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## The Ethos of Education and the Ethos of Christianity

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Ecumeny and Law 5, 45-56

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2017

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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## The Ethos of Education and the Ethos of Christianity

**Keywords:** education, transcendental dimension, humanity, Christianity, Greek philosophy

### Introduction

Education comes from the philosophical concept of the human being. The unveiling of the truth about the human being is not an abstract issue, but today it is mainly motivated by the protection of endangered humanity. As a result of globalisation we talk about humanity in its entirety. Any global consequences are brought about by local activities, which points to the area of education. Education has to lead to the responsible relationship to being itself, but this very responsibility cannot be directed solely at the human being, but it is given by what extends *sub specie aeternitatis*. We think about education in time in which we repeatedly doubt it in a radical way, the very foundation of biblical tradition and metaphysics. The transcendence which guarantees the inner continuity, source, and aim for the flow of phenomena is also challenged.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore needed to look in more detail to the subject of doubt.

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<sup>1</sup> M. VALČO: *Communism as a Christian heresy: A false (and failed) prophecy of an ideology*. Proceedings of 26th SVU World Congress of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences: SVU and its role in the era of globalisation: trans-Atlantic collaboration, innovation and preservation. University in Žilina, Žilina 2012, pp. 448—462.

## The beginnings of philosophical reflection on education

The Greeks open the issue of education with the respect of the world and human society. The uncovering of objective norms brings the Greeks to the understanding of nature. Subsequent generations consider Homer as the educator of Greeks who explains the human acting in connection to superhuman agents. In a mythical way he explains the place of the person in the world in the cosmos whose order was interrupted by human — the kidnapping of Helen. It is becoming clear that educational effort — *paideia*<sup>2</sup> — cannot be restricted to the early period of life. The *areté* is getting to the middle of the educational effort, which has the origin in the education of chivalric nobility to bravery, but Hesiod points out the silent bravery of working man. *Areté*, in turn, is the ability of proper acting, it is related to spiritual characteristics but also to physical one of a fighter, needed for the protection of home(land), that is, the community.<sup>3</sup> Speaking anachronistically, the sophists may be connected with Homer who, at the same time, removes transcendent focus of education. Protagoras claims about the gods that we cannot even know if they exist or not. The sophists focused only on the humans, they taught political *areté* and they also created such terms as upbringing and culture. Humanist thoughts of the sophists have been of major influence for the New Age humanism. The humanist ideal was not represented only in sophistic interpretation. The above-mentioned sophistic depiction of *paideia* from the point of view of the most famous group of thinkers, from the point of view of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, is viewed as degradation. It is clear that not only the sophists contributed to the degradation of education process of shadow affairs. The course of degradation of W. Jaeger is represented in the works of great masters of ancient tragedy (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides).<sup>4</sup> The religious tradition of the nation had been gradually changing into the pragmatic thought of culture where the human himself became the measure of all things. The concept of educational ideal is known at least from the time of Homer. The admiration of an ideal attracts the followers. The ideal has the normative character of individual education so as the law in the society which is according to Protagoras similar to the line used as the

<sup>2</sup> The term *paidea* was not invented by Homer. It appears in the 5th century BC. Firstly, it was understood as upbringing of children, but later was connected to “life philosophy.” We can translate it as upbringing, education, civilisation, culture, tradition, literature, but for correct understanding of the term’s importance W. Jaeger recommends looking into unifying those aspects. Cf. W. JAEGER: *Paideia I*. Warszawa 1964, pp. 17—32.

<sup>3</sup> A. MACINTYRE: *Dziedzictwo cnoty*. Warszawa 1996, p. 229.

<sup>4</sup> W. JAEGER: *Humanizm i teologia*. Warszawa 1957, pp. 41—42.

help for writing.<sup>5</sup> The role of law is to adjust the maladjusted members of the community. Nobody can break from the fundamentals of justice without a punishment; the Greek goddess Dike is a powerful deity, the world law is leaning to the divine. Callicles considers education as the chain by which the human is shackled.<sup>6</sup> *Nomos* and *fyzis* stand in opposite to each other. There are two possibilities before the Greeks — the state law as the highest law of human behaviour is in harmony with divine order, or the state law contests the norms that are established by divinity. While considering those possibilities, the sophists overlooked the reality that is pointed out by, among others, Radim Palouš, namely, that the *polis* is of divine nature.<sup>7</sup>

Naturalism which challenges the norms of authority is noticeable also in Antiphon, according to whom, the justice does not infringe the laws of states in which we live. We distinguish the law created on the basis of natural law and artificial law. Man-made laws are relative.<sup>8</sup> In the effort of the sophists, the aim is not visible which would lead to the certainty of the most important questions of religion, morals, and education, as the metaphysical evidence is missing. They are not providing the most important justification and so the inner certainty of education's aim. Not until Socrates and Plato did anyone provide a fundamental support to education ideal, and so that they can return to the thoughts which were before this ideal.

## *Paideia* of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle

Socrates feels the transcendent calling of a person to a journey of existence. The education focuses on the loving of truth, while he calls back to divine inspiration. He comes closer to the problem of education similarly as the sophists but, at the same time, he reflects it as a whole. Without the answer to the question what is the aim of life, the education is not possible.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the sophists, Socrates brings the moral problem in life of an individual is getting to the front, it is pushed back by the sophists. His education activity is focused on social life — on politics, but he himself does not assume a political position. Socrates teaches to take

<sup>5</sup> PLATÓN: *Protagoras*. Praha 1992, 326 c—d.

<sup>6</sup> PLATÓN: *Gorgias*. Praha 1992, 483e—484b.

<sup>7</sup> R. PALOUŠ: *Čas výchovy*. Praha 1991, p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> K. POPPER: *Otevřená společnost a její nepřítel*. Oikoymenh, Praha 1994, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> W. JAEGER: *Paideia II*. Warszawa 1964, p. 96.

care of oneself and one's soul. The dialogue is the method of acting right where the knowledge is the basis. The participants of dialogue are confronted with the task to look for *logos*. The elusiveness of *logos* leads the human to modesty, to considering the superiority of divine *Logos* while it is the human who creates his own "I". Here, reigning over oneself is shown as very important and it shows the freedom of humanity. The self-control brings freeing under the animal part of human's nature and it is the basis of virtue. It accentuates the power of unity of *areté* in different moral situations.

Having said that, it is clear that understanding of autonomy by Socrates does not reject the higher law but rather predicts it. It points out the cooperation of *polis* members modelled on the cooperation of organs inside the human body. Education must be grounded in absolute ethical norms originating from God, who is different from gods in which the Socrates' fellow-citizens believed.<sup>10</sup> Socrates' educational activities he considered caring for the soul where the voice of god echoes, are interconnected with the process of making the concept of god better understood.

Universally accepted *arché* of European education is Plato's concept which is explicitly stated in *The Republic*, where he likens the situation of a human being to imprisonment in a cave. Palouš explains this concept by pointing out to another metaphor.<sup>11</sup> According to Palouš, education is like teaching to swim a person who resembles a fish immersed in an ocean that cannot leave it by their own effort. *Paideia* represents the orientation towards what is "superhuman." It is the representation of the current human condition. In Plato's education effort, the relationship to the Truth is important. In *Phaedrus* he claims that the soul cannot become human without contemplation. In *The Republic*, in turn, we come to the understanding that the human chooses his or her destiny. The virtue of human being is connected with their free will. Plato, with help of the *logos* and myths, brings the person to the Truth, without which the education cannot be envisioned.

Also Aristotle considers the soul, but the emphasis of his investigations of human life creation is shifted from agathology to ontology. Aristotle's education is similar to education effort of his famous predecessors, which means it is connected to the truth more powerful than its reversal. Socrates and Aristotle have different approaches to rhetoric but they both believe that for a real speaker the speech should be subordinated to the truth. Socrates refuses to utter any blandishments even if eventually

<sup>10</sup> PLATÓN: *Obrana Sokratova*. Bratislava 1990, 24b; cf. XENOFÓN: *Spomienky na Sokrata*. Bratislava 1970, I.1, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> R. PALOUŠ: *K filozofii výchovy*. Praha 1991, p. 46.

it costs him life. The human being has to care not only that he or she appears as good but also that he or she should really be good in public and private life. Aristotle does not accept common reality as people drowned in everyday sorrows. His transcendence has different nature; it is recognizing of localisation of common things in what is general.

Believing in Olympian gods could not explain the natural phenomena but nor it was enough for thinking and moral feeling.<sup>12</sup> Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle believed that god is the highest principle of social and natural order to which they come closer by rational reflection. The God in Greek thinking is the problem. His characteristics are that God is the living and immortal being that was closer to the human than to the world.<sup>13</sup> With Plato the idea of Goodness could correspond with our idea of God, but Goodness is the more intelligible cause, so it is more an inanimate thing than the person. Gods are subjected to Moire. The human soul is god and education effort really rests on religious recall of soul to its own godlikeness. Aristotle connects the first philosophical principle with the notion of god, but Aristotle's god did not create the world, he was merely a prime mover.<sup>14</sup> The soul according to Aristotle is not a god but the form but it possesses something divine — the intellect.<sup>15</sup> According to him, god is in heaven and people have to take care of the world and, based on this assumption, he creates the ethical advice for his son. Plato claims that god is the range of all things.<sup>16</sup> *Paideia* leans towards god, as the highest norm and virtue are synonymous with god.<sup>17</sup> In the midst of the crisis of the Greek ideal of culture, the theology is born, and it fulfils the tasks put forward by humanism. However, the rational appeal to the supernatural source does not secure the right behaviour of man. Plato's effort for perfect organisation of life conceals the danger of totality in it. However, according to Karl Popper, the Platon's totalitarianism is honest, because he was not motivated by exploitation but rather stability of the whole.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> A. SCHWEITZER: *Kultúra a etika*. Bratislava 1986, p. 135.

<sup>13</sup> E. GILSON: *Bůh a filosofie*. Praha 1994, pp. 16—17.

<sup>14</sup> ARISTOTELES: *Metafyzika*. In: *Od Aristotela po Plotina*. Bratislava 1972, XII.7.

<sup>15</sup> ARISTOTELES: *Etika Nikomachova*. Praha 1996, X.7.1177b 30.

<sup>16</sup> PLATÓN: *Zákony*. Praha 1997, IV, 716c.

<sup>17</sup> PLATÓN: *Thaitethos*. Praha 1996, 176b.

<sup>18</sup> K. POPPER: *Otevřená společnost a její nepřátelé*. Praha 1994, p. 102.

## The Christian education

Plato's *paideia*, which precedes our world of freedom and responsibility, shows that real humanism reflects the whole and limits and that freedom is not absolute arbitrariness and divinity but it is the journey to something divine. The philosophy as love of wisdom constitutes a preparation for Christianity. The human in Judeo-Christian tradition is created by God and called to develop his talents. Adam and Eve, even after the Fall, are not rejected by God but they are sent on an arduous journey that leads to the Kingdom of God. God leads people, educates them and calls to right meaning of existence. The education is a holy thing. The Church as new kind of human society comes to Greeks in a moment when the idea of *polis* undergoes a crisis. The education is not practiced by obtaining new knowledge, but by following, by self-devoting and self-giving. The Greek understanding of human in body-and-soul dialectics is different from the overall biblical understanding of the person in its intimacy and integrity. The human is created in the image of God. The authentic example of human is Jesus Christ. The Spirit — *pneuma* or Hebrew *Ruach* shows dialectics of outer and inner life. The heart is the place where the human being meets with God. The body is not a prison but it possesses great dignity and it shall be resurrected. God created the corporeality by free will and God's Son assumed this body. Behaviour of people, over the course of history may be divided into two categories — the category of sinner and to the category of born-again person. It is only possible to speak about human relationship to God. The biblical anthropomorphism has an educational aim. The human being is connected to God as to the Creator, he or she depends on Him. The human has the law of obedience in his heart so in his consciousness. This obedience is possible only in freedom, which means that the human is an autonomous creature.<sup>19</sup> The human is a social being. The sex difference is ideal for life in the society based on love. God makes a contract with people and compares it to an engagement. The relationship between God and human is analogical to the relationship of father and son. God makes human, the master of nature, but this divine goal is attained by the Christ. Human work is the fulfilment of divine will. Christ is the exemplary person. The person is oriented towards others — to the Other (meaning God) — and so he is more himself, as more he is someone else by God. Divine picture of a human being is destroyed by the Original Sin and God wants to remedy this destruction by the long

<sup>19</sup> Cf. K. TARNOWSKI: *Wiara i myślenie*. Kraków 1999, p. 36.

journey of education while he reflects His freedom. One is a human by overcoming oneself. The main idea of Christian education is divination, which means mysterious “share” in God’s nature.<sup>20</sup> Divination does not mean the destruction of man but individual fulfilment and the situation in which the human is not identified with God but he or she is getting closer to Him.<sup>21</sup>

The existence of Jesus Christ impacts the entire human race. The Christian education does not become universal by abstraction but by “bringing unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ” (Eph. 1:10). The ideal which was stated by creation cannot be obtained and it is also impossible to go into the direction of it. From now on, the person has to go from a destroyed state where he is the sinner to ideal image of God’s servant. Here, the sense of education is completely unveiled. The Messiah is not superhuman, but the Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*) who “takes away the sins of the world” and who leads His brothers and sisters. Jesus humbled himself and was obedient until the death.

The proclamation of the Gospel was not thwarted by the Dead Sea. The world was united by Greek culture in the time of spreading the Gospel. Even Jews were Hellenised to some extent, and it did not concern only the diaspora. Similarly, as diverse philosophical schools and announcers of Gospel promised fuller life and appealed to the Master who was not only unveiling the truth but mainly was the truth Himself. They used philosophy in which they saw the perfect tool as the god of philosophers was different from Olympian gods. Clement of Rome reacts, in his letter to Christians in Corinth, to some disorder in the church of Corinth and indicates (similarly to Plato and St. Paul) the mess in space, in Roman army, and in a human body pointing to Peter and Paul as the symbols of obedience, and to Jesus Christ as the perfect symbol. Pope Clement himself marks his letter as an act of Christian education, which is understood as cleansing of a sinner.<sup>22</sup>

*The Dialogue with Trypho* testifies that proclaimers of Gospel tried to find the common ground with people with whom they were in dialogue. Its author, St. Justin (Martyr) sees as the common ground philosophy and culture. Even among Jews, there were religious groups which could have been understood as philosophical schools (Flavius Josephus, Philo of Alexandria), while he thought of individual actor leaned to Revelation.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. D. OKO: *Laska i wolność*. Kraków 1997, pp. 86—87.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. O. CHISTYAKOVA: *Rationalization of Contemporary Culture and Education in the Context of Religious Resistance to Violence*. In: International Conference on Arts, Design and Contemporary Education (ICADCE 2016). Available at: <http://www.atlantis-press.com/php/pub.php?publication=icadce-16>. Accessed 25.01.2017.

<sup>22</sup> W. JAEGER: *Wczesne chrześcijaństwo i grecka paideia*. Bydgoszcz 1997, p. 39.



So it is not only about searching the truth, but also about acceptance of certain truth. Thinking about God without certain anthropomorphism is impossible. We have to start off with our experience and we do not have other than human. By the way of rational reflection, the great representatives of Greek thought clarified the religious thinking and the first Christian thinkers from Alexandria followed suit.

Clement of Alexandria draws on Socrates and the ideas stemming from Greek *paideia*. In his work *Paedagogus* he presents Christ in a position of the divine educator who overrules everything. Clement of Alexandria oscillates between accepting and refusing the philosophy which he appreciates because it provides the sign of truth, but according to him, it was stolen from Jewish culture, and he also compares Plato to Moses. He claims that philosophy is *propaideia* as a result of human work and real *paideia* comes from God.<sup>23</sup> The most important task in the life of the human is recognition of God, and so he calls a believer the gnostic. God is *the Absolut, the Creator, Demiurgos, Pantokrator* and Christ is *Logos, Kirios*. He speaks about the assumption that maybe Plato knew that God is the only one (*Phaedrus* 272c). He appreciates abstinence, but the greater importance is given to doing good where human loses his negative sides. Clement of Alexandria compares the Greek philosophy to nuts that we first have to crush in order to get to a seed.

The ethnocentrism of Jews and Greeks is rejected in Christian thinking. Saint Paul comes to Athens and St. Peter enters the house of uncircumcised man. The vision of education brings people to the Word thanks to the universalism of Christianity. Origen of Alexandria brings a new Christian view of cosmology in which the creation of the world happens *ex nihilo*. In the confrontation with Manichaeism and Gnosticism, Christian thinking must defend quote of the Creator that all “was good” and also must defend the dignity of a human being which lays in his freedom.

Origen perceives human being as the core of free moral acting. All depends on the human ability to distinguish between the real and ostensible good, between the truth and lie and between being and not being. At that point, the philosophy becomes *paideia*. Thanks to foregoing, Plato became the most important ally of Origen in the war of thoughts happening during the early Christian era. Christ is the God’s *Logos*. He comes to the world as a result of the divine initiative and not as the result of human effort.<sup>24</sup> Origen discards totalitarian features of Plato’s upbringing and dividing society because Christ takes care not only of the chosen Jews and educated Greeks but instead cares for all the people. You do not need

<sup>23</sup> KLEMENS ALEKSANDRYJSKI: *Kobierce*. Warszawa 1994, I, 20.

<sup>24</sup> ORIGENES: *Przeciw Celssowi*. Warszawa, 1986, p. 162.

only knowledge for acting right but God's grace is necessary. The arrival of Christ is evaluated by the world as the heyday of God's educational effort, which started by the Fall of Adam. *Paideia* is the consecutive fulfilment of Divine Providence. Gregory of Nyssa sees in Plato's concept of education the structure suitable for the Christian education. *Paideia* gets new content. It retains the philosophical belief that knowing the truth leads to virtuous life. Christian education is the formative process and needs permanent care as for getting the moral life, the grace of God is needed. Evil is blindness of the human being, and so the human being does not choose right. For Gregory of Nyssa, Christ is the Healer.

The focus of Greek *paideia* was limited to the development of this subject but also on the influence of subject to object that fulfilled the function. In this education process along with liberal arts and philosophy, literature (chiefly Homer) played an important role. Gregory of Nyssa gives Bible as *paideia* to Christians who were raised in the classical Greek culture. The education of a Christian is therefore a result of continuous reading of Bible and its aim is the imitation of Christ.<sup>25</sup> Gregory of Nyssa's exegesis assumes that the Holy Scripture has double meaning — historical and educational. Saint Gregory does not use the words “the Messiah says” or “Christ says” when quoting the Bible, but “the Messiah educates us” and “Christ educates us.” This emphasis shows the educational interpretation of the Holy Scripture, which is understood as in its entirety and not as a collection of works by different authors, because as a whole it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Moses from the Old Testament represents the prototypical human being who lived his life in the community with God. The steep and inaccessible road to Mount Sinai represents the inaccessibility of God's knowledge. We can see Him despite His being invisible. The education of the human being is a pilgrimage which never comes to the end but the search itself fulfils the function and fulfils human being with joy. The movement of soul includes the erotic desire of beauty. The human being created in the image of God has to live in friendship with God. The important educational role is given to the Book of Psalms which cause the level metamorphosis.

The connection between Antiquity and Christianity begot a new culture. We can follow the rules of the new humanism which uses the structure of *paideia* from the letter of St. Basil the Great — *Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature*. The first Christian thinkers present Christ only as the Educator and the Teacher. The whole universe, the work of creation and redemption, each person and all the humanity are taking part in the universal process of education which provides redemption to the perfection of a person living with God.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. W. JAEGER: *Wczesne chrześcijaństwo i grecka paideia*. Bydgoszcz 1997, p. 103.

## Conclusions

Besides the sophists, the Greek education accepts the vertical relationship, but the nature of divinity was very different. The concept of one God has important philosophical and mainly practical implications. God is not anonymous and not personal, but he is the Father. It is a close relative. Both concepts of education strive to fight “the divine feeling of being drowned” in the never-ending chase of something that cannot be attained anyway. They reflect and accept this situation. Contrary to the Christian thought, Greek thought requires the belief in destiny and necessity, which creates final and all-concerning horizon in the background of which the human being understands oneself and the world, which is represented in totalitarian tendencies of Plato’s education. The history is not important for everything is pre-destined. The most significant distinction between the Christian and Greek concept of *paideia* is in the perception of freedom and necessity. Biblical message calls the human being to give the testimony about the hope in another world.<sup>26</sup> The world does not come from the necessity, it is not the cosmic catastrophe but it is the result of the free decision of God. The Christian optimism has its source in the belief that evil in this world does not have the origin in metaphysical ancient principle but that its origin is in free and personal decision of the human being who refused the order of God. Christian *paideia* is the expression of the freedom — free turn to God which is related to faith and love as the answer to the human being and the revelation of the Love and the Truth.<sup>27</sup> The Christian education does not have elite aspect against which even Socrates could not have been immune, but it wants to educate all. The initiative in education belongs to God but human freedom has necessary and irreplaceable role in it, which this education initiative has to answer.

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<sup>27</sup> M. REMBIERZ: “Dom rodzinny jako przestrzeń wychowania intelektualnego — wzrastanie w mądrości, czy utwierdzanie się w dziedzicznych uprzedzeniach i stereotypach?” In: *Jaka rodzina takie społeczeństwo. Wspólnototwórczy wymiar wychowania integralnego*. Ed. M. T. KOZUBEK. Katowice 2012, pp. 225—255.

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PAVOL DANCÁK

## The Ethos of Education and the Ethos of Christianity

### Summary

The aim of the paper is to introduce transcendental dimension as a basic part of the education of a man. Greek thinking about man reaches its peak in conviction that education strive is based in getting as close to gods as possible. If man loses the transcendent dimension, he or she also loses a part of his or her humanity. Christianity brings very important optimism into the area of education, as God is Love and in Jesus Christ man gets another chance. Education understood as *imitatio Christi* contains implicitly this transcendent major.

PAVOL DANCÁK

## L'éthos de l'éducation et celui du christianisme

### Resume

L'objectif de l'article est d'introduire la dimension transcendantale en tant que partie fondamentale de l'éducation de l'homme. La conception grecque sur l'homme atteint son summum dans la conviction que l'effort éducatif tend à s'approcher des dieux le plus près possible. Si l'homme perd sa dimension transcendantale, il perd quelque chose de sa nature humaine. Le christianisme introduit dans la sphère de l'éducation un optimisme important étant donné que Dieu est l'Amour et que c'est grâce à Jésus-Christ que l'homme retrouve un nouvel espoir. La dimension transcendantale est implicitement présente dans l'éducation comprise comme *imitatio christi*.

**Mots clés :** éducation, dimension transcendantale, humanité, christianisme, philosophie grecque

PAVOL DANCÁK

## L'ethos dell'educazione e l'ethos del cristianesimo

### Sommario

Lo scopo dell'articolo è quello di introdurre la dimensione trascendente come parte fondamentale dell'educazione dell'uomo. Il pensiero greco sull'uomo raggiunge il suo apice nella convinzione che lo sforzo educativo mira all'accostamento più vicino possibile agli dei. Se l'uomo perde la dimensione trascendente, perde qualcosa della sua natura umana. Il cristianesimo apporta un ottimismo essenziale nella sfera dell'educazione in quanto Dio è Amore e in Gesù Cristo l'uomo riceve una nuova speranza. La dimensione trascendente è presente implicite nell'educazione intesa come *imitatio Christi*.

**Parole chiave:** educazione, dimensione trascendente, natura umana, cristianesimo, filosofia greca