

Aspects Regarding the Formative-Informative Relationship in the "Pedagogue" by Clement of Alexandria

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Abstract

The entire work of Clement of Alexandria, but especially the work "The Pedagogue", constitutes a brilliant synthesis of Christian theological and educational thought from the end of the 2nd Christian century, but also a reference document for the subsequent stages of development of pedagogy. For the Alexandrian pedagogue, the value of faith is illustrated by the value of the education he promotes, that is why he puts the Pedagogue at the centre of his ideational approach, as an exemplary model of thought and action. The way he defines the concepts and argues the formative-informative relationship may be surprising today, but hard to dispute. The research conclusions show the fact that the formative-informative report is relevant to the extent that it is supported by the love of the Pedagogue towards those he educates, who does not hate, knows how to be gentle and persuasive even when he disapproves of a certain behavior.

Keywords:

Pedagogue; pedagogy; formative; informative; self-development

Zusammenfassung

Aspekte zum formativ-informativen Bericht im Werk "Der Pädagoge" von Clemens von Alexandrien. Das Gesamtwerk von Clemens von Alexandrien, insbesondere aber das Werk "Der Pädagoge", stellt eine brillante Synthese des christlichen theologischen und pädagogischen Denkens vom Ende des 2. Jahrhunderts dar, aber auch ein Bezugsdokument für die nachfolgenden Entwicklungsstufen der Pädagogik. Für den alexandrinischen Pädagogen wird der Wert des Glaubens im Wert der von ihm geförderten Bildung illustriert, deshalb stellt er den Pädagogen als beispielhaftes Denk- und Handlungsmodell in das Zentrum seines ideellen Ansatzes. Die Art und Weise, wie Clemens von Alexandrien die Begriffe definiert und das formativ-informative Verhältnis argumentiert, mag heutzutage vielleicht überraschen, ist aber schwer zu bestreiten. Die Forschungsergebnisse dieser Studie zeigen, dass der formativ-informative Bericht relevant ist, insofern er von der Liebe des Pädagogen zu den von ihm Erzogenen getragen wird, weil der Pädagoge keinen Hass, sondern weiß, wie man sanft und überzeugend ist, auch wenn er ein bestimmtes Verhalten missbilligt.

Schlüsselworte:

Pädagoge; Pädagogik; formative; informativ; Persönlichkeitsentwicklung

1. Introduction

One of the main problems of pedagogy remains the periodic redefinition of the formative-informative relationship, a theme of pedagogical reflection that we constantly find in the attention of thinkers from the educational space, from antiquity to the present day. The present paper analyzes the way in which this issue is found in the texts of Clement of Alexandria, classic author not only for the pedagogy of Christian antiquity, but also for the contemporary one. Our research concern was also supported by the constant attention that his writings have received in the modern period of pedagogy, given their very good reception in the context of the reconsideration in European culture (Casey, 1925) of Plato's writings (Maier, 1994) and especially Aristotle (Butterworth, 1919), from whom Clement takes over and develops the concept of education through culture (Albulescu, 2007), which he

places at the foundation of the personal development of the person.

Clement of Alexandria, full name Titus Flavius Clement, was born in Athens, about 150 AD, into a pagan family. The date of his conversion to Christianity is not known, but according to his confession in *Stromate*, Book I, Panten, his teacher from Alexandria, the founder and first leader of the well-known catechetical school in this city, had a decisive role in this regard. Most likely, Clement arrived in Alexandria in 180, and in 200, after Panten's death, he took over the leadership of the school (Opreș, 2012). During the persecutions ordered by the emperor Septimius Severus (202-203), Clement was forced to take refuge in Caesarea Cappadocia (Fecioru, 1982a).

As we have shown in a previous analysis (Opreș, 2011a), the appearance of the school in Alexandria and Clement's activity within it meant, indisputably, the transition to a new stage of education in Christian schools (Scheau, 2014). Education through culture, a key concept that aims to integrate informative elements with formative ones in a structure and on new foundations, was one of the most important directions supported by Clement and the School of Alexandria, a concept taken over and developed later by personalities like Saint Basil the Great, in his well-known address to young people.

Although not preserved in its entirety, the work of Clement of Alexandria is extensive (Hoek, 1988). It is noticeable in all his writings the force with which he tried to present to Christians the role of education and the importance of access to culture (Opreș, 2021) for a high personal moral life, within the society of his time (Ivan, 2020). It is also significant that he does not urge the abandonment of social positions or material goods, for religious reasons, an opinion present in the era, and he argues his point of view by showing the major formative role of helping fellow men, from multiple perspectives.

2. Theoretical foundations

The education promoted by Christianity has experienced a similar course to that of the spread and development of this religion. After a period in which the teaching was transmitted only by living speech, since the apostolic period, written syntheses began to appear and transmitted to different Christian communities in full process of formation. Almost immediately, the reactions of the official religion appeared, supported sometimes to the point of identifying with it, of the Roman emperors. Also supported by some political and religious circles, the open conflict would last almost three centuries, until the edict of religious tolerance, from the year 313, issued by the emperor Constantine the Great. In all this period of time, despite the often generalized campaigns in the Roman territories against those who had become Christians, their first schools began to appear, founded by the descendants of the apostles or their disciples. Necessarily, Christian literature also developed, initially through the multiplication of apostolic texts, later included in the New Testament, and later through the appearance of works of biblical exegesis (Borca, 2020). Thus we meet the first efforts to train all Christians in an education system designed for life (Benga, 2009). The approach was a formative-

informative one and its appearance was not accidental at all, taking into account the fact that the essence of Christian education is the invitation to a continuous inner personal remodelling through consciously undertaken educational-religious approaches.

In the previously presented religious and educational context, the work "The Pedagogue" represents a unique appearance, through its ideology and specific argumentation, but also through the way it generated a whole series of Christian educational models. The author of this work was sometimes called by posterity "Clement, follower of the apostles" (Cyril of Jerusalem) or "Great Clement" (Maximus the Confessor), and some of the martyrologies mention him on December 4. His popularity was very high at the time, although he led the School of Alexandria for a short time (200-203) and did not manage to complete all the works he started. Nevertheless, his fame as a thinker and orator, doubled by the work he left before leaving for Caesarea, keep him in a privileged position among the Church Fathers and Writers (Bolocan, 2008, p. 23).

His remarkable erudition attracted a large and select audience, made up of Christians representing the high social classes, but also pagans or Jews. Some of his disciples, including Origen and Alexander, became, in turn, leaders or founders of catechetical schools. Clement of Alexandria was considered the man who "gathered, in himself first and then in his works, all the thinking of the writers, philosophers and poets of antiquity, the Christian who oriented Christian thinking towards the use of all the cultural conquests of mankind, the theologian who laid the foundations of a scientific theologies" (Fecioru, 1982b, p. 5). Thus, the necessary connection of the new Christian schools with the basic literature of antiquity was achieved.

3. Research methodology

The article aims to highlight the main elements that contribute to establishing the formative-informative relationship in the work of Clement of Alexandria. The present analysis was carried out with the help of a methodology that utilizes both educational and historical research tools. Thus, document analysis, the comparative method and the monographic method were used. Writings of the Alexandrian author and analyzes by different authors from the field of educational sciences and theology, interested in the understanding and capitalization of

his pedagogical ideas in current education, were used in the present research.

First, the research aims to highlight the way in which Clement of Alexandria understands and uses the terms *pedagogue* and *pedagogy*, an analysis based on which he establishes and argues the formative-informative report.

For him, the authentic pedagogue is the one who first takes care of training, with the aim of making the soul better, of guiding it towards a wise life. He claims that this mechanism has the best results. It is analyzed how, as a model, the analyzed author proposes Jesus Christ, about whom he speaks with the term Pedagogue, the educator par excellence, the One who teaches people to become like Him, an approach the author calls *pedagogy*.

The formative-informative relationship in the process of personal development is traced to Clement of Alexandria and in the understanding of the delimitation of the meanings of the concept of philosophy, but in the approach of some topics from the space of moral education. We were interested both in highlighting the meanings that circulated in the era related to philosophy and its role in understanding or knowing the world, as well as the working possibilities of this field in supporting knowledge on stable foundations. In the space of moral models, we analyzed the way in which they campaign for a reconsideration of the attitude towards material values, which they say can become harmful to the formation and development of the person if they are not used correctly. Complementarily, I followed the way in which the dialogue between formative and informative aspects is used by Clement in arguing the need for lifelong education, a true initiative in the history of education.

4. Research results

The work *The Pedagogue* represents a fundamental text for any approach in the field of education that aims to capitalize on classic pedagogical models. Although the scope and complexity of the work are indisputable, given the particularities of the present work, we summarize ourselves to some general analyses, alongside the illustrations and arguments with the most expressive texts for the presented concepts.

The pedagogy represents the work of the Pedagogue and is a "*good leadership of man towards virtue since his childhood. But the Lord revealed to us*

more clearly what it means to be called a child. Let's not misinterpret the name of a child saying that it is the age where a lack of intelligence is seen. Undoubtedly, those who know only God the Father are children; they are innocent, they are babies, they are righteous" (Clement of Alexandria, 1982a, pp. 175-176).

For Clement, the *Pedagogue* deals first with practical matters (Vornicescu, 1957). The author shows how the Pedagogue calls people to a moral life, prescribes immortal rules of conduct and offers them models for living them. He is the healthy one, who does not need a doctor (Matthew 9, 12) and, through this, he has the knowledge and the opportunity to teach others, to whom he can show that only those who are sick in soul need *Pedagogue* to cure them of their passions and then take them to the Teacher.

Clement does not accidentally use the word *Pedagogue* to give the title of his work. The term is used before him by Paul the Apostle, when he writes to the Galatians about the new law of faith, which brought people out from under the leadership of *pedagogues*, also called *guides* (in the Romanian translation): "*Thus the Law was our guide (pedagogue) towards Christ, so that we may turn from faith. And if faith has come, we are no longer under the guidance. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians, 3, 24-26).

One of Clement's surprising statements, especially considering the historical moment in which it was made, speaks of formation in terms apparently opposed to instruction: "*The pedagogue is concerned with the education of men, not with their instruction; its purpose is to make the soul better, not to teach it; to give advice for a wise life, not for a life dedicated to science"* (Clement of Alexandria, 1982a, p. 167). Even if in his time the development of science did not know terms of comparison with the level it has reached today, the Alexandrian author considered it necessary to draw attention to the danger of *a science without conscience*, an aspect possible, he suggests, by following some intellectual trajectories excessively marked by rationalism.

The Alexandrian author also shows who are those who need a Pedagogue: "*Just as those who are sick with the body need doctors, so also those who are sick with the soul need a Pedagogue; first to heal our passions, then to lead us to the Teacher, to prepare our pure and proper soul for the acquisition of knowledge and to make it able to receive the revelation of the*

Word. Striving therefore to perfect us through a gradual ascent to salvation, the Word, who in everything he does is loving to people, according to an instruction with good results: first he means us, then he educates us, and at the end of everything he teaches us" (Clement of Alexandria, 1982a, p. 167). For the Alexandrian educator, the value of education and the role of the Pedagogue are comparable to those of medical science. The statement is supported in the Christian doctrine by the teaching regarding the dichotomous nature of man, based on which both the soul and the body need a permanent remodelling.

Another register addressed by Clement is that of the training-evaluation relationship. Although the issue of the role of evaluation in education is not necessarily a novelty brought by Christian education, the justification of an evaluation carried out by the Pedagogue is related to the fact that He is without sin, without personal mistakes from which the disciples can justify their own failures. The great paradox of teaching people and leading them so that they become like Him, and the Judgment becomes, in fact, the place and the occasion of the reward, following the final evaluation, with *eternal value*, belong to the Pedagogue (Oprea, 2011b, pp. 61-64).

Clement pays special attention to expanding the meaning of the word Pedagogy. For Clement of Alexandria, the pedagogue is a teacher of both men and women. Although the evangelical texts insist on these aspects long before him, this idea contributed to the opening of a completely new path, towards a new paradigm, for the education systems of the time. Currently, the same model of thinking has even determined the replacement of the classic word related to children's education, with that Sciences of Education or Education Science (Voiculescu, 2005, p. 14). "*Pedagogy means educating children; this is clear from its name. However, we must see who the children are that the Scripture speaks of in a veiled way and what pedagogue we must give them. Children are us*" (Clement of Alexandria, 1982a, p. 173).

For the quoted author, every man is a child. With this, he also eliminates the contradiction in terms, related to the use of the word *Pedagogy* in the education of adults, but additionally justifies the need for permanent education of Christians. The author of *The Pedagogue* offers as an argument for the use of that term the understanding of the word *child*, also attributed to those who are mature and without malice. What he anticipated before, Clement now openly

presents: Jesus is the supreme educator, whose first concern is to have the same love for children, as the shepherd has for his sheep. The reason why the Pedagogue takes care of those he educates is reaffirmed: communion with Him. "*The teacher is Jesus. Sometimes He calls himself Shepherd, saying: I am the good Shepherd (John 10, 11-14). According to a metaphor, starting from the shepherds who tend the sheep, Jesus is the Pedagogue who tends the children, is the Shepherd who takes care of the babies; and because babies are innocent, they are called allegorically, sheep*" (Clement of Alexandria, 1982a, p. 196).

The Alexandrian author thus also prepares the explanation of the term Pedagogy. For the theological and educational model supported by him, pedagogy par excellence is synonymous with the Pedagogue because His teaching shows full agreement between the One who presents it and the One who lives it (Cucoş, 1999, p. 45): "*The word pedagogy has many meanings. It is a pedagogy of the one who is educated and trained; it is a pedagogy of the one who educates and instructs; in the third place is the pedagogy itself; fourthly, what is learned, for example the commandments, make up the pedagogy, too. [...] The pedagogue leads his children towards a life of salvation because of his care*" (Clement of Alexandria, 1982a, pp. 196-197).

The main method of education of the Pedagogue is love (Mândăcanu, 2006, p. 20). By the way, among the three definitions of God, present in the Bible, one identifies the Creator with love: "*God is love*" (I John 4, 8). This is also the reason why Clement of Alexandria talks about the love of the Pedagogue towards the student, even when he applies a certain punishment or different forms of disapproval. The cited author insists that "*the rebuke is a kind of doctoring; remove the passions that have strengthened in our souls, clean the impurities from our life [...]. The rebuke is a kind of diet for the sick soul; it advises what we must do and stops the deeds we must not do*" (Clement of Alexandria, 1982a, pp. 196-197) For the perfect Pedagogue, reproof is the expression of love and leads to love: "*The Lord does not blame people because he hates them - because he could lose them for this reason -, he does not hate them because He suffered for us. The Lord, like a good Pedagogue, very skilfully hides His blame under reproach, awakening [...] through reproach the wisdom of the mind; then the Lord again, in His turn, seeks to exhort those whom He blamed. [...] The word changes its behavior,*

according to the way of life of each one: when it is harsh, when it is gentle" (Clement of Alexandria, 1982a, p. 204). Recent research deepens the concept in terms of current pedagogy, when they talk about the integrated modelling of emotional and cognitive intelligence (Marin, Bocoș, & Baci, 2022).

The Pedagogy of *the Pedagogue*, in Clement of Alexandria's vision, can only have its origin in the divine person, the only one who has the power to love and reprimand only in situations and with the measure that supports a continuous ascent. All the previously presented aspects, in relation to the absolute pedagogical model, find their crowning in the argument that Clement uses with the intention of demonstrating that such a pedagogy is possible, but absolutely proper only to the Supreme Person: "*When the Word threatens, it is obvious that he does not want to do harm, that he does not carry out the threat; [...] The word does not act like the snake that bites as soon as it has inserted its fangs. So God is good. The Lord, before proceeding to action, seeks to soften with words*" (Clement of Alexandria, 1982a, p. 205)

By resorting to philosophy, Clement of Alexandria seeks to additionally delimit the approaches and openly express the value of education achieved through live speech or written texts, the two methods being for the cited author extremely important and equal in value. Thus, the author tries to define its meanings and present the true philosophy. He insists on dialectically presenting the meanings of the word philosophy: "*We do not call philosophy the doctrine that each philosophical school professes, but the philosophy that is really philosophy; we do not call philosophy that technical wisdom, which includes the experience of things that concern life, but that wisdom which is a sure knowledge of divine and human things, a deep and unerring understanding, which includes in it the present, the past and the future, on which the Lord handed down to us through His coming and through the prophets*" (Clement of Alexandria, 1982b, p. 420). His perspective, far from being specific to his era or theological field, was taken up by J.J. Rousseau, who adds that without an authentic philosophy, man easily ends up distorting everything, including himself (Opreș, 2012).

The relationship between wisdom and the love that educates is not only a Clement of Alexandria's major theme, but also a timeless current and necessary research approach in the field of education sciences (Opreș, 2019). The Pedagogy of *the Pedagogue* is

unitary and unique at the same time for each of the students, so that each of them through understanding and experience (Ocoleanu, Preda, 2007, p. 217) gets to know the One who gives meaning and long-term relevance to any formative endeavour.

5. Discussions and conclusions

The author, a very important Christian thinker - brought up in the school of Greek philosophy - theologian, pedagogue and head of the Catechetical School in Alexandria, offers models of theological reflection and educational perspectives that are always valid, given the way in which he managed to use the evangelical text as the main source of inspiration, to which was added the personal experience of applying it in the relationship with the disciples. The starting point in his pedagogical exposition and argumentation is the thesis according to which intellectual-spiritual development is reflected by the way in which each person manages to dialectically base his option on values, personal experience and reflection on his own faith.

Although important, one's own pedagogical experience was left on the back burner in an attempt to provide essential support to the spread of the new education model. The personal level of education, acquired through a very special support from the family and his extraordinary intellectual abilities, brought the Alexandrian author to the position of opening a new perspective to education, not only to the Christian one.

He claims that the formative side must precede and support the informative one, not the other way around. A better valorization of literature with explicit or implicit moral content is what the current pedagogy seeks to propose. The unprecedented development of mass media and the constant technicization of the lives of today's children and adolescents must be balanced by consistent and relevant elements for them, so that their development of sensitivity to personal difficulties, inner restlessness or the expectations of those around them is supported. The growing volume of information with which a student comes into contact in the current period calls for the identification of ways through which these become personal values for those who are educated, as a premise for community remodelling. On this not easy road, Clement of Alexandria offers remarkable perspectives, validated over time. We believe that the present research can provide elements of support to researchers and practitioners in education, in the effort

to identify significant answers to the increasing number of questions that educational systems ask themselves, related to the formative-informative relationship.

Clement of Alexandria shows the fact that the success of Christian education cannot be expected in the absence of complex structures that combine elements of theology, morals and philosophy of education with didactic ones. The perspective he supports is based both on theoretical models and assumed values, but also on the didactic experience acquired at the school in Alexandria. In this way, elements from fields that up to him seemed at least partially in opposition to each other are brought together, and the success that accompanied his activity meant that all his writings preserved until the modern period benefit from numerous translations and constant attention. The contemporary period value Clement's writings including for the perspectives they offer related to the use of moral models from literature for the articulation of educational sequences aimed at the formative side, and through this to support the informative line.

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article.

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