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# ABORDĂRI TEORETICE – REEVALUĂRI ȘI DESCHIDERI / THEORETICAL APPROACHES – NEW INTERPRETATIONS

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## JUAN LUIS VIVES: THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION IN THE GOLDEN CENTURY

Reader, Irina Maciuc, Ph.D  
TSTD - University of Craiova

### **Abstract**

*The triumphs based on the humanist idea of education. In this context, The Pedagogical work of J.L.Vives is one of the most important legacies of the Renaissance, because the aim and curriculum of education in his vision reflects the ideals and interests of the particular age of humanity. In The Golden Century it is arguable that the education of women was encouraged. Vives believed that women could learn Latin and Greek and continue to a level in which they could assist their sons in preparation. De Ratione Studii Puerilis, written upon the request of Queen Catherine to serve as a plan of study for Mary Tudor ; De Institutione Feminae Christianae work commissioned by Queen Catherine which would become the leading theoretical manual on women's education of the sixteenth century ; and. De Tradendis Disciplinis are the most important works of J.L.Vives as pedagogue. This paper underlines that the multilingualism (knew Latin and Greek but also French, Dutch, Spanish, English and Italian), the open mind, and his tumultuous life demonstrates that the European Dimension remains a strong definition of his works, and its destiny.*

**Key concepts :** *educational theorist, the Education of a Christian Woman, pedagogic work, Golden Century, European dimension of education*

### **1. Elements for a biography**

Juan Luis VIVES (1492? -1540) is "one of the top Renaissance educators and anthropologists" (De Angelis, 2000, Nardi, 1965), a well-known "committed humanist"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Guy, A. (1972), *Vivès ou l'Humanisme engagé*, Paris: Seghers.

Converted Spanish Jew, he lived almost all his life outside Spain, his academic activity, particularly appreciated, unfolding especially in *London – Oxford* and *Paris*. He was also a professor at *Leuven* and *Bruges*.

He was permanently in touch with the authority, both with the power of mind, being a friend of Thomas More and the collaborator of Erasmus of Rotterdam, and the earthly power, the royal pompous, brilliant, ostentatious power of the kings and queens, princesses and duchesses, but also the spiritual power of the popes or cardinals.

*Catherine of Aragon*, Queen *Isabella of Spain*'s daughter, Princess *Mary*, King *Henry VIII of England*, *Duchess of Nassau*, but also *Pope Adrian VI* or the young *cardinal Croy* have been close friends. He gained valuable teaching experience. He was tutor to Princess *Mary*, the future *Queen Mary of England*, and the courses held in *Oxford* (obtained on the recommendation of *Cardinal Wolsey*) were witnessed by the Princess' parents: *Henry VIII* and *Catherine of Aragon*, his Spanish wife.

*J.L. Vives* did not come from a very wealthy family. His parents, educated people were Hebrew converted to Christianity. His father, *Luis Vives*, because of an alleged return to *Judaism*, was tried by the Spanish *Inquisition*, on 6 September 1524, the process being concluded with the verdict of capital punishment; it is known from the middle of the last century as a result of documentary research. His mother, *Bianca*, died of plague in 1508, but her body, as a result of the inquisitorial process against her husband was, after almost 20 years, exhumed and burned. *Vives's* mother had a great contribution to his education and it is possible to have laid the foundation for his teaching beliefs. She remained for him the model of the *Christian woman*. After his mother's death, he moved to *Paris*, in 1509, and studied philosophy and theology at the *Sorbonne*. From 1516 *Vives* lived more in *Leuven*. Although he was deprived of an official title, *Vives* received the permission from the *University of Leuven* to teach in public. In the same year he became professor of *Guillaume of Croy* (1498-1521), *bishop of Cambrai*, who a year later, as archbishop of *Toledo*, was named *Primate of Spain*.

Let's remember that *Vives* worked at *Corpus Christi College*, *Oxford*, as a lecturer of Greek. However, only at the end of 1523, he received his doctorate at *Oxford*, becoming a *Doctor of Civil Law*. He remained at the royal court due to his excellent academic reputation. He was a good speaker, and his lectures distinguished by the elegance of form. As the instructor of *Henry VIII's* daughter, he developed a study plan, *De ratione puerilis studii* (1523)<sup>2</sup>.

*Vives's* stay in *England* was interrupted only by short visits to *Bruges*. The reason was his marriage on 26 May 1524 with the 19 years old daughter of a prosperous merchant.

In *Bruges* met and became a close friend of *Adrian of Utrecht*, *vice chancellor* of the *University*, who later became *Pope Adrian VI*. *Vives* has sent him

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<sup>2</sup> Vives, J.L., *The Education of a Christian Woman. A Sixteenth-Century Manual*. Edited and Translated by Charles Fantazzi, 2000 Publisher: University Of Chicago Press

one of his letters, giving a clear diagnosis and possible solutions for the diseases specific to his age<sup>3</sup>.

Vives was, for most of his life, a private tutor or instructor, including among his "students" his future wife, *Margaret*, daughter of the *Valdauras*' merchants in *Bruges*.

As a tutor to Princess Mary Tudor and close friend of Catherine of Aragon, in 1527, Vives took the Queen's side, the first wife of Henry VIII, in her quarrel with the king, on the marriage annulment.

J.L. Vives was imprudent to write and speak against the king. He received six weeks of house confine. Subsequently, he was expelled from England and went to *Bruges*. In *Bruges* he suffered financial difficulties, being completely unprepared for the situation of not having a generous employer. Only in his last years, he received a small pension from *Charles V* (*Charles Quint*, 1500 – 1558).

From 1537 until 1539 was a close friend of *Mencia de Mendoza*, the first *Marquess de Zenete*, married in 1522 with *Enrique III of Nassau*, who was then the second and last wife of the *Duke of Calabria*<sup>4</sup>.

Juan Luis Vives had a short and sad life, marked by the premature loss of his hparents, a poor health and the exile.

He wrote many philosophical, pedagogic and methodological works and even a work of empirical psychology. He's the author of the paper, "*Latin Exercises*" published in 50 editions. He was adept woman's education, I several treatates on this topic. The best well-known work in this respect is "*On Christian Woman's Education – De Institutione Feminae Christianae*" (1523), work that has been translated into numerous languages and was highly respected.

## 2. J. L. Vives's Work: A Complex and Diverse Work

Born a hundred years before *Comenius*, he was a brilliant student of the *Academy of Valencia*, he wrote *Will Seymour Monroe*<sup>5</sup>, he acted as the tutor of a future queen of England, and he trained the young *cardinal of Croy* in *Leuven*, and among close friends also counts the *Duchess of Nassau*. He worked with *Erasmus* and corresponded with *Thomas More*<sup>6</sup>.

J.L. Vives stressed the need for public/school education that can provide a specific learning environment, which allowed contact with sciences and could form the individual personality. With *Exercitatio Linguae Latinae* (1538) Vives wrote a textbook, which was well received in many schools and by many scholars.

<sup>3</sup> Pope Adrian VI (Hadrian VI), also known as Adrian Florisz Boeyens, Adriaan Florisz d'Edel or Adrian von Utrecht (born in Utrecht and died in 1523 in Rome) after his profane name, was Pope between 1522-1523.

<sup>4</sup> *Dona Mencia de Mendoza* (1508-1554) was an admirer of Erasmus, a rich and educated Duchess, a Spanish who protected arts.

<sup>5</sup> Monroe, W.S. 1900, *Comenius si începuturile reformei educaționale [Comenius and the Beginnings of Educational Reform]*, New York, Charles Scribner 's Sons

<sup>6</sup> Norena, C. G. (1990), *A Vives Bibliography*, Lewinstone, NY: Mellen Press

But his main work on pedagogy, more specifically methodology and didactics, remains, in our view, *De tradendis disciplinis* (1531).

Vives postulated expressly for the elimination of outdated teaching and observation methods in sciences<sup>7</sup>. Thus, he became an opponent of scholasticism. *De disciplinis* (*About subjects / objects of education*, work which appeared in 1531 in *Bruges*) is an encyclopedic treaty offering extensive criticism of the contemporary foundations of education, and a program to renew it. It consists of three parts: *De causis corruptarum trium*, *De tradendis disciplinis* and *De artibus*.

Vives believed that science ideally complements Christianity. His philosophy was dualistic. Science is just a confirmation of Christianity, he writes in *Introductio sapientiam veram* (1524) and in the work *De fidei Christianae* (1540), distinguishing himself in this regard.

*Bildungspädagogischen* merits of the Spanish<sup>8</sup> (see *C. Kahl*) are also so remarkable, because he promoted education for women, made this a real campaign in this sense. He devoted his work in 1523 to the first wife of Henry VIII, Catherine of Aragon, considering the education of their daughter, Princess Mary<sup>9</sup>. In *De Institutione Feminae Christianae*, Vives argued that a woman has the right to education. This education included the study of classical languages, Latin and Greek.

J.L. Vives was adept of *sequence in language learning*, native language, he believed, was the first to be studied.

The mother, wrote Vives<sup>10</sup> such as *Cornelia*, should see in his child his most precious jewel. The daughter will be familiar with the housework, but also receive education, to love virtue and avoid vice. Education will be achieved through play, stories, reading, submission and obedience. Piety, courage, education, virtue are true landmarks, and the young woman will learn that ranks, beauty, wealth are vanity, transient things.

A rigorous discipline, respected by all household members should defend her from vanity, laziness, love of luxury and excess jewelry, clothes and dresses, sophisticated hairstyles, etc.

Boys and girls will be trained separately, but with the same care, supported J.L.Vives

<sup>7</sup> Margolin, J. C. (1976), "Vives, lecteur et critique de Platon et d'Aristote" in R. R. Bolgar, ed., *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 1500-1700*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 245-58.

<sup>8</sup> Kahl, Christian, Biography of Vives (in German), in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon*

<sup>9</sup> She was Queen of England and Ireland, Queen of Spain, Sicily and Naples. Mary was very unpopular, being reputed in that time as the Bloody Mary. History recalls the fact that Mary lost Calais port, the last English possession on the continent. He died in 1558.

<sup>10</sup> W.S.Monroe, op.cit.

### 3. Renaissance Woman and Education: Myths and Realities

If Renaissance man could become "prince or warrior, artist or humanist, merchant or priest, scholar or adventurer", a woman of that period could be "mother or daughter or widow; virgin or whore, saint or witch, Mary or Eve or a Amazon"<sup>11</sup>.

Known educated women were: *Margaret Beaufort*, mother of Henry VII of England, royal protector of artists, the noble *Elisabeth Grymeston*, the humanist *Isotta Nogarola* from Verona, the Florentine nun *Beatrice del Sera* (1515-1586), from the Dominican monastery of San Niccolò in Prato, or *Mary Ward*, who managed to school 500 girls in a network of schools reserved for girls.

To the above-quoted we can add two more names, much more known, the poet *Vittoria Colonna* and the refined *Marguerite d'Angouleme*, sister of King Francis I of France, who became by marriage of Navarre, an intelligent and cultivated woman, protector of arts and humanists. *Marguerite of Navarre, Duchesse d'Alençon* (1492-1549) is, in fact, the praised author of a *Heptameron*.

*Isabella d'Este* studied geography, astrology; she had a good command of Greek and Latin and practiced patronage. Very known were also the *Duchess Elizabeth Gonzaga* and the noble Venetian *Caterina Cornaro*.

*Beghin*s must not be forgotten, the ones who took care of poor women's education in Belgium, German Rhineland and France.

Although the vast majority of women were illiterate, at more that a century after J.L. Vives's death, the Venetian *Elena Lucretia Cornaro Piscopia* took his doctorate (1678), following a career of scientist and university professor, etc.

In this socio-political and cultural context, J.L. Vives's contribution in women's education can be qualified as a work of synthesis and clarification, the perception of a need, woman's training, ordering and systematization of information that exists at that time and support for further development, in this plan.

*Catherine of Aragon*, raised at the court of his mother, *Isabella, the Catholic Queen of Spain*, came to England with an already formed respect for culture and trust in humanistic education.

Like his daughter Mary, Catherine was the beneficiary of a Christian education.

*Jane Grey*<sup>12</sup>, as *Catherine Parr*<sup>13</sup> have been trained women, like the one succeeding King Henry VIII to the throne, *Elizabeth Tudor*.

Having 40 editions, the Treaty of J.L. Vives dedicated to Christian woman's education, claimed that in woman's minds there are no defects to prevent her from

<sup>11</sup> King, M.L., (2000). Femeia Renașterii [Renaissance Woman], in: *Omnia Renasterii [Renaissance Man]*, vol. Coord. by Eugenio Garin and translated by Dragos Cojocaru., Iasi: Polirom

<sup>12</sup> The elder daughter of Henry VII, she lived between 1537-1554, was Queen of England for nine days only (July 10 to July 19 1553) and died beheaded. She knew Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Italian and French, and appreciated the works of ancient philosophers.

<sup>13</sup> She lived between 1512 and 1548, was the sixth and last wife of Henry VIII.

acquiring wisdom, honor and chastity. But, highlighted Vives, training should not be excessive. Moral precepts, initiation in housework and good manners are more important.

An education through *prayer, obedience, respect* and *daily work* that keeps you away from laziness. But the woman had to know how to write and read.

#### **4. The Significance of Juan Luis Vives' Work: The European Dimension and the Didactic Instrumentalization of Pedagogic Contribution**

As author of remarkable works, Vives has been read and studied by philosophers such as *Ernest Renan* (1823-1892), *Friedrich Albert Lange* (1828-1875), *Wilhelm Dilthey* (1833-1911), *José Ortega y Gasset* (1883 -1955). *Lange* considered him a precursor of *Bacon* and *Descartes*. According to *Jose Ortega y Gasset*, Vives's method relied on the useful experience and not vague speculations. *Rene Descartes* (1596-1650) in *Les Passions de l'âme* (1649) refers to one of J.L. Vives's works, *On Soul and Life*. He rised from the ranks as a leading critic of scholastic philosophy, sterile debates, but also through the elegance in expression or valuable lectures.

He was an ardent admirer of Greco-Roman antiquity, of the representative works for that period<sup>14</sup>.

*De anima et Vita* (On Soul and Life, 1538) is a study of soul and its interaction with the body, a work that also contains an insightful analysis of emotions<sup>15</sup>. But the most valuable contribution remains in our opinion, the teaching. Vives is a valuable precursor of J.A. Comenius, the great Czech educator, of universal value.

Besides women's education, Juan Luis Vives had concerns about *language teaching* and *religious education of children*.

He believed that the care and welfare of the poor ones is not the sole responsibility of the Church, but of the entire Christian State.

Although Vives expressed in many areas a very modern and progressive attitude, he was never enthusiastic about the idea of the *Reformation*. He claimed a constructive and objective dialogue with those in rival camp.

In religious matters, he has always been put in difficulty by explaining the relationship between the necessary, in his opinion, development of sciences and the ecclesiastical power. However, he always proved a smart attitude and rejected, undoubtedly and because of his family relations with the Inquisition, all forms of radicalism, pronouncing in favour of reconciliation and tolerance.

He always proved to be a fierce opponent of *scholasticism*, a man who believed in the possibility of knowledge of nature and in an education proper to

<sup>14</sup> See *Opera omnia* (1964), ed. G. Mayans y Siscár, 8 vols., Valencia: Monfort, 1782-90 and London: Gregg Press

<sup>15</sup> G. Zilboorg, psychiatric historian, calls Vives the "godfather" of psychoanalysis in his work from 1941 titled "A History of Medical Psychology".



nature. His knowledge, particularly in psychology, education and even in medical practice or education for a healthy life has led to further developments.

Vives was a supporter of new ideas about education in his time of day, appropriate to the nature of the child and individual differences.

S. De Angelis, R.M. Ihanes, A.Guy, C.Khal, J.Ijsewijn si A.Losada<sup>16</sup>, Urmeneta Fermin<sup>17</sup> C.Fantazzi, P.Mack, J.C.Margolin, W.S.Monroe(1900), C.G.Norena<sup>18</sup> and G. Tournoy<sup>19</sup> are only some of the specialists interested in the practical application of the work of the great Spanish teacher and psychologist.

Today, J.L. Vives's works enjoy the attention and appreciation in his home country, *Spain*. There are several institutions in Spain, called after J.L. Vives, and in *Bruges, Belgium*, there is the *Pedagogical Institute J.L. Vives VZW*.

In *England, France and Germany*, however, research on the life or works of Vives is quite rare. As in *Romania*, by the way.

For us it is important to underline its *didactic contribution in the field of language teaching, how to deal with differences in education and, especially, emphasized methodological issues*: the importance of playful, the stories, the education completed by the mother in the family environment, by specific means, attractive and colored with affection.

### 5. J. L. Vives's Reception in Romania

For the great education historian, Ion Gheorghe Stanciu, the pedagogic message of Juan Luis Vives is "an education appropriate for the human nature"<sup>20</sup>. *De tradendis disciplinis*, the main pedagogic work is "a true work of systematic pedagogy"<sup>21</sup> and the psychology work of Vives ("a curious empirical psychology treaty *avant la lettre*", after M. Debesse) is developed also from a pedagogical perspective: "the soul must be known, to be led"<sup>22</sup>.

The Romanian educationalist C. Cucos considered him "one of the forerunners of experimental psychology and child psychology"<sup>23</sup>.

He is considered a dualist philosopher, Christian, but believing in the possibility of scientific to progress.

<sup>16</sup> IJsewijn, J. & Losada, A., eds. (1986), *Erasmus in Hispania Vives in Belgio*, Louvain: Peeters.

<sup>17</sup> Urmeneta Fermin de. *La doctrina psicològica pedagògica de Luis Vives*

<sup>18</sup> Norena, C. G. (1989), *Juan Luis Vives and the Emotions*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Tournoy, G. et al., eds. (1993), *Vives te Leuven*, Leuven: Leuven University Press.

<sup>20</sup> Stanciu, I.Gh.(1976), *O istorie a pedagogiei universal si romanesti pana la 1900* [A History of Universal and Romanian Pedagogy to 1900], E.D.P., Bucharest, pp.86-89

<sup>21</sup> Idem, p.87

<sup>22</sup> ibidem

<sup>23</sup> Cucos, C. (2001), *Istoria pedagogici. Idei si doctrine fundamentale* [Pedagogy History. Fundamental Ideas and Doctrines], Iasi: Polirom, p.104

Most times, he was expressing his belief in the importance of *early education*, from an early age, within the family, but also in the right school environment. He believed in *public education*.

"The Renaissance education model targeted an education oriented towards the study of nature, the free development of human being, harmonious development, upstanding and perfect individual (the *universal scholar individual*, connoisseur of classical Greco-Roman culture and science of weather )... The School of *Vitorino Da Feltre* at *Mantua* and that of *Guarini Veronese* in *Ferrara* (XV century) and scholars like *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (1467-1536), *Juan Luis Vives* (1492-1540) [s.n.], *Michel de Montaigne* (1553-1582) were brilliantly representing the renewing spirit of the Renaissance in Education"<sup>24</sup>.

Presenting the need for women's education, J.L. Vives emphasized that the mother may be a complete teacher, always present, always caring.

Vives is considered in our country, the one who, "before Fenelon" expressed "*concern for woman's education, focusing on the development of moral traits [s.n.]*, to which the whole training is subordinated", but also a *precursor of educational and professional orientation [s.n.]* (he appreciated that depending on skills, boys should be oriented to the priesthood or to a military career, etc., severe trial and decision belonging to those preoccupied by their education, recommending that they meet every 2-3 months).

"Vives remains a fine theorist who has enriched the pedagogical thinking, with a set of valuable principles and new methods. If *Vittorino Da Feltre* marked the transition from medieval to modern times, *Vives inaugurated the modern era, announcing and preparing the appearance of J.A. Comenius* [s.n.]"<sup>25</sup>

He anticipated many of J.J. Rousseau's ideas, who, moreover, is likely to have influenced by *Montaigne*, author of the famous *Essays*. He expressed interesting views on medical training and health education.

C. Cucos, an important Roman specialist, said that "Vives revealed the importance of psychological background knowledge for a better education, by advancing principles and proposing directions of research specific to the child psychology. *For the development of personality in accordance with the Christian ideal, he recommend an education based on classical culture, but also on a content that was in accord with the individual interests and practicality. He advocated a public education and broght arguments in favor of a differentiated education for women. He also granted a special interest to cultural training and teachers' moral formation [s.n.]*"<sup>26</sup>

**AS FOR US, WE APPRECIATE THAT THROUGH THE MULTILINGUALISM (HE KNEW WELL LATIN AND GREEK, BUT ALSO FRENCH, FLEMISH, VALENCIAN, SPANISH, ENGLISH**

<sup>24</sup> Maciuc, I. (1998), *Puncte de reper in pregătirea pentru cariera didactica [Milestones in Preparation for Teaching Career]*, University of Craiova

<sup>25</sup> Stanciu, I.Gh., op.cit.

<sup>26</sup> C.Cucos, op.cit.