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THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF JULIAN THE APOSTATE

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Abstract: Julian the Apostate, the last pagan ruler of the Roman Empire has left a rich correspondence, the content of which is extremely varied. The epistles, most of which are authentic, form a separate volume in the editions and can be divided into four groups. The first group consists of the so-called Gallic letters, the second group includes the letters of Illyria and Constantinople, the letters from Asia Minor form the third group. Finally, the letters written from Antioch complete the list. In the following, we will discuss the School Edict and more particularly the letter that accompanies it (Ep. 61 Bidez — second group of letters). The decree of the *Codex Theodosianus*, dated 17 June 362, was rather short-lived, being in force only from July 362 to 11 January 364, but it is nevertheless an outstanding document of ancient educational history since no other emperor had previously issued similar regulations on the operation of teachers. Alongside this decree we may place the edict associated with Justinian (Cod. Just. I,5,18,4; I,11,10,2), which, conversely, forbids the pagan rhetors from education, but in the sixth century no one attempted to criticise it.
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Flavius Claudius Julianus Imperator, the last pagan ruler of the Roman Empire, went down in history as the second philosopher-emperor after Marcus Aurelius. Although due to his *conversio* he was given the epithet "Apostate" by the church fathers, despite the fact, that he never lost his faith, but instead he endeavoured to build a pagan church on the Christian model, that was ultimately based on a Neoplatonist foundation, and, also in accordance with Christian standards, he promoted the support of the poor and the establishment of orphanages. His short life, however, prevented him from realising his principles in the long term. It is a curious and fortunate grace of fate that the writings of the Roman Emperor have survived, albeit not in their entirety, but the Greek-language *corpus* still spans several hundred pages. His rather voluminous correspondence provides a wide range of valuable information.[1] In this paper we shall attempt to explore the educational policy of the emperor based on his correspondence. The Latin edict *De professoribus*, known as the "School Edict", issued on

1 Bidez 1972.

17 June 362, is preserved in the *Codex Theodosianus* (XIII,3,5) and *Codex Iustinianus* (X,53,7), and is supplemented by a unique letter in Greek (Ep. 61), which was intended to explain the decision of the emperor.[2] In addition to this, however, he also addresses in several of his *epistles* the question of how the educational affairs of the empire should be regulated.

Julian is a lesser-known figure in ancient history, it is therefore worth briefly outlining the main stages of his life as an introduction. The nephew of Constantine the Great was not originally destined to succeed to the imperial throne, since the sons of Constantine did their utmost to exclude the collateral relatives from the succession after the death of their father (337).[3] The founder of the second Flavian dynasty, Constantius Chlorus, was the grandfather of Julian as well as the sons of Constantine, namely Constantine II, Constans, and Constantius II, and Constantine the Great and Flavius Iulius Constantius, father of Julian, were half-siblings. We do not know the exact year of the birth of Julian, he was born in 331 or 332 in Constantinople, and his mother Basilina died in childbirth. In 337, as a half-orphan aged five or six, he witnessed a brutal massacre led by the sons of Constantine the Great, when his father and other relatives were executed, leaving only him and his half-brother Gallus alive. He himself also gave an account of the tragedy in one of his speeches, explaining his miraculous escape by the intercession of Helios, God of the Sun (Or. VII, 227C–234C).[4] He spent his childhood years in Constantinople and Nicomedia under the tutelage of Constantius II, who governed the eastern part of the empire and who appointed Christian tutors beside him, thus, in these early years we know of a certain Eusebius of Nicomedia. Meanwhile, Mardonius — who had once belonged to his mother's circle — began the early education of the young man as a *paidagogos*, in a pagan spirit: he introduced Julian to the poems of Homer and Hesiod.[5] A few years later, in 342 or 345, Constantius II assigned the adolescent youths, Gallus and Julian to the distant Macellum, a

2 The Latin text is also available in the Bidez edition: *„Magistros studiorum doctoresque excellere oportet moribus primum, deinde facundia. Sed quia singulis civitatibus adesse ipse non possum, iubeo quisque (quisquis* Iust*.) docere vult, non repente nec temere prosiliat ad hoc munus, sed iudicio ordinis probatus decretum curialium mereatur, optimorum conspirante consensu. Hoc enim decretum ad me tractandum referetur, ut alteriore quodam honore nostro iudicio studiis civitatum accedant."* For an explanation of the supplementary letter 61 (numbered according to Bidez), see below. Bidez 1940, 72.

3 Bidez 1940, 22.

4 Rochefort 1963. On the personal tragedy: Wojaczek 1992, 207–235; Csízy 2006, 136–138; Csízy 2000, 223–228.

5 Mardonius was a kind of a family substitute to Julian, as we can read in the excellent monograph of Athanassiadi-Fowden: *„When Julian was entrusted to his care, Mardonius infected his pupil with this enthusiasm, while for his part Julian showed an absolute trust in his new master who, at that moment, was the only person capable of reproducing for the orphan something of the athmosphere of home life."* Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 15. Further literature: Bidez 1940, 25–29; Rosen 1997, 126–146.

Christian settlement in Cappadocia, as a place of forced residence, where, however, the early sown seed speared, as Bishop Georgius of Cappadocia put his library, which contained the works of many pagan classical authors, at the disposal of Julian.[6] It was here that the future emperor became acquainted with the writings of the pagan rhetors and philosophers, as he recalled in his later letters (Ep. 106 and Ep. 107). Having been left without an heir, Constantius was forced to appoint Gallus as his successor, as a result of which in 351 Julian was able to enjoy relative freedom and set off on his journey to Asia Minor, where he first came into contact with the Neoplatonist circle of Aedesius, and from there he went to the school of the philosopher Maximus of Ephesus.[7] Julian, however, could not enjoy the company of Maximus for long, as he was again assigned to Constantinople and Nicomedia, where he received Christian education, learned rhetoric from Nicocles and Hecebolius, and Aëtius was sent by the emperor specifically to strengthen his Christian faith. Meanwhile, he obtained the notes of the lectures of the renowned Antiochian orator Libanius, since he was not allowed to publicly attend his classes. From there, he went to the University of Athens, the Academy: through the intercession of Empress Eusebia, he was granted permission to study in one of the finest educational centres of antiquity.[8]

We have seen above that Julian had completed his studies in grammar, rhetoric and philosophy under the three-tiered educational system of antiquity, and was surprised to learn, after Constantius II had condemned and executed Julian's half-brother Gallus, that he had to go to Milan to seek his appointment as *Caesar*, i.e. as heir to the throne.[9] The young man left Hellas with a broken heart, which he considered his true home. Nonetheless, on his way he visited to Ilion (Troy), which was still a place of worship at the time, to pay tribute to his heroes Achilles and Hector, an experience he described in a very interesting letter (Ep. 79).[10] The heir to the throne also had to take an active part in military events, thus the emperor entrusted the Gallic campaign to the young man, who was completely untrained in military matters at the time and initially fought the war relying on his commanders-in-chief, but he soon mastered the science and practice of warfare and performed surprisingly well in the difficult terrain. It was at this time, a year or two after his appointment — in the winter of 356–357 — that in his first speech he formally thanked Constantius II (Or. I), and it

6 Regarding Macellum see for example: Hadjinikolau 1951, 15–22; Festugière 1957, 53–58; Bidez 1940, 29–47.

7 On the Neo-Platonists of Asia Minor: Prächter 1973, 165–216; Bidez 1940, 76–93.

8 Bidez 1940, 101–131.

9 Bidez 1940, 132, skk.

10 A certain Pegasius was at Julian's disposal as a guide, who, despite being a Christian, also paid homage to the pagan gods and heroes, as the future emperor recalled. At the place of worship, the monuments to Hector, Achilles and Athena made a great impression on the young man.

was also at this time that he formulated his praise of Eusebia (Or. II), to whom he was particularly grateful for the study excursion to Athens. In 358 another panegyric was created dedicated to Constantius (Or. III), in which, however, Julian also drew a critique of the emperor with veiled mythological allusions. It was at this time that he bid farewell to his loyal friend and excellent adviser, Sallustius, whom the emperor, jealous of his Gallic successes, had removed from his entourage. Only those who read carefully between the lines can perceive that Julian also expressed his grief in this Constantius-speech (Or. III), unlike in the consolation to Sallustius, where he openly did so (Or. IV). In the spring of 360, in Lutetia, now Paris, the soldiers of the *Caesar* proclaimed him *Augustus*, now for the second time, which he accepted on this occasion and informed Constantius II of the events in a letter (Ep. 17).[11] At the same time, in his speech, or longer letter (Or. V) to the Athenians, which contains many biographical elements, he formulated his political programme at once, and then marched with his army against Constantius. The confrontation did not take place, however, as the legitimate emperor had died in the meantime. Julian made his solemn entry on 11 December 361 into Constantinople, the capital of the eastern part of the empire and, before he had put on the robe, created a writing in which, among other things, he expressed his ambition to become a follower of Marcus Aurelius (Or. VI, 253ab). The addressee of the speech was the distinguished contemporary orator Themistius, who was also highly esteemed by Christians (Or. VI). In addition to several letters, he wrote two invectives and a hymn during his stay in Constantinople in 361–362. The offensive writings, the speech against Heraclius (Or. VII) and the writing against the "Unmannerly Cynics" (Or. IX), are in fact criticisms of neo-Cynicism, which was close to Christianity, in which the emperor criticized the Cynics' treatment of myth and advocated a correct pagan philosophy. In his hymn to Cybele (Or. VIII), he portrayed the cult of Magna Mater from a kind of allegorical Neo-Platonist approach, with many reminiscences from Plotinus, Porphyrius and Iamblichus. The emperor associated the figure of Cybele with the empire's cult of Helios, who, as Providence (*Pronoia*), is essentially equivalent to the Sun God and is responsible for connecting the human and divine spheres. In this writing, Julian was in fact confronting Christianity by highlighting the intellectual features of pagan philosophy, connecting to the polemical writings of paganism.[12]

The next and last significant stage of the life of Julian was Antioch, where, probably in December 362, he wrote his satire *Caesares* (Or. X) and his famous Oration to the Sovereign Sun (Or. XI), as well as the Beard-Hater (*Misopogon*)

11 Julian himself wrote that the guardian spirit of the state (Genius Publicus) appeared to him in a dream: or. V, 284c–286d. The story was also told by the great historiographer of late antiquity, Ammianus Marcellinus: 20,4,9–11. In the present case, it is Julian's theocratic vision of the empire. Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 74–75.

12 Csízy 2006, 140–142.

(Or. XII), which was his last major apologetic speech, written in February 363, in which he responded to the attacks by the Christian inhabitants of Antioch. In the Oration to the Sovereign Sun, he testified that it was thanks to Helios that he survived the massacre of 337. He identified the God of Sun with the figures of Apollo and Mithras, and he regarded the God as both his leader (*hegemon*) and tutor (*paidagogos*) (Or. XI,188a). The *Caesares*, which was written for the winter solstice celebration of Saturnalia, is noteworthy for several reasons. The emperor sets Marcus Aurelius as an example to himself and others in the imaginary contest in which Alexander the Great appeared alongside the Roman emperors. The former heads of state were called to give an account of their deeds and were put to the test. A product of the Antiochian period is the cycle of "pastoral letters" (Ep. 84a, 86, 88, 89ab), in which Julian, as *pontifex maximus* of the empire, formulated his exhortations to the high priests. In the letters, we read, among other things, how a religious leader can fulfil his role as educator, how to behave, what to communicate, and what to teach his environment. These writings also deserve attention from the perspective of our narrower subject, educational policy, and the history of education.[13]

Julian died near Ctesiphon in June 363, the last sentence attributed to him — "You have won, Galilean!" — preserved for us by Theodoret in the 5th century.

Julian the Apostate is the only Roman emperor to have left a rich correspondence, the content of which is extremely varied. The epistles, most of which are authentic, form a separate volume in the editions and can be divided into four groups. The first group consists of the so-called Gallic letters, probably dating from 357–361, and according to Bidez these are numbered from the fourth to the nineteenth. The second group includes the letters of Illyria and Constantinople, written between 361 and 362, numbered from the twentieth to the seventy-fifth. The letters from Asia Minor form the third group, from June to July 362, about six weeks of correspondence (Ep. 78 – Ep. 81). Finally, the letters written from Antioch between July 362 and March 363 (Ep. 82 – Ep. 136) complete the list. This is complemented by a few epistles of uncertain date (Ep. 152 – Ep. 157), as well as a group of poems and fragments in the Bidez edition (Ep. 161 – Ep. 178), along with the letters of Pseudo-Julian (Ep. 198 – Ep. 201) and the letters to Iamblichus (Ep. 190 – Ep. 197), also of uncertain origin.[14] The corpus of letters is very diverse in terms of its subject: with religious, cultural historical and empire management subjects. Often times the emperor is voluble and sincere in tone yet demonstrates his rhetorical erudition.[15]

13 The terminology "pastoral letters" comes from Gibbon (e. p. 1776). Gibbon 1997; According to the publication by Bidez 1972, these are: 84a, 86, 88, 89a, 89b. Kabiersch 1960, 1; Rosen 2006, 300.

14 Bidez 1972.

15 Bidez 1972, 1–5.

In the following, we will discuss the School Edict and more particularly the letter that accompanies it. The decree of the *Codex Theodosianus*, dated 17 June 362, was rather short-lived, being in force only from July 362 to 11 January 364, but it is nevertheless an outstanding document of ancient educational history since no other emperor had previously issued similar regulations on the operation of teachers. Alongside this decree we may place the edict associated with Justinian (Cod. Just. I,5,18,4; I,11,10,2), which, conversely, forbids the pagan rhetors from education, but in the sixth century no one attempted to criticise it.[16]

Our source is also important because in the two major centres of education in antiquity, Rome and Athens, teachers were allowed to teach as private tutors with imperial approval.[17] At the same time, the emperors themselves patronised the activities of the teachers, and in this respect, they paid attention to talent management.

Julian determined who could teach not only for orators, but also for grammarians and philosophers, as he gave the right to make a decision to the city council (*ordo curialium*) placing the teaching activity under moral criteria, while at the same time subjecting the final judgement to imperial approval. The provision undoubtedly violated urban autonomy.[18] Ammianus Marcellinus (25,4) noted on this point, although already at the time of the Christian Theodosius (379–395): "For the laws which he enacted were not oppressive, but stated exactly what was to be done or left undone, with a few exceptions. For example, it was a harsh law that forbade Christian rhetoricians and grammarians to teach, unless they consented to worship the pagan deities."[19] The eminent historian of late antiquity wrote this despite the fact, that in his work he treated Julian with particular sympathy and in his characterization, he emphasized that Julian possessed the four Platonic cardinal virtues:

> *He was a man truly to be numbered with the heroic spirits, distinguished for his illustrious deeds and his inborn majesty. For since there are, in the opinion of the philosophers, four principal virtues, moderation, wisdom, justice, and courage and corresponding to these also some external characteristics, such as knowledge of the art of war, authority, good fortune, and liberality, these as a whole and separately Julianus cultivated with constant zeal… By what high qualities he was distinguished in his administration of justice is clear from many indications: first, because taking into account circumstances and persons, he was awe-inspiring but free from cruelty. Secondly, because he checked*

16 Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 229.

17 In Rome, the edict concerned Marius Victorinus, whereas in Athens it affected Prohairesius, a former tutor of Julian. The emperor exempted Prohairesios from the decree, but he did not accept it. Marrou 1957, 441–443.

18 Cod. Theod. XIII, 3,5,5 = Cod. Iustin. X,53,7 *„…sed iudicio ordinis probatus decretum curialium mereatur, optimorum conspirante consensu. Hoc enim decretum ad me tractandum referetur, ut alteriore quodam honore nostro iudicio studiis civitatum accedant."*

19 Translated by J. C. Rolfe. Rolfe 2022.

vice by making examples of a few, and also because he more frequently threatened men with the sword than actually used it. [20]

Far more revealing than the short Latin edict is the Greek letter of the emperor (Ep. 61), which also gives us an insight into the educational policy of Julian. The authoritative monograph of Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden, entitled *Julian and Hellenism*, begins, not coincidentally, with an excerpt from Letter 61, while asking the question of what captures the concept of Hellenism in late antiquity: unity or diversity.[21] According to the author, the answer of Julian is clearly unity, also in the sense that the emperor sought to create this unity in a religious context, placing the now syncretic god-figure Helios at its centre: for him he was both the Father of paganism and the saviour of the Hellenes (Ep. 184, 419a — *tou Hellenikou soter*) and the common blessing of the *oikumene*, the inhabited world (Ep. 181, 449b — *to koinon ton hellenon agathon*). At the same time, the School *Edict* of Julian also formulates the sacral character of the 4th century Hellenism, which is in a sense a kind of exalted, overheated mysticism.[22] Especially when we consider that, for Julian, Odysseus appears as the Neo-Platonic hero who triumphs over the sensuous world with the help of Athena.[23] During his reign, he sought to uphold the values of pagan education as a priest of Hellenic education (*paideia*), where the ultimate goal of the individual is the Neo-Platonist *unio mystica* — the unification with the divine. Athanassiadi-Fowden points out that the emperor does not make a distinction between sacred and profane letters,[24] which is also reflected in letter 61 that supplements the School Edict. In his concept of education, the great figures of antiquity, Homer and Plato, are presented as pagan saints. Under the influence of the Neo-Platonist philosophers, such as Plotinus, Porphyrius and Iamblichus, this paideia is enriched with moral and cathartic elements, as it is expressed in the Pythagoras biographies written by the latter two thinkers.[25] Let us now take a look at the regulation and the letter 61 supplementing it.

20 Ibid.

21 Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 1.

22 Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 8.

23 In this case, it is the consolatory speech written by Julian on the departure of Salutius (Or. IV, 241d; Hom. Il. 11,401). *Athena* appears as *Providentia* according to the Neo-Platonist idea: Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 70; Buffière 1956, 413–418.

24 Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 123.

25 Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 124–125.

Decree of Julian on professors — C.Th. XIII,3,5=Iustin. X,53,7 — 17 June 362

Masters of students and teachers must excel first in character, then in eloquence.
But since I cannot be present in person in all the municipalities, I command that if any man should wish to teach, he shall not leap forth suddenly and rashly to this task, but he shall be approved by the judgment of the municipal senate and shall obtain the decree of the decurions with the consent and agreement of the best citizens. For this decree shall be referred to Me for consideration, in order that such teachers may enter upon their pursuits in the municipalities with a certain higher honour because of Our judgment.[26]

Ep. 61 [42]

I hold that a proper education (orthe paideia) results, not in laboriously acquired symmetry of phrases and language, but in a healthy condition of mind (hygies nous), I mean a mind that has understanding and true opinions about things good and evil, honourable and base. Therefore, when a man thinks one thing and teaches his pupils another, in my opinion he fails to educate (paideia) exactly in proportion as he fails to be an honest man (chrestos aner). And if the divergence between a man's convictions and his utterances is merely in trivial matters, that can be tolerated somehow, though it is wrong. But if in matters of the greatest importance a man has certain opinions and teaches the contrary, what is that but the conduct of hucksters, and not honest but thoroughly dissolute men in that they praise most highly the things that they believe to be most worthless, thus cheating and enticing by their praises those to whom they desire to transfer their worthless wares.
Now all who profess to teach anything whatever ought to be men of upright character, and ought not to harbour in their souls opinions irreconcilable with what they publicly profess; and, above all, I believe it is necessary that those who associate with the young and teach them rhetoric should be of that upright character; for they expound the writings of the ancients, whether they be rhetoricians or grammarians, and still more if they are sophists. For these claim to teach, in addition to other things, not only the use of words, but morals also, and they assert that political philosophy is their peculiar field. Let us leave aside, for the moment, the question whether this is true or not.
But while I applaud them for aspiring to such high pretensions, I should applaud them still more if they did not utter falsehoods and convict themselves of thinking one thing and teaching their pupils another. What! Was it not the gods who revealed all their learning to Homer, Hesiod, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Thucydides, Isocrates and Lysias? Did not these men think that they were consecrated, some to Hermes, others to the Muses? I think it is absurd that men who expound the works of these writers should dishonour the gods whom they used to honour. Yet, though I think this absurd, I do not say that they ought to change their opinions and then instruct the young. But I give them this choice; either not to teach what they do not think admirable, or, if they wish to teach, let them first really persuade their pupils that neither Homer nor Hesiod nor any of these writers whom they expound and have declared to be guilty of impiety (asebeia), folly and error in regard to the gods, is such as they declare. For since they make a livelihood and receive pay from the works of those writers, they thereby confess that they are most shamefully greedy of gain, and that, for the sake of a few drachmae, they would put up with any-

26 Translated by C. Pharr 1952.

thing. It is true that, until now, there were many excuses for not attending the temples, and the terror that threatened on all sides absolved men for concealing the truest beliefs about the gods. But since the gods have granted us liberty, it seems to me absurd that men should teach what they do not believe to be sound. But if they believe that those whose interpreters they are and for whom they sit, so to speak, in the seat of the prophets, were wise men, let them be the first to emulate their piety (eusebeian) towards the gods. If, however, they think that those writers were in error with respect to the most honoured gods, then let them betake themselves to the churches of the Galilaeans to expound Matthew and Luke, since you Galilaeans are obeying them when you ordain that men shall refrain from temple-worship.

For my part, I wish that your ears and your tongues might be "born anew," as you would say, as regards these things in which may I ever have part, and all who think and act as is pleasing to me.

For religious (kathegemosi) and secular (didaskalois) teachers let there be a general ordinance (koinos nomos) to this effect: Any youth who wishes to attend the schools is not excluded; nor indeed would it be reasonable to shut out from the best way boys who are still too ignorant to know which way to turn, and to overawe them into being led against their will to the beliefs of their ancestors (epi ta patria). Though indeed it might be proper to cure these, even against their will, as one cures the insane, except that we concede indulgence to all for this sort of disease. For we ought, I think, to teach (didaskein), but not punish (kolazein), the demented.[27]

In the introduction, Julian briefly defined true literacy, the essence of which is a true opinion on right and wrong. He considered teaching against one' s convictions to be dishonest, as the honest man (*chrestos aner*) teaches only according to his inner convictions, since he carries the teachings in his soul (*ta en te psyche pherein doxasmata* — 422c). According to the edict, grammarians, rhetors and sophists must teach on the basis of tradition, and this is particularly true of sophists working in the field of political philosophy. It is clear from the words of Julianus that emotion plays an important role in interpretation and education in general, therefore classical works can only be taught with pagan faith. The emperor also lists the authors with whom it is essential for the students to get acquainted: Homer, Hesiod, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Thucydides, Isocrates and Lysias, who all owe thanks to the gods for their knowledge. However, it grants the freedom of religious practice to Christians (423c) and states that conversion is not to be forced (424a). Christians should be treated with a policy of forgiveness (424b), and not punishment, but education (424b). In his ideas — as well as in the life of the empire — the spiritual, cultural and political elements are closely intertwined.[28]

These ideas can also be found in other works of the emperor: in *Epistle* 84 of the Pastoral Letters, in fragment 89b, as well as in the *Caesares* and the *Misopogon*. His educational principles thus become in fact his political objectives. The Aristotelian idea that man is a social creature (*ontos anthropou physei*

27 Letter 36 (61 in Bidez). Translated by W. C. Wright.

28 Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 190.

politikou zoou 89b, 288b) is the cornerstone of the argument at the heart of which he placed mild punishment and character formation (*pepheimenos kolazein, chreias epanorthoun* 89b, 289a – cf. Ep. 61). The thoughts of gentleness, good will and good deeds concerning Marcus Aurelius are about the emperor himself, which were meant as an exhortation to himself. The letter, which he wrote as *pontifex maximus*, high priest of the empire, focused on the love of his subjects through the *philotheos* — God-loving — and *philanthropos* — man-loving — behaviour (89b, 305ab). *Philoxenia* — the love for strangers — which prioritises acceptance and helping those in need, can be achieved through the virtue of generosity (*megalopsychia*). Underlying these principles, however, is the pagan philosopher's God-seeking attitude, the *homoiosis theo*: the idea of likeness to God, which is based on the teaching of "Know thyself!".[29]

We can explain the letters of Emperor Julian in many other ways, with education and educational policy being just one of many.

In conclusion, we can say that the fourth century ruler possessed a kind of double consciousness: he was both Roman and Greek.[30] As a high priest, he sought to regulate priestly-educational behaviour and, in his edict on education, to teach according to one's convictions, in an age when education and religion were inseparable. In his educational policy, he followed Iamblichos' concept of *paideia*, in that he combined the priestly office with the requirements of Hellenic *paideia*, and sought to implement the ascetic morality of Neo-Platonist philosophy.[31] *Theurgy* plays an important role in this idea, but it is not mentioned in the *edict* presented above nor in the related *epistle* 61. The emperor paid attention not only to the compulsory curriculum, but also to the teachers themselves, since the emphasis was on explaining and commenting on the curriculum, not on the text itself. This interpretation, in turn, emphasized pagan philosophical and religious principles to the utmost. Based on his writings and political actions, the emperor was guided by *philanthropy*, which appeared also as pious religiosity (*eusebeia, hosiotes*), as gentleness (*praotes*) and as the patronage of strangers (*philoxenia*).

The decree on professors can also be seen as part of the idea of church organization, according to which the emperor was working to create a pagan priesthood on the Christian model, for which the educational policy of the imperial educational order provided the appropriate basis, even if this plan excluded one stratum from education, giving place to those who fully conformed to the theological and, with it, philosophical guidelines of the official imperial propaganda.

29 Csízy 2018, passim.

30 Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 229–230.

31 Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981, 126.

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