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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

in the Context of the New Paradigms of Education and in the Romanian Education System

Abstract: The Christian concept of education is distinguished within new educational paradigms by the way it relates to the ultimate human reality at the essence of spiritual experience. Its ideological view of human life as a whole, along with the specific religious teaching methods, does not oppose individual vocational development and social inclusion. Rather, it supports the educated person by providing guidance in navigating the often unclear landscape of societal values. The Romanian education system, like other European systems, is open to what the postmodernist language calls the "tradition of the new," but it also has the capacity to incorporate value requirements related to European Christian tradition. This tradition is dedicated to promoting enduring values of humanity, beyond any ethnic, religious, or cultural differences. Christian education defines its priorities in relation to interaction with other educational models or paradigms, without denying their positive contributions. Thus, the school has the opportunity to become a definitive axiological landmark in society and a crucial space for refining values, serving as the most qualified institution to provide us with a vision of our future.

Keywords: *Christian Education, Humanism, Postmodernism, Practical Theology, Catechesis*

The principles and priorities of religious education are becoming more and more known and widely debated lately, not only in the school environment, but also in the whole social space, debate driven by the mass media. The attention paid to the religion class shows that religious education is an important aspect for Romanian education system and must be treated as such. Very interesting seems to be the diversity of pro and negative arguments, arguments which belong to the interception of religion class

in society, the distribution of the Christian message, but less by the place of the religious concept of education in the education system of Romania.

School is a favorable environment to promote values in society, by default of Christian values, so the point of view of specialists in education brings additional value in public debates, which did not happen unfortunately in the last time. One thing is sure, that the society is very careful and agrees to the fact that religious education is a priority of the Romanian education. On the other hand, Christian values, regardless of the fact that they subsist in objective forms of religious manifestation or in other forms in spiritual life of the citizens, cannot be separated by the cultural act, teaching staff in particular, particularly complex and the only model which may promote sustainable models of the religious, ethnic, national alter ego. If religious education is receiving overwhelming majority support, and we refer in particular to parent authority, then there is a need to improve the organization of their priorities and rules of operation.

It is our intention to put in the light the marks of interaction between Christian education principles and some paradigms of education which are coming in the spotlight with maximum determination in relation to these principles in the Romanian education system.

For a religion professor and the person who teaches Christian religion, there are two large imperatives in the conceptualism and development of religious education:

1. Identification and preservation of elements of continuity and authenticity in the transmission of Church's doctrine;
2. Optimization of theoretical and practical frame of curricula insertions of Christian education in the Romanian education system.

Therefore, the attention of religion professor is heading in equal measure both toward the teaching content as well as toward the organization and flow of the education process. Lack of a common terminology and specific strategies in the methodological approaches regarding Christian education leads to an increasing trends from the curriculum elaborators to borrow and adapt the content, the Christian message or the methodological instrumentation of new educational patterns. These educational

models or “Educational paradigms”¹ “are an answer to the new politics in education, general trend being of conformation to what, in postmodernist language, means “tradition of the new” (H. Rosenberg, to see E. Paun, 2002, p. 13).

Educational Paradigms respond to social-cultural realities and are subject to them. In fact, social politics lead to a specific approach in the theory and educational practice (Paun, 2002, p. 15), which causes Christian education to respond in his own manner, and to adapt itself to these stipulations. In practice, this entails an enlargement of the religion professor area of concern and of the person who teaches religion towards:

- The new forms of approach of the educational act, from the point of view of environmental requirements or social factors;
- Pluricultural, interdisciplinary character and keeping the integrator concept of education;
- The questionable existential question of the human being.

To discover other areas of research does not mean a deterioration of the Christian education content, but on the contrary an acclimation to the new realities. The highlighting of the informational content, moral, civic, which involves the religion class means an implementation in the light of the education objectives and goals of the Christian message. „The educational value is that best adequate report, between the mean (shape, conditions) of achieving the education and its aims (target) – shaping the individual for humanity“ (Cucos, 1995, p. 62).

Religious education is by the nature of its promoted values a propitious environment to human value interaction, but also proposes transcendent marks of cultural investment, axiological. For a Christian, culture does not produce values for culture, but perennial values of humanity in the sacral space of the Church. But the Church is the genuine universe of human values and this fact has been proved in the course of time. If religion would significantly deplete on the level of cultural values, would become itself a

¹ The term *Paradigm* comes from gr. παράδειγμα, for example, model; Vb. παραδείκνυμι means show close, indicate with precision, he gave the example or compare. Educational Paradigms affects the education system to structural and functional level, in particular the students’ role in the knowledge process and in the very thoughtless use of scientific truth.

cultural product, human in essence, means of interpersonal valorization. The unalterable religious background is not due to cultural product, but the Divine transcendental, if by we do not understand an abstract reference to an unspecified ideal, philosophical, but to a fact, and a personal presence of God through Its unfinished works. On the other hand, God is tripled in person and the Church appeared in particular as that universe of human intercommunion, according to the Divine model.

In this context we invoke and affirm the human pluralism in the unity of faith, but also cultural diversity as national, ethnic, community specific of the cultural space. Recourse to cultural, religious, confessional plurality is far from being a sophism in Church's life, the Church is the only institution which has remained consistent to its principles in this respect from the beginning. The Holy Words of apostle Pavel are: „There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3, 28), with the mentioning that, in the Church, the distinct reason of those listed does not destroy, but it discovers the upper reasons unit of all in God. For this reason, the person I emphasizes that these differences which, until the Redeemer's coming were radical, they become circumstances of the unit in diversity, but only in the reality – human divine of the son incarnated to God .

As compared with other modes of religion reception, at least in the school environment, some assumptions might be proposed:

- The religion hour to be dealt with all the other disciplines, without being conceptually isolated;
- The diachronic and profoundly human character must not ignore the actual historical environment and church life and at the same time to be integrated in the general-purpose of education (N. Ματσούκα, 1981, p. 307).

It is to be mentioned the fact that the professor of religion has done and still does considerable efforts to integrate this discipline in the curricula area, at conceptual level. If religion is associated with other disciplines within the area of socio-human, it cannot be disassociated, but also it cannot be confused with other disciplines, because what it stands out and approaches it also is its purpose or finality. Unfortunately, in Romania the problem of the religion hour has never been brought to its finality, but it was analyzed sequentially and under the pressure of social rules aspects

which aimed its functionality in the education system or in the society.

As a general rule, disciplines are competing for a ground of knowledge well structured that has a benefic interaction, in support of a conjoint education, but religion proposes a system of values which are always at the level of the person's decisional forum. Some opinions of specialists in pedagogics stop at the functional, utilitarian character of religious morality (see Mircescu, 2003, p. 51), without taking into consideration that the faithful person is not only a moral person or who answers positive to ethical rules, but also a person open to an effective and permanent interaction between God and man. A person with true faith will never be passive to the condition of the other persons existence, but will always be disposed to have a valuable interaction with him, within the meaning of the Holy Apostle Paul: „Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6, 1-2).

The Person of Christ, the Messiah, appears as a basis of human interaction, but He is also the model of Christian education, not within the meaning of the singularity, but in the sense of its finality. For this reason, one of the aspects which had been pointed out by professor Ματσούκας at the conference dedicated to the finality of religious education in Greece, it emphasizes that Christian education has a diachronic character, i.e. claims that Christian models of education are not committed to perishability, as it actually happens with educational content. However, he insists on updating and adapting historical cultural, civic, from all points of view.

Socio-human disciplines are deeply marked by the dynamic of education models, they are optimally open to social interaction and are preparing the educated one to assume his status or social role. „Social system is a configuration of cultural models, which provides individuals group life techniques, of interaction and social integration, in accordance with the expectations or requirements essential for cohabitation in the society. How a person reacts in a given situation, depends on the education he has received, habits formed that helps it to play a social role”. (I. Albulescu, M. Albulescu, 2000, p. 16)

The process of conceptualism to which is often subject the Christian doctrine also involves certain risks which are the cause for subjective judg-

ment in addressing to religious mentality, characterized in particular by:

- *Omission* (For example, omission of the character revealed by Christian teachings)
- *Superficiality and indifference*
- *The globalization trend*
- *Inadequacy to the investigated field* (Which excludes the scientific character of the research).

There were always different positions in the Christian's message approach, the content faith teachings, but today it is very much in question the scientific character of the overall catechumen procedure. Joseph Moingt observed: „Modern developments of the science has integrated Christianity of general science or history of religion, to put underprivileged the claim of being founded on a historical supernatural and exclusive revelation” (Moingt&Troeltsch, 2000, p. 186). The Christian message does not eclipse that man is able to find knowledge by its own means, but the manner which he relates to the truth of knowledge may not always be the same, whereas science, in all of its forms, it tends to limit the truth of knowledge from its objective condition.

Without doubt, some causes are related to the incorrect reception of the Christian message. Among these, professor Κογκούλης identifies:

- Gross ignorance of the modern man for the sacred contemporary amenities, which leads to his removal from the life and traditions of the Church.
- Indifference, who determines man to have an alienated life style, without exit and indefinitely perpetuated;
- Negative disposal of man's rejection towards institution's and work of the Church (Κογκούλης, 2000, p. 36).

Due to the fact that any educational paradigm involves a logic of scientific founding, epistemology, but there is also a specific ideological discourse, it is necessary to examine in what conditions Christian education can integrate or not to such paradigms. In accordance with the conditions in which Christian education has not its ontological, epistemological and axiological foundation in research, we can speak of a Christian paradigm of education and not only humanistic, as a dimension of socio cultural existentialist paradigm, such it is stated in the pedagogy recent studies (see

Paun, 2002, p. 14.)

Postmodernism represents an opening intended towards human problematics, as a reaction to the modern paradigm of education much too rigid, of instrumentalism and based exclusively on the cognitive-informative dimension, of the educational training process, that is the objectiveness. A re-orientation toward the subject to be educated can be from the Christian perspective a new challenge, a common universe that can serve as starting point but also a foundation for numerous common values (Gordon, 2003, p. 156). Although the Church teaching is sufficiently substantiated and approved on a persons development, it is not sufficiently structured and applied to the realities on which subscribes the Romanian educational system and the new trends in education.

There is a common discussion in nowadays on the postmodernism and its implications in social science. Here are a few implications of postmodernism in the field of education.

- Support for those educational paradigms centered on humanistic existential-valorization.
- Redefining interhuman relations by re-establishing dialog between a person and society (socialization), subjective and objective, rational and emotional, determinism and indeterminism.
- Customizing educational act according to the subjective stipulation of the educated one and depending on their dynamic in the educational process.
- Emphasize of the transposition didactic role through which the teacher redevelops the formal curriculum by adjusting it and re-phasing it to the concrete conditions of teaching.
- Bring back to the plane of debates the variables of curricular developments such as: professional habitus, preparing the professor for its educational career etc (see Paun, 2002, p. 22).

Postmodernism remains a concept quite general when applied to pedagogy as science of education, and that is why it is substantially redefined by the prism of other educational paradigms as well as the humanist-educational or constructivist paradigm. These two paradigms come into the proximal determination of Christian education by the accession of new premises in theory and in the practice of learning. As a matter of fact

the body of these new educational paradigms is positioned in particular by contrast carried out against modernistic paradigm which he succeeds. Postmodernist supporters even talk about a reconstruction of educational sciences.

As regards the humanism and the humanistic paradigm, as an ideology, they are not a novelty, however, they distinguish themselves through some desideratum that Christian education has it fully noticed:

- The discovery of sacrament human existence, whom he does not deny its revealing character, from which the human re-edification of values.

- Spiritual Resizing of the cultural and educational phenomenon.
- Educational-humanistic paradigm proposes a pedagogy of cultural models through the observation of which is carried out individual ways to assume a higher value of educational, judgement (from the humanistic point of view).

- Subjective involvement professor, development relationships are affections and trust between it and high school students.

- Advances its orientation hypothesis towards its own human being in the values space with idea of formation making an image on himself equally authentic, which approaches current humanism to the psycho-analytic pedagogy. Also from the psycho-analytic pedagogy, educational paradigm-proposes:

- ✓ Maximize the experience and individual adventure.
- ✓ An open and informal pedagogy.
- ✓ Setting up personal beliefs of the subject as a basis of world knowledge.

- Support empathy as a way of genuine interhuman knowledge and promotes positive, empathetic thinking.

- It relies on personalism, spiritual theories emphasizing the internal dynamics of the personality and transcendental relationship between human being and the universe (Barlogeanu, 2002, pp. 27-35).

It can be easily found similarities between humanistic educational paradigm and the constructivist one, having regard that they both belong to the postmodernist current from which they are originary, and especially for the fact that they are based on a philosophy of knowledge linked to the existentialist subjectivism. We will not insist on development of these

theories, but we will remember that, in the light of those theories, knowledge of reality is strictly linked to the internalness of human subject, the truth of knowledge being confined only to what the self or conscience can collect, what they can integrate at the level of previous experiences, previous convictions (see Siebert, 2001, p. 66).

Here is how explains Detlef Horster¹ the constructivist position towards the Christian morality: “In the Christian community, both the simple peasant, as well as prince or king they could find in the Bible guidance for everyday moral decisions. There is a common sense of justice for all the statuses and one of identification with the community. Today, this situation has changed irrevocably. Now you can’t impose a universal moral, it must be justified and this justification should be understood by each individual. Moral is no longer a undeniable and understood good, as in Christian community. Now, in order to justify it means that you can show why all men, without exception, should relate to it, to consider it right and rational and to follow it as well as God imperatives. It can be achieved only if justification is understandable for each, so as to be able to ask for listening/obedience. These are the reasons why I call it the moral of acceptance and mutual respect as being analogous post Christian epiphany and morals. On the other hand, obviously, from the normative point of view, it can be reported to the Christian principle of equality, and the New Testament after Matthew²” (Siebert, 2001, pp. 68-69)

Pedagogy constructivist supporters go further and claim the deconstruction of any truth of knowledge, so that the whole structure of knowledge to be the product exclusively of the subject, without anything that does not pass through the filter of reason of his consciousness. In fact, constructivism does not support anything other than that reality is not other than their own self construction. For some advocates of this theory there are no proven principles or rules which require axiomatic, but only constructs.

It is very important the type of relationship values on which an educational paradigm proposes to Christian education because, objectively, Christian virtues, as well as fundamental values of human existence, shall

¹ Professor of philosophy at the University of Hannover.

² They are considering the verse: *All the things that you would want other people do for you, you should also make for them, for that this is the law and prophecy*, Matthew 7,12.

not be exhausted intelligible or individually, they are participation of the person to a human-divine reality. Theological speaking, our very existence is by participation, and the man has nothing outside its participation to God, more precisely, beside God's gift. „God, that who is the existence, kindness and wisdom itself, more true speaking even above all of these, has nothing antithetical in it. But the creatures, whom exist by participation and grace, and, those who are rational and mental, and hold the ability of goodness and wisdom, have something antithetical in them. Namely, to their existence opposes the non-existence, and to the goodness and wisdom ability, the malignancy and the ignorance” (Marturisorul, 2008, p. 112). Human existence is an act of his rational' participation in God's uncreated work, by sharing of his gifts, his kindness. This is the first condition of the pedagogical act, of its definition, which is why the existence of an absolute ontological and axiological fact of life. If in the relationship between teacher and student there is indicative of a axiological transfer, formative and final, as far as the relationship between God and man, the act of existence, not only of education, is transposed into a superior plan. „Rational creature and mental shall communicate with God the Holy, that is, at his kindness and wisdom, by this very fact that it exists and by its ability to be happy, and by accomplishing as if for his eternal lasting grace. Through this he finds God. And he experiences the things made by Him, such as it was told, through collection of artistic wisdom contemplated in creatures, which is simple and without his own hypostasis; it was only in his mind” (Marturisorul, 2008, p. 111).

From the Christian point of view moral is not justified exclusively through its normative character, not even under the conditions much too idealistic of acceptance by all, but it is justified by saying that it leads to its end. Nothing more, because the man does not cease to be moral when it finds morals purpose, better said its true finality. On the other hand, a moral or ethics whose substance is by definition a rule or a law, then is unachieved because it always means the existence of lawlessness, of the one who breaches the law, and therefore of the law which convicts the wrongdoing. Or, the objective transfer of moral standard toward the internalness or subjectiveness of personal, acceptance, does only points out what cannot be aimed or to render the individual only as far as he can intelligible include the moral standard or better said the effect of moral standard. Subjectiveness plays an entirely different role in relation to di-

vine revelation and by default with the moral law. Subjectiveness does not opposes to the objectivity of God's existence, nor does not oppose to objectivity of moral law, but they discover them, relieves them, and this only under the conditions in which it enables access to God's revealed knowledge and it receives freely. Religious theories, scientific, or philosophical are not redemptive, they do not have such a purpose and, therefore, they not mediate faith (Opris, 2013, pp. 8-9), therefore religion is nothing more than the theory or philosophy of education.

On the other hand, in order to assume from the axiological point of view the Christian education priorities, they must materialize themselves at the level of educational objectives, not only in the plan of theory, but also on the level of skills and of education ideal. There are some points of contact between theoretical-philosophical content of education paradigms recalled and the faith teaching of the Church, the Christian model of education, which concern some specialists in education:

- Ontological education,
- Epistemological education,
- The axiology of the education.

Under ontological view, education can only be a move from the ontic point of view, „guaranty of the educational fact of life“ (Cucoş, 1995, pp. 8-9), it is included to ontological exigencies and as finality it cannot ignore what belongs to the human nature. From this point of view, religiosity is an educational imperative. The Holy apostle Pavel said that even „the pagans, which do not have laws, by nature they abide to the law ... which shows that the law deed is written in their hearts“ (Romans 2, 14-15). Christian Education is included to the ontological reality of the man, as a human's being created by God, hypostatic, rational, and as a finality the resemblance to God, reaching to him. Christian concept of education is included to the human ontological reality, without this might be interpreted in the sense of a limited opportunity to grow, whereas the man's ontological reality open endless possibilities to submit to God.

Epistemological education is focused on knowledge possibilities and limitations, the use of knowledge as a truth principle for training and human development, which shows that education is a cognitive journey, but also a discovery of the truth not only the scientific one, but also of the

hypostatic truth and rationality of creation. An education without the last mark of the world rationality would become an education in the materialistic spirit, utilitarian, non-finalist. Regarding the role of mind in the knowledge human realities, Church teaching shows that human intelligence tends to exceed the insufficient materiality of creation and will remain always open over the supra-reality transcendental, personal, of God. To the undefined of human mind it corresponds the infinity of God (I. Calist Xanthopol, 1979, p. 163, n. 351). Therefore, religion emphasizes the size of epistemological of education in perspective of exceeding the knowledge limits, but also of rational creation. When the knowledge horizon is defined to the laws of nature, to the limits of human reason, education loses its purpose by the fact that man is a spiritual creature, capable not only to know the reasons of things, but also to climb into the unit of this knowledge in God.

Finally, the axiology of the education raise the problem of value orientation of training young people in school and in society. For this purpose, the school is not only a receptive space of cultural values, but is the institution empowered to clarify and formulate axiological standards in the society. School is opened to socio-cultural paradigms and in the opinion of some specialists these paradigms at the origin of axiological orientation in education. Such a report is indicated in the sociological studies. „Modernity and post-modernity may be associated in the educational space with the existence of paradigms whose configures pedagogy as an dynamic and complex domain. In a work of reference, Y. Bertand and P. Valois¹ Identifies and analyzes five educational paradigms: rational, technological, humanistic, interference and inventive. They constitute the aim in educational plan of “socio-cultural paradigms”. A socio-cultural paradigm describes the relationship and influence of society development on social practices, on the functioning and organization of social institutions. Educational, it describes the relationship between education and society, educational models that society formulates, it proposes or enforces... as a last resort, a socio-cultural paradigm contains – in an express or implied manner – a theory on which it is based the educational practice in a society” (Paun, 2002, p. 14).

The debate on the acceptance of religion class in schools, as a manda-

¹ *Fondements éducatifs pour une nouvelle société*, ed. Nouvelles, Montréal, 1999.

tory discipline in the curricula plan, offered possibility of formulating very different some points of view. We will not enunciate them, but we take note that the increased interest towards the faith of the young people in school shows that the place of religion is in the public education institutions and not elsewhere. The support for the religion class begins by discovering its shaping valence, its training, the implications of invoking religious values in the context of spreading other cultural values, scientific, ethnic, etc.

Unfortunately, Christian paradigm of education is perceived in the other theories only to its traditional, historic dimension or, liturgical at the most. Elements of Christian morals are somehow relativized or interpreted individually, losing themselves in their unitary character, ecclesiastic, although they subsist only in this way. In other words, school can approach educational prospects in partnership with various social institutions, but regarding the religion class, relativization of religious education priorities represents not only an act free of responsibility, but also an attempt to cultural identity of a nation.

Before the fall of communism, the education system has been demonstrated a form of immunity more ideological in relation to other European models of education in virtue of the fact that the communist countries were isolated in a communist bloc. After completion of this phenomenon, the communism society develops rather difficult appetite toward an efficient value cleaning in the education system, in consideration of the fact that we are passed to more than a quarter of a century ago, and education policies are deprived of congruence and predictability.

Outside the current educational political space, the concept of Christian education shall be presented in the form historical, adjustments, cultural continuity both on the Romanian territory, but also in the Eastern Orthodox space, which ensures new possibilities of systemic approach. It remains to be seen whether the authority of the state in the field supports or gives credibility to a Christian paradigm of education which has confirmed its status in the course of time.

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