientist, the available means to respond, the communication and the use of one’s findings among the scientific society.

Consequently, it becomes clear that the content and orientations of education [Παιδεία/Paedeia], in action and training, are mainly ideologically influenced and determined by the following factors:

- a) *Philosophical ideas and the theory that the educator has accepted*
- b) *The spiritual level of the people*
- c) *The component of society where goals are formed”.*<sup>21</sup>

These forms of dependency of the content and orientation of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] on the surrounding atmosphere leads to situations of change, especially when the same healthy orientation in the search for the meaning of life is not shared. In fact, as St. Justin Popovic observes, in European philosophy “*man appears more or less fragmentary*”.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, according to Popovic, it seems that there is no philosophical system in which the man is considered to be a whole, body and soul.<sup>23</sup> Thus, for example, in the context of post modernity, Jean-François Lyotard notes: “*Within the context of delegitimization, universities and institutions of higher education are henceforth called upon to form competences and no longer ideals*”.<sup>24</sup> Lyotard seems to repeat in some way Plato, who noted that “*every science... separated from justice and from other virtues, should be considered artifice and evil and not wisdom*”.<sup>25</sup>

## EDUCATION IN THE MODERN ERA

In contrast to the above, the modern school seems to insist on the cognitive development of the student and not on the offer of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] to students. However, the adaptation of the school to the constantly differentiating professional structures of society, shrinks its activity on the effort of cultivating humanization to students.

The humanistic redefinition of the school will help the student to come to a direct encounter with himself and by extension with his problems. In this way, this school will respond to what Christ said “*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*” (J.10, 10).

<sup>20</sup> Kogoulis 2016, 326.

<sup>21</sup> Kogoulis 2016, 326.

<sup>22</sup> Popovic 1992, 197.

<sup>23</sup> Popovic 1992,197-8.

<sup>24</sup> Lyotard 1993, 120.

<sup>25</sup> Plato, *Menon*, 19 226E.



Unfortunately, many times under the pretext of "upgrading" and "reforming" there is an attempt to distort the "identity" of the students and remove it from the Greek Orthodox Heritage. At this point we notice that the central goal of the school is not simply to provide the student with knowledge and skills, but to cultivate one's self-awareness.

The humanistic redefinition of the school is related to the general purpose of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] which, according to Kogoulis, is:

- «*To help children and adolescents and, above all, students to BECOME: Perfect, complete as personalities, "cosmopolitans"»*,<sup>26</sup> constituting a "peoples' world" (=cosmos=jewel - ornament), universal, worldly people and NOT glob-alized" or based on Postmodernity and being post-humans.

As for the necessity to offer Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] to students, we clarify that they, especially nowadays, need "*senses trained to distinguish between good and bad*" (Heb.5, 16). Specifically, Authentic and genuine Education helps students:

- To avoid being intellectually disabled and epistemologically trapped.
- To be able to think, reflect and be alert.
- To be led to a responsible pace, so that they are able to be guided into true communion with others and gain the illumination of the secrets of the age.
- To acquire genuine morals, which will help them in an attitude of honesty in interpersonal relationships and will be a barrier to the bad influence of the time.
- To assist in the study of the reality of the world and its problems.
- To be distinguished for consistency and to acquire an unencumbered care for the others.

## CONCLUSIONS

The orientations of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia] and their Theocentric and Christocentric content prevent the danger of "reducing Christianity to humanism", as well as the replacement of humanistic Christianity<sup>27</sup> with the old polytheistic religion and ultimately globalization-homogenization of the people.

On the contrary, the humanistic redefinition of the school will be an embankment in the distortion of the role of Education [Παιδεία/Paedeia], which aims to a man who ceases to function as a person and turns into a robotic organism with uniform ape-like behaviour.

Through the orientations of Education and its God-centred content, since, as St. Justin Popovic observes, "*only the God-Man is a perfect and perfected man*"<sup>28</sup> and "*at the same time: a perfect God and a perfect Man*", young people will discover and will cultivate their personality, as it befits to the Greeks and they will eventually become "cosmopolitans", as an ancient Divine Liturgy characteristically mentions.

<sup>26</sup> Kogoulis 2016, 439-547.

<sup>27</sup> Popovic 1987, 128-129.

<sup>28</sup> Popovic 1974, 206.



Finally, it is worth mentioning what St. Kosmas the Aetolian observes, who prophetically reminds us, New Greeks, that: "*Things will come out of the schools that the mind ... cannot imagine*".<sup>29</sup> Last but not least, it is worth to underline what was emphasized by Papoulakos, the Elder, as well as what exists in the consciousness of our people, along with the sayings of Saint Christopher (rested in 1861), who, among others, notes: "*The Godless Education blocks the nation's path and prevents it from enjoying its freedom... The Godless letters weave the shroud of the nation...*".<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Tritos 2009, 75.

<sup>30</sup> Bastia 1997, 145-147.



## ΟΙ ΠΡΟΣΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΣΜΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΠΕΡΙΕΧΟΜΕΝΟ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΣΤΙΚΟΣ ΕΠΑΝΑΠΡΟΣΔΙΟΡΙΣΜΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΣΧΟΛΕΙΟΥ

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### Συμπεράσματα:

Η Παιδεία, ως η πνευματική τροφή του ανθρώπου και το φως της ζωής του, αποτελεί τον πρώτο βασικό πυλώνα της εκπαίδευσης στο χώρο του σχολείου. Ειδικότερα, το περιεχόμενο και οι προσανατολισμοί της, και μάλιστα, στο πλαίσιο της αξιοπρόσεκτης επισήμανσης του Μεγάλου Βασιλείου, ο οποίος κάνει λόγο για την «*ωφέλιμο παιδεία*», την οποία διακρίνει από «*την ανόητη και βλαβερή*», διαδραματίζουν τον θεμέλιο λίθο στον τρόπο της Διαπαιδαγώγησης του μαθητή. Η εν λόγω Παιδεία, στο δικό μας κοινωνικό περιβάλλον, εισάγει, ή οφείλει να εισάγει τον μαθητή στον κόσμο της δικής του παράδοσης και ταυτότητας. Αυτό σήμερα κρίνεται άκρως απαραίτητο, καθόσον στο βωμό του επικρατούντος πνεύματος της παγκοσμιοποίησης, επιδιώκεται ο μελλοντικός άνθρωπος να είναι ο «καταναλωτής», ο «παγκοσμιοποιημένος» και όχι ο παγκόσμιος, ο οικουμενικός άνθρωπος.

Ο ανθρωπιστικός επαναπροσδιορισμός του σχολείου μέσω των προσανατολισμών της Παιδείας και του Θεανθρωποκεντρικού περιεχομένου της, θα αποτελέσει ανάχωμα στη διαστρέβλωση του ρόλου της εκπαίδευσης, η οποία επιδιώκει να πάψει ο άνθρωπος να λειτουργεί ως πρόσωπο αλλά ως «ρομποτικός οργανισμός» με ομοιόμορφη πιθηκίζουσα συμπεριφορά, και θα βοηθήσει τους νέους να ανακαλύψουν και να καλλιεργήσουν την προσωπικότητά τους, όπως αρμόζει στην Ελληνική ιδιοσυγκρασία και στην Ορθόδοξη Χριστιανική μας πίστη.

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