

TRADITION IN PEDAGOGY AND LINGUISTICS: TWO FOOTHOLDS IN ASCENTION – JOHN AMOS COMENIUS AND EUGENIO COSERIU

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“...Solomon who says that there is nothing new under the sun, whatever is now existed before...// (Gordano Bruno).

Rezumat: *Ideea prezentării se conține în motto-ul articolului, ce conține aserțiunea filosofului italian Giordano Bruno. În ea el face aluzie la celebrele cuvinte ale lui Solomon – „nimic nou nu este sub soare, ce este acum, a fost mai înainte//. Deci ea leagă concepția biblică cu cea carteziană, a cărei strălucit reprezentant G. Bruno a fost. Filosofia lui panteistă, la rândul său, a entuziasmat pe mulți filosofi, gânditori, poeți, precum, I.A. Comenius, Spinoza, Leibniz, Goethe. Continuitatea aceasta leagă concepții și generații. Greșesc cei ce desconsideră tradiția atât în religie, cât și în știință. Veșnica dihotomie – tradiție și inovație, este ca o forță motrice în ascensiunea ambelor. Creația titanică a lui Comenius în teologie, filozofie, pedagogie, educație, acum când marele gânditor intră în al 345 an al eternității, rămâne de o autenticitate incontestabilă, fiind exponentul cel mai strălucit tocmai în continuitatea tradiției. Toată înțelepciunea divină a Bibliei, toate valorile deontologice și științifice ale lumii antice, toate noile idei ale științei contemporane lui au fost adunate în scrierile și activitatea lui prodigioasă ia oferit locul de fondator al educației moderne. Spre regret, puțin a fost evaluată și implementată filosofia lui educațională. Pentru el pedagogia a început cu religia și teologia avea ultimul cuvânt în toată sistema lui educațională. Concepția lui ar putea întoarce educația hipersecularizată modernă pe făgașurile începuturilor sale epistemologice triumfale.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *Biblie, tradiție, știință, secular, filosofie, religie, teologie, sistem de învățământ, moștenire spirituală, istorie, învățare, cunoaștere, virtute, pietate, raționalism, tânăr, instruire, lingvistică, cultură, valori etice, cercetare.*

The idea of tradition is important in both religion and philosophy. Twentieth century philosophy is often divided between an 'analytic' tradition, dominant in Anglophone and Scandinavian countries, and a 'continental' tradition, dominant in German and Romance speaking Europe.

The term "tradition" comes from the Latin *traditio*, but the Greek term is *paradosis* and the verb is *paradido*. It means giving, offering, delivering, performing charity. In theological terms it means any teaching or practice which has been transmitted from generation to generation throughout the life of the Church. More exactly, *paradosis* is the very life of the Holy Trinity as it has been revealed by Christ Himself and testified by the Holy Spirit. The roots and the foundations of this sacred tradition can be found in the Scriptures. For it is only in the Scriptures that we can see and live the presence of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. St. John the Evangelist speaks about the manifestation of the Holy Trinity: *"For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:2). The essence of Christian tradition is described by St. Paul, who writes: "But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For He is peace between us, and has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in His own person the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law. This was to create one single man in Himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the Cross, to unite them both in a single body and reconcile them with God. In His own person He killed the hostility... Through Him, both of us have in one Spirit our way to come to the Father" (Ephes. 2:13-14).*

The discontinuity in the Sacred Tradition, as well as in philosophy and any other domain of human activity is characteristic of our modern times: *"In the Christian world everything is based (founded) on the Sacred (Holy) Tradition, on the sacred continuity of this tradition. Historical criticism began to demolish it at the start of the epoch of Reformation. For the first time did Reformation cast doubt on it. The Reformation ceased to take it in consideration and due to its equivocal character, which is intrinsic of any reform, considered only the Holy Writ. The process of destruction went on and in the long run, brought to the destruction of the Holy Writ. Truly, the Holy Bible is nothing else than an inseparable part of the Sacred Tradition. Hence, tradition being refused, Holy Bible should be refused inevitably...*

—*I think that the process which takes place in the realm of historical criticism of religion, takes place in the sphere of history in general. Because, there truly exists not only a sacred tradition of the religious history, but there also exists a sacred tradition of history, a sacred tradition of culture, inner sacred traditions...//*¹. Then the famous Russian philosopher warns that the Marxist way of understanding history „discomposes and mortifies without compromises, in a consequent way and to the end, all sacred historical traditions”. He advocates nations not to follow this cynic approach of the economic materialism, which once brought the world to rebellion, revolution, and collapse. There are still many a deep and unhealed wounds that this ideology has left. It has destroyed in man the knowledge of soul, spirit and Christian faith.

That is why we live now in the chaos of a continuously wrecking pedagogy. It did not stick to the epistemological promises of its triumphant beginning, i.e. to the unity of religion and tradition. And nowadays many a secular and supersecular innovation put under peril even our very species. *// Instead of the godly wisdom through which it has been given to us to know, to honour, and to enjoy the one who is the height of all goodness, there has arisen a horrible shrinking from that God in whom we live, move, and have our being, and a foolish conjuration of his Holy name//*². It is high time we had a retrospection on the teachings of John Amos Comenius. He is rightly considered the father of modern education. However, only the infinitesimal parts of his teachings have been investigated and implemented up till now. His best spiritual behest is still under veil. His edifying theology is, unfortunately, at post-restante.

John Amos Comenius (1592 -1670) was a Czech pastor, religious leader, educator and encyclopedic philosopher, but first and foremost a theologian: *“Should there be any man who is such a pedant as to think that the reform of schools has nothing to do with the vocation of a Theologian, let him know that I was myself thoroughly penetrated with this idea. But I have found that the only way in which I can be freed from it is to follow God’s call, and without digression to devote myself to that work to which the divine impulse directs me//*³. So, we see that the relationship between pedagogy and theology does not exclude each other. These two humanistic domains, on the contrary, are amplifying each other.

He revolutionized not only the teaching of Latin but was conspicuous in the 17th century for his ecumenical beliefs. He developed a universal system of human knowledge among all men and nations. That is why in the context of enlarging the European Union with its multiple educational systems we should once again cast a glance on his pansophic legacy. His biggest project *Janua Rerum* (gateway of things), an encyclopedia of the physical world intended to unite our understanding of the physical world with that of God was termed *Pansophia*. There, he outlined the reform of society through a process of learning that he described by means of the metaphor of light in *Via lucis* (the way of light). But his most enduring heritage is *Didactica Magna*, where he postulates how the reform can be attained. It is like a most durable foothold between biblical traditions of education and our modern ones.

For Comenius pedagogy started with religion. That is why he projects his new school as being an equivalence with man’s life in Eden. The purpose of any school is to help the man to progress spiritually. According to Comenius the most useful thing that the Holy Bible teaches us – is that there is no more certain way under the sun for the raising of sunken humanity than the proper education of the young. For all men the goal is the same, namely, knowledge, virtue, and piety, as this life – the Scriptures reveal, is nothing but the preparation for that to come. For they call it a way, a progress, a gate, and an expectation, while men they call pilgrims, sojourners, or lookers forward to the lasting state.

His retrospective view over the biblical times identifies the first school immediately after the Deluge and traces the development of tradition in the school system as far back as the schooling in ancient Egypt and ancient Babylon: *// We learn that patriarch Shem opened the first school, just after the flood. Later this was called the Hebrew school. Who does not know that in Chaldea, especially in Babylon, there were many schools, in which the arts, including astronomy, were cultivated? Since later on (in the time of Nebuchadnezzar), Daniel and his companion were instructed in the wisdom of the Chaldeans, as was also the case with Moses in Egypt//*⁴. These schooling traditions were handed down to Israel, where he identifies the religious education with the formal one: *—By the command of God, schools were set up in all the towns of the children of Israel. They were called synagogues, and in them the Levites used to teach the law. This lasted till the coming of Christ, and became renowned through His teachings and that of his Apostles//*⁵. There was a continuation of the tradition in the Roman Empire: *—The custom*

of erecting schools was borrowed by the Romans... and from the Romans it spread throughout their empire, especially when the religion of Christ became universal through the care of pious princes and bishops. History relates that Charlemagne, whenever he subjected any heathen race, forthwith ordained for it bishops and learned men, and erected churches and schools //⁶.

And this tradition should be passed further to other generations: *"It is to the interest of the whole Christian republic that this Godly custom be not only retained but increased as well, and that in every well-ordained habitation of man* //⁷.

Comenius is conscious of the responsibilities of those who can devise some plan, who can obtain a method by which some improvement may be made in the youth who are growing up. So he admonishes by the words of Bible that cursed are those who make the blind to wander out of the way. And he raises the question: —*Can it then please Him that we pass by without thought, and stretch out no helping hand, when we see the errors, not of beasts, but of intelligent beings, not of one or two, but of the whole world? Let this be far from us!* //⁸. This awareness makes him stretch back his inquisitive mind to the fountain springs of human thought – to Socrates, Diogenes, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Cato, Cicero, Plutarch, St. Augustine and others, so that he might have a solid foundation for his new method of "didachography". And the wise men of old realized the gravity of the task too: "Plutarch says: "For the characters of young children, no man is responsible; but it is in our power to make them virtuous by a proper training. Mark this well; he says —in our power"⁹.

But power comes from knowledge. And he seems to absorb all ethical, educational, intellectual standards of the ancient tradition. The teachings of the old philosophers are like footholds in his pedagogical ascension. Throughout his *Great Didactic* their precepts are scattered like dewy drops that reflect the wisdom of God: *"Books should be written simply and clearly... and it is desirable that they be written in the form of a dialogue. ... Nothing is more suited to inspire confidence than dialogue-form, and by means of it the mind can be gradually led to the desired goal... in this form Plato wrote all his philosophical, and St. Augustine all his theological works, and Cicero also has employed it largely, thus coming down to the level of readers* //¹⁰.

That the art of teaching be placed on a proper foundation is to the advantage of states, according to the testimony of Cicero. With whom agrees that of Diogenes ... //¹¹.

—*It will also be of great use if an abstract of the contents of all the books used in the class be placed on the walls of the room... by means of which the senses, the memory, and the understanding may be daily exercised in conjunction. Not without purpose was it that, as the ancients relate, the walls of the temple of Aesculapius were covered with the precepts of the art of medicine, written there by Hippocrates himself. This great theatre of the world, also, God has filled with pictures, statues, and living emblems of His wisdom that he may instruct us by their means* //¹².

"To fill the minds of scholars with a dreary waste of books and of words is lost labor... Rightly does Seneca say of instruction: 'Its administration should resemble the sowing of seed, in which stress is laid, not on quantity, but on quality" //¹³.

—*Truly did Aristotle say that all men are born anxious to acquire knowledge...But how many of those who undertake to educate the young appreciate the necessity of first teaching them how to acquire knowledge?* //¹⁵.

—*We must bestow our labor on that which is of real importance, and therefore (as Seneca says in his 9th Letter), must devote ourselves to the improvement of our understanding rather than to the enlargement of our vocabulary* //¹⁶.

—*A system of concentration that is of such vital importance should be applied to all branches of study, in order that, as Seneca says, what is learned by reading may be given form by writing, or that St. Augustine says of himself, we may write while we make progress and make progress while we write* //¹⁷.

In his *Great Didactic* he delves not only into Biblical and philosophical teachings. His conception of education is very complex. It reveals the influences of many a philosophical trend, social and religious precepts of his century. It is centered on the human being, on the freedom of thinking and acting, advocated by the epoch of Renaissance, on modern realism and rationalism, on the pantheistic and empiric conception of the great philosophers of his time - Giordano Bruno, Francis Bacon and Descartes, on his own creed that the young can attain the true knowledge of God, of man and of nature, that they (the young) may grow accustomed to see in this light the light of God and to love and to honor the Father of Light above all things'.

The scientific revolution of his century marked the advent of new theories in educational progress, expressing his own conception: “*God has inspired some sturdy men in Germany, who, weary of the errors of the present method of instruction, began to think out an easier and shorter way of teaching languages... I here allude to men like Ratke, Lubin, Helwig, Ritter, Bodin, Glaum,*

*Vogel, Wolfstrin, and he who deserves to be placed before them all, John Valentine Andreae (who has laid bare the diseases not only of the Church and the state, but also the schools, and has pointed out the remedies). In France too they set this stone in motion, since the year 1629, Janus Caecilius Frey brought out a fine work on Didactic —A New and Easy Way to the Godly Sciences and Arts, to Languages and Rhetoric//*¹⁸. And other points of view, very congruous with his own: “*Lubin says in his Didactic – Charity bids us not to niggardly withhold from mankind what*

*God has intended for the use of all, but to throw it open to the whole world//*¹⁹. “*...Pleasantries often lead to serious things. Thus would be fulfilled Luther’s wish that the studies of the young at school could be so organized that the scholars might take pleasure in them as if in playing at ball all day, and thus for the first time would schools be a real prelude to practical life//*²⁰.

He was greatly influenced by the optimistic conception of Giordano Bruno who propounded the idea of universal harmony: “*All things are in the universe, and the universe is in all things, we abide in it and it abides in us: and in this way everything coincides in a perfect unity. That is why we should not rack our minds, that is why there does not exist a single thing we should be awed by. And because this unity is single and stable and ever lasts, this Oneness is eternal ...*

Those philosophers who have found this unity, have found their confidant – Wisdom”²¹.

Comenius was one of those select. It supported him in his projects – large and wearisome: “*This is undoubtedly so, and unless our labours are shortened the task will be no easy one; for this art of ours is as long, as wide, and as deep as the universe that has to be subdued by our minds*”²².

Natural philosophy, as it was envisioned by Descartes and other participants in the Scientific Revolution, had only the physical world as its proper domain, and this has been largely true of science ever since. Numerous scientists of the seventeenth century affirmed the Cartesian dualism of the primary properties of the physical world versus the secondary properties associated with human perceptions. The goal of science was to see beyond the veil of these secondary properties to the true nature of the physical world. It facilitated Comenius and other scholars to pursue research in an unbiased and rational manner to obtain certain knowledge of the natural world and the nature of the spirit, as Descartes himself asserted it to be easier to investigate than the body. —*In man, the microcosm, everything is contained potentially. Bring light and he will strait-way see*”²³.

This ideal is expressed largely in his *Great Didactic* where he proves to be the staunchest supporter of the *rational procedure* in pedagogical science, and the quintessence of his pedagogical creed is that children should grow rational, virtuous and pious.

To the aspired European knowledge based society of nowadays, Comenius in his 345 year of eternity, sends a desiderata – not a utopian but a prophetic one: “*... multiplication of learned men, since the multitude of the wise is the wisdom of the world. And since our desire is to increase the sum of Christian wisdom, and sow the seeds of piety, of learning, and of morality in the hearts of all who are dedicated to God, we may hope for the fulfillment of the divine prophecy: ‘The earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea// (Isaiah, xi, 9)*”²⁴.

How inextricably linked are we today to the whole tradition of pedagogy via Comenius “titanic endowment, as well as endeavor, for we are not to discontinue this tradition - —*For this no single man and on single generation is sufficient, and it is therefore essential that the work be carried on by many, working together and employing the researches of their predecessors as a starting-point//*”²⁵. For if pedagogy started with religion, it should return to its life giving spring, otherwise it is doomed to collapse.

Another philosopher, a contemporary one, who took tradition as a vehicle of learning and ascent to the acme of humanistic research, is the greatest scientist in modern linguistics, Eugenio Coseriu.

The principle of tradition in Coseriu “s deontological hierarchy comes third but in the sciences of culture it is the most important one. In *The Principles of Linguistics as a Science of Culture*

Coseriu quotes the famous Spanish linguist Menendez Pidal: “*...in culture everything is primarily tradition, and only then, in the frame of tradition – new and revolutionary things//*. Coseriu enlarges a little bit by adding: “*Who asserts only new things, does not say anything, because the true, effective newness in science as well as in culture is something that has its roots in the tradi-tion, it does not*

ignore what has been done hitherto. It is a satanic self-assurance to say: I am to arrange things, everything that has been done is foolish. This means to despise all the world, from its origin to present days, this means not to admit that all people wanted to say the truth, to say things as they are. And if they made mistakes – and no doubt they did – it was because of this essential limit of the man and science, because of a certain historic moment and because they viewed things from a certain perspective. From these rationalities I do value tradition and constantly seek in it for antecedents of later theories, seek for this intuition, partial as it is, and try revealing in all my works of historical linguistic the continuity of the problems”²⁶.

To exemplify this E. Coseriu emphasizes that there cannot be a delimitation between pre scientific or non scientific (as some say) linguistics and a scientific one with the beginning of the 19 century. He points that a new method emerged in the 19 century, there is no doubt about it, but the problems – both of theory and description – were always the same. Another example is with Italian Renaissance, for instance, where we can find exactly the same principle of historical explanation through substratum and superstratum and socio-cultural differentiation of languages.

Another quotation from *Lingvistica integrala* proves the ponderability of tradition in linguistics: —*Tradition weighs most heavily in the langue than in any other activity, because of this otherness (alterity), which means unity with the subjects from the past and present and solidarity with subjects of the future. A subject from the future will be able to understand what I do in Romanian now if it is in accordance with the possibilities of Romanian. It is the linguist who is aware of this, while the speaker is not conscious of the fact and applies it intuitively, i.e. creates without thinking of the fact that someone might not understand him.*

In this way we come to the objectivity of linguistics. And this is the object of linguistics: it must study the langue as the objectivity of a subject among subjects, endowed with alterity//²⁷.

I would like to round up my presentation with the words of a philosopher who stands as a foothold for the ascent of all modern science, giving it the new methods of investigation – Francis Bacon: “*It is useless to expect a considerable growth in knowledge via simple adding new things upon old ones; Every time we should start from the very low foundations, if we do not wish to rotate in the same circle... The honour of the old authors always remains unstained because the comparison we are making here is not a comparison of talents or efforts, but of methods, and we have here not the role of the judge but of the guide*//²⁸.

Notes

- ¹Berdiaev, 1996, p. 31
- ²Comenius, 1907, p. 13
- ³Comenius, 1907, p. 9
- ⁴Comenius, 1907, p. 62
- ⁵*ibidem*
- ⁶*ibidem*
- ⁷*ibidem*
- ⁸Comenius, 1907, p. 17
- ⁹Comenius, 1907, p. 90
- ¹⁰Comenius, 1907, p. 173
- ¹¹Comenius, 1907, p.20
- ¹²Comenius, 1907, p.174
- ¹³Comenius, 1907, p.175
- ¹⁴Comenius, 1907, p. 20
- ¹⁵Comenius, 1907, p. 87
- ¹⁶Comenius, 1907, p. 178
- ¹⁷Comenius, 1907, p. 178
- ¹⁸Comenius, 1907, p. 8
- ¹⁹Comenius, 1907, p. 9
- ²⁰Comenius, 1907, p.180
- ²¹Bruno, 1943, p. 207
- ²²Comenius, 1907, p. 160
- ²³Comenius, 1907, p. 175
- ²⁴Comenius, 1907, p. 294
- ²⁵Comenius, 1907, p. 285
- ²⁶Coşeriu, 1992, p.15
- ²⁷Coşeriu, 1996, p.124

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5. COMENIUS, J.A. *The Great Didactic* London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924031053709> [=Comenius, 1907].