

STUDIA HISTORICA

SENECA, QUINTILIAN, AND PLINY THE YOUNGER, EXCEPTIONAL PERSONALITIES OF ROMAN CULTURE FROM THE 1ST CENTURY AD

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ABSTRACT. *Seneca, Quintilian, and Pliny the Younger, Exceptional Personalities of Roman Culture from the 1st Century AD.* In the first century AD. Roman culture managed to give the universal heritage exceptional personalities, who thru their writings influenced both contemporaries and those of the next generations. Thus, thru his vast work, Seneca will remain one of the great personalities of his time. In his writings he pursued, with priority, the improvement of moral life and therefore he managed to be over time a source of inspiration for many cultural and philosophical personalities, but also for some of the Church Fathers and Christian moralists. Quintilian is a pedagog-practitioner, who shows the means of training a good speaker, but, at the same time, builds a pedagogy with rich nuances and pragmatic openings. Quintilian's personality was appreciated not only by his contemporaries, but also by future generations. Saint Jerome (347-420 AD), Rufinus of Aquileia (345-410 AD), as well as Cassiodorus (490-580 AD), quoted from Quintilian's work. In the correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Emperor Trajan are two letters, dated 112 AD, which are important for the history of Christianity, because here we have some information about the moral life of Christians, but also about Christian worship and the Eucharistic assembly practised on Sunday.

Keywords: Seneca, Quintilian, Pliny the Younger, personalities, Roman culture, Christianity.

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Introduction

The era of Octavian Augustus initiated a period of flourishing of Roman culture, which will continue throughout the first century AD. During this period works of literature were produced, as well as artworks of great value, which have entered the universal heritage and which, over the centuries, have been models for future generations¹.

Thus, as early as the Julius-Claudian dynasty (27 BC-68 AD), Rome became one of the most important centres for the spread of Stoicism. Adherents of Stoic philosophy participated in the conspiracy of Gaius Calpurnius Piso against Nero, in April 65 AD, during the games of Circus Maximus. There were also certain situations when philosophers were expelled from Rome during the reigns of Vespasian (69-79 AD) and Domitian (81-96 AD). During the Antonine dynasty, when the attempt to give a philosophical foundation of the imperial power was stimulated, the followers of the Stoic philosophy were favoured, especially that the emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD) will become an important representative of Stoicism. It should be mentioned that the Romans, in some fields of culture, created works that have not been surpassed to this day.

1. Seneca

Lucius Annaeus Seneca was one of the greatest personalities of the first century AD. Having the same name as his father, he was also called Seneca the Younger, so as not to be confused with his father, who was a rhetorician and was named Seneca the Elder or Rector.²

Seneca was born in Corduba,³ Hispania, into a family that was part of the provincial elite. Seneca's family was part of the Annae clan and came from Roman settlers who had long settled in the southern province of Baetica. This was one of the most Romanised provinces in southern Spain.

¹ N. A. MAȘCHIN, *Istoria Romei antice*, traducere de Ion Parocescu și Anton Herescu, Editura de Stat, București, 1951, 288-293.

² Lucius Annaeus Seneca was known as Seneca the Rector, the Father, or the Elder. He lived between 54 BC. and 39 AD. and was the father of the philosopher Seneca. Seneca The Rector gives us a valuable synthesis of eloquence and rhetoric, which became known as: *Controversiae et Suasoriae*, *Controversy and Suasorii*.

³ Today it is the city of Cordoba in Spain.

Seneca the Elder, or Rector, Seneca's father, was a historian and critic of the art of oratory, but also a defender of the classical tradition. He carried out his intellectual activity both in Spain and in Rome. He was part of the equestrian order (knights) which, in the social hierarchy, was the first after that of the senators. His mother's name was Helvia, and she came from a respectable family and was of high moral standing.

There are several opinions about the date of Seneca's birth, so it oscillates between the years 1 BC. and 1 AD. He had two more siblings, one older Lucius Annaeus Novatus, who will be adopted by Senator Iunius Gallio, and over time will make an important career as a dignitary. Seneca's younger brother was Marcus Annaeus Mela; he remained a knight and was the father of the famous poet Lucan (39-65 AD).

From an early age, Seneca will be brought to Rome, where he will receive a high-quality education. Here he had the opportunity to hear the most famous Greek and Latin instructors. He will study rhetoric, but also philosophy, being attracted by the Stoic Attalus. He would attach himself to Stoic thinkers, altho his father was a conservative person, paying special attention to rhetoric and did not love philosophers. Seneca will remain attached to Stoicism, but also to his mentor Attalus. When the emperor Tiberius expelled from Rome the Stoic scholar Attalus, his instructor, Seneca will also leave Rome on his way to Egypt, to his mother's uncle, who was governor of Egypt. Seneca will remain in Egypt between 25 and 31 AD, a period in which he came into contact with Egyptian philosophy, local religious rites, but also with the teaching of Philo of Alexandria (15 BC-45 AD) and of the Greek-Egyptian Chaeremon.⁴

After returning to Rome, he would become a famous orator, and in the last years of Tiberius' reign, he would be questor. Seneca will also begin a turbulent senatorial career, so that in 41 AD he will be exiled by Emperor Claudius (41-54 AD) to the island of Corsica. He will return from exile in 49 AD. and will build its own cultural-political circle. He began a major political career during the reign of Nero (54-64 AD), becoming his most important advisor, *amicus principis* (friend of the emperor).

Starting in 61 AD, Nero will move away from Seneca's political strategy and in this context, he will withdraw from active public life.⁵ Due to Nero's abusive

⁴ Chaeremon lived in the 1st century AD and was a historian, Stoic philosopher, and priest. In the year 49 AD. together with the peripatetic philosopher Alexander of Aegae, he will come to Rome to be Nero's mentors.

⁵ Eugen CIZEK, *Istoria literaturii latine* vol. II, Societatea "Adevărul" S.A., 1994, 449-450.

behaviour, a conspiracy was formed, led by Gaius Calpurnius Piso, who plotted the assassination of Nero during the Circus Maximus Games in April 65 AD.⁶ Seneca was suspected by Nero of being involved in Piso's conspiracy against him. Altho Seneca promised him his fortune and swore on the most sacred that he was unjustly suspected, he was forced by Nero to commit suicide in 65 AD,⁷ cutting his veins.

Seneca was a writer who stood out especially for his many works and was therefore often compared to Cicero (106-43 BC) and St. Augustine (354-430 AD). Unfortunately, many of Seneca's writings have not been preserved, and of these only fragments remain. Thus, the only systematic treatise on ethics was lost: *Moralis philosophiae liber* (Book of moral philosophy), written between 63-65 AD, but also several collections of letters, as well as a monograph on Egypt, entitled: *De situ et sacris Aegyptiorum* (On the settlement and sacred rites of the Egyptians). This writing would have been interesting for the way Seneca related the knowledge of Egypt, but especially the way in which he was influenced in thought by the Egyptian philosophy and religion, during the six years he stayed here. From the partially preserved writings, it seems that Seneca was the author of a work in rather large verses.

Philosophical works, prose, tragedies, epigrams, and epistles addressed to his friend Lucilius have been preserved from him.

Amongst the writings that have been preserved we mention: *Ad Marciam de consolatione* (Consolation to Marcia), a writing that may have been published in 40 AD. In the twenty-six chapters of the book, Seneca tries to console the sufferings of the matron Marcia, for the loss of her son, Metilius, who died at the age of twenty.

De Ira (About Anger) is a dialog writing, which may have been written in 41 AD, and it is addressed to his older brother. Seneca says that man was born for mutual help, and anger for destruction. That is why man seeks society, and anger seeks isolation, because man brings benefits, and anger harms.

De providentia (About Providence), a six-chapter writing that is addressed to his good friend Lucilius. It may have been written in the first months of 42 AD, when Seneca was in exile on the island of Corsica. According to some opinions, it

⁶ Călin Ioan DUȘE, *Imperiul Roman și creștinismul în timpul Părinților Apostolici*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2019, 92.

⁷ C. Tranquillus SÜETONIUS, *Viețile celor doisprezece Cesari, Nero, XXXV*, Traducerea de David Popescu și C.V. Georoc, Studiu introductiv de David Popescu, Editura 100+1 Gramar, București, 2005, 231.

was written in 63 AD. In this writing, Seneca answers the following question: why do so many misfortunes befall good men, if there is providence? To this question he says that providence tests the moral strength of good men, and they are more than a god, because they overcome these blows of fate, which do not touch the divinities. Seneca speaks in a general way, but he considers the misfortunes that have personally targeted him: the death of his wife's only son, the trial, and the exile.

De constantia sapientis (On the constancy of the sage). This writing is a dialog in nineteen chapters, which is dedicated to the Epicurean Serenus and which is said to have been written in 42 AD. According to some experts, it may have been written later. In this writing, the dialog about providence continues. Seneca claims that the *sapiens*, the sage, cannot be affected by premeditated and violent outrage, nor by involuntary harm, because the sage is invulnerable to evil.

The brevity vitae (On the brevity of life) comprise twenty chapters and it may have been written in the year 48, or 49 AD. In this dialog, Seneca addresses his friend Pompeius Paulinus, his future father-in-law, advising him to abandon political involvement. Seneca also condemns those who dedicate their entire lives to external occupations, such as: fashionable life, sports, entertainment, and philological activities, proposing them as a remedy *otium* (rest), for the purpose of moral-philosophical self-perfection.

De tranquillima animi (About the peace of the soul) is written in the form of dialog in seventeen chapters. This work is addressed to his friend Serenius and was written between 53-54 AD. In this writing he resumes the ideas from the above-mentioned work, but from a diametrically opposite point of view regarding the socio-political status of philosophy. Seneca deals with two important issues in this work. Thus, the first problem is the one related to the restlessness of the soul, being treated in the first chapter. Seneca responds to an imaginary Serenius, who complains that he has not yet been able to regain his composure since he is subjected to several temptations. This uneasiness, which Seneca describes, can be dominated only by the mastery of the soul. On the second issue, related to the withdrawal from civic life, which Athenodorus recommended,⁸ Seneca rejects his ideas, altho he did the same in his writing *De brevitate vitae*. Now, Seneca consistently recommends the exercise of

⁸ Athenodorus of Tarsus or Cannanites was a Stoic philosopher and lived between 74 BC and 7 AD. He was brought to Rome by Emperor Octavian Augustus.

human duties, but also political ones, even if he admits that sometimes disappointment is necessary.

De vita beata (About the happy life) is a writing in the form of a dialog in twenty-eight chapters. It was written in 58 AD. and is addressed to his older brother, who is now called Gallio, after being adopted by Senator Iunius Gallio. In this writing, Seneca defends himself against the accusations, brought by Suius, that he has amassed a huge fortune and practises a lot of usury in the provinces. Many senators were also unhappy that Seneca supported Nero's plan to abolish indirect taxes leased to taxpayers and to impose direct taxes on aristocratic estates.

Seneca talks about the relationship between happiness and virtue, because agreement with nature would bring man a happy and virtuous life at the same time. In the last part of the writing, Seneca defends himself, in a seemingly fictitious controversy, against the accusation that she would not live according to the precepts she supported. Thus, Seneca emphasises that he demonstrates not how he lives, but how to live. He also claims that he masters his riches, and they are not the ones who dominate or master him, because he keeps them in slavery.

De Benefitiis (About Benefits) is a seven-book book addressed to Aebutius Liberalis. It is possible that this extensive treatise was written and published between 61-63 AD, or, in some opinions, between 61-65 AD. In this writing, Seneca deals more about the exchange of benefits, or services, than about the benefits that underlie interpersonal relationships, because he wanted to humanise the morals of his time, the interfamilial relations of the Roman elite, but also those between parents and children, as well as those between slaves and their masters. He starts from the idea that people do not know how to bring, but also to receive services. Seneca shows that the value of a service does not consist in its concrete expression, but especially in the affectionate disposition of the one who intends to do it.

Naturales Quaestiones (Problems of Nature) is an extensive treatise in seven or eight books, depending on how it was published by publishers. It is addressed to Lucilius being written and published in part, between the years 62-63 AD, because, according to some opinions, it would have worked on it until the year 65 AD, when he was forced by Nero to commit suicide. In this treatise, Seneca deals with the study of nature, addressing all four kingdoms of matter. Thus, in the first two books it deals with fire, with water in the third and fourth books, with air in the fifth book, with the earth in the sixth book, and with the contemplation of the circle of the universe thru

the sky, in the seventh book. This treatise contains almost all the knowledge of the time about nature and informs readers about the scientific hypotheses that were circulating at that time. Seneca expresses his belief in the progressive development of scientific truth, which will be enriched over time from one generation to another.

Epistulae ad Lucilium (Epistles to Lucilius) is the most important work of Seneca and contains one hundred and twenty-four epistles, which would have been written between 61-65 AD, having an ethical character. From the contents of these letters there are two important aspects, namely: the predominantly philosophical content, but also the fact that Seneca was an active person, who was involved in the contemporary life of the high society of that period.

Seneca was also credited with nine tragedies, from which we can see his passion for poetry and theater, which was also confessed in his letters. Throughout his life, Seneca wrote seventy-three epigrams.⁹ He was one of the richest people of his time and borrowed money at a very high interest rate. His fortune would have been about three hundred million sesterces.¹⁰

Thru his vast work, Seneca remains one of the great personalities of his time. He pursued, with priority, the improvement of the moral life and therefore he managed to be over time a source of inspiration for many cultural and philosophical personalities, but also for some of the Church Fathers and Christian moralists.¹¹

2. Quintilian

Marcus Fabius Quintilianus was born in 35 AD. at Calagurris,¹² in the Roman province of Hispania. According to some researchers, Quintilian was born between 35-40 AD.¹³ His father was an educated man and taught rhetoric in Rome. Quintilian will come to Rome at the beginning of Nero's reign, and will benefit from a good upbringing. In the capital of the Empire he had the opportunity to hear the most illustrious teachers. In addition to the grammarian Quintus Remmius Palaemon, Quintilian had the opportunity to hear the pleadings of the famous Roman lawyers in the forum. Thus, he heard Servilius Nonianus, who was appreciated for the vigor

⁹ Eugen CIZEK, *Istoria literaturii latine* vol. II, 450-469.

¹⁰ N. A. MAŞKIN, *Istoria Romei antice*, 353-354.

¹¹ Călin Ioan DUŞE *Imperiul Roman și creștinismul în timpul Părinților Apostolici*, 232-238.

¹² Calagurris is today the city of Calahorra in Spain.

¹³ C. MARESCHI, *Storia della letteratura latina*, vol. II, Milano, 1957, 21.

of talent and depth of ideas, Trachalus, who was sublime and clear, with a harmonious voice unmatched, Vibius Crispus, who was born to delight and who was unsurpassed in civil proceedings. Quintilian also had Iulius Africanus as his teacher, whom he appreciated because he was more energetic and overly careful in his choice of terms.

Of all his teachers, he most appreciated Gnaeus Domitius Afer,¹⁴ whom he said was one of the greatest speakers he had ever heard. That is why Quintilian took Afer as his role model, listening to him speak, but also how he gave speeches in court. Pliny the Younger also talks about Quintilian's affinity for Afer: "This is how I remember hearing from Quintilian, my teacher. He told the storey: *"I was accompanying Domitius Afer. While speaking in front of the cetumvirs, in a calm and serious tone (this was his way of teaching)"*.¹⁵ Having the best teachers and thirsty to know as much as possible, Quintilian managed to form a vast culture, but also to master all the secrets of oratory.

After completing his studies and the death of Afer, in 59 AD, Quintilian returned to his homeland, where he may have practised law in the courts of the province of Hispania. He returned to Rome in 68 AD as part of the suite of Emperor Galba,¹⁶ who was elected emperor by the Spanish legions. He survived the assassination of Galba on January 15, 69 AD, which leads us to the conclusion that he did not remain his advisor or close friend.

In Rome, Quintilian will practise law, and the sober attitude of his speeches, the seriousness, the depth of ideas, the well-controlled behaviour in everything, the elegance and the finesse of his style ensured him a remarkable success. Altho he came to enjoy all the esteem, Quintilian felt lone to this noisy world, bold and unobtrusive, eager especially for learning. In this situation, considering himself incompatible with this reality in the forum, but also with his oratorical ideal, he will decide to dedicate himself exclusively to teachers. Thus, he will seek to change this situation and atmosphere vitiated by incompetence thru the serious education he will give to the youth.

¹⁴ Gnaeus Domitius Afer was born in Nemausus, in the Roman province of Gallia Narbonensis. He lived between 14 BC and 59 AD., and he was a famous orator, who returned to the classicism of Cicero's eloquence.

¹⁵ PLINIUS cel Tânăr, *Opere complete*, Ep. II, 14, Traducere, note și prefață de Liana Manolache, Editura Univers, București, 1977, 79-80.

¹⁶ Galba was appointed governor of the province of Hispania Tarraconensis by Nero in 60 AD. He remained here as governor until 68 AD.

Quintilian will open a public school of rhetoric, probably from 70 AD. and will work as a teacher of rhetoric for twenty years. Emperor Vespasian would create a state higher education, under the leadership of Quintilian, who would thus be the first state-paid rhetoric teacher. He will be paid one hundred thousand sesterces annually,¹⁷ a considerable sum compared to that of private rectorors, who were paid only two thousand sesterces.

Amongst his disciples were Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Juvenal. His rhetoric lectures were much appreciated by contemporaries, so they circulated under his name in two books of rhetoric, which were published by his students, according to the course notes. He was also a great lawyer, and he excelled in the art of eloquence.¹⁸ The emperor Domitian intrusted him with the education of the descendents of his sister Domitilla,¹⁹ Vespasian and Domitian, children of Flavius Clemens, whom he adopted in order to succeed to the throne. He did not stay long with them, because in 95 AD, Domitian would order Flavius Clemens to be killed, and Domitilla would be exiled, along with her children.

In the year 88 AD. he retired from teaching and devoted himself to writing. We know too little about his personal life, so from his writing *Institutio oratoria*, we find out that he had a beautiful wife, who was an ideal mother, but who died young, before she turned nineteen. Shortly after her death, the two children died, the first at the age of five, and the one in whom he had high hopes, at the age of ten, possibly in 94 AD,²⁰ when he finished writing the fifth book of the *Institutio oratoria*. It is possible that Quintilian died after 96 AD, shortly after the completion of the valuable work *Institutio oratoria*.

During his life, Quintilian wrote a rather extensive work, but which, unfortunately, has not been preserved. Thus, the lawyer's speeches were lost, the ones in which he defended Naevius Arpinianus, who was accused of killing his wife,²¹ the one in which he defended Queen Berenice,²² sister of Herod Agrippa II, the last

¹⁷ SUETONIUS, Vespasianus, XVIII, 288.

¹⁸ Constantin CUCOȘ, *Istoria pedagogiei: idei și doctrine pedagogice fundamentale*, ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2017, 35.

¹⁹ M. Fabius QUINTILIANUS, *Arta oratorică*, vol. I, 4, 2, Traducere, studiu introductiv, tabel cronologic, note, indici de Maria Hetco, Editura Minerva, București, 1971, 323.

²⁰ Op. cit. vol. II, 6, 123-127.

²¹ Op. cit. vol. II, 7, 2, 24, 229-230.

²² Op. cit. vol. I, 4, 1, 19, 331.

Jewish king. Also, some speeches were lost, which were written after the course notes, and which were published by his students, but also two books *Ars rhetorica* (Rhetorical Art), which were rejected by Quintilian. During his career as a teacher, Quintilian published, possibly in 89 AD, *De causis corruptae eloquentiae* (On the causes of corrupt eloquence), in which he recommended the use of a classicising eloquence. Unfortunately, this writing was also lost.

After retiring from teaching, Quintilian was insistently asked by his friends to write a work on the art of oratory: *“After twenty years of training youth, I came to rest, when a few friends asked me to write a work on the art of oratory; I rejected this proposal for a long time, because I knew that very competent authors left to posterity, both in Greek and in Latin, a large number of very valuable works on this issue. But this motivation, which I thought came to my aid, made them even more insistent, for they claimed that it was difficult for them to make a choice between the opinions of previous authors, special and sometimes even contradictory, and that I, even if I did not bring something new, I could no doubt give them a fair appreciation of what has been written.”*²³

Thus, Quintilian will write the *Institutio Oratoria* (Principles of Oratory), the only work that has been preserved from him. This writing is conceived as a textbook for educating the future speaker, being dedicated to his friend Marcellus Vitorius, who was a famous lawyer and in love with literature. Quintilian hoped that this work would be useful for Geta, the son of his good friend, Marcellus. Quintilian worked on this work for more than two years. As he finished a book, he sent it to Marcellus, accompanied by a preface in which he made certain communications, but also certain storeys from his life.

Institutio Oratoria has twelve books and is, as I mentioned, a real textbook for educating the future speaker. This education, in Quintilian’s conception, must begin from early childhood, because: *“Man has the vivacity and ability of the mind; that is why it is believed that the origin of the soul is of a divine nature.”*²⁴ Therefore, Quintilian, in the first book, gives instructions on how to do this education, showing the criteria according to which, the nurses and preceptors of the child must be chosen: *“First of all, the language of the nurses should not be defective; Chrisip²⁵ demanded that*

²³ Op. cit. vol. I, 1, 1-2, 3.

²⁴ Op. cit. I, 1, 1, 11.

²⁵ Chrisip was born in 280 BC. at Soli in Cilicia. He was the foremost representative of Stoicism after Zeno. He was also a great scholar, but also a valuable theorist, who would have written seven hundred and fifty works. He died in 206 BC. Athens.

they be initiated into philosophy, if possible; In any case, he argued that we should choose the best we could. Undoubtedly, in their choice, the first criterion is the moral one; however, to speak correctly. The child will hear them speaking first, he will force himself to repeat their words by imitation, and we are very much inclined by nature to keep what we have learnt in the tender years; just as you keep the smell you soak the dishes in when they are new and just as you can't completely remove the colour given to the wool after you change its natural white, so the first habits of childhood persist the worse they are. What is good easily changes into evil; but can you ever change vices for the better? Therefore, the child should not get used, even when he cannot speak, to a language from which he will then have to learn.”²⁶

Quintilian supports the idea of the superiority of education in state schools, to the detriment of private education, which can lead to selfishness. It shows how the study should be carried out in secondary education, in addition to grammaticus. Explains the educational role of grammar, music, geometry, philosophy, thus supporting the principle of multilateral training of the student.

In the second book he talks about higher education defining the function of the rhetorician, emphasising the importance of readings from speakers and historians, but especially the implications of rhetoric. Quintilian talks about the need to have a teacher with exceptional professional and moral training: *“Therefore, we must now take greater care that the impeccable morality of the teacher is a guaranty against any harm, for the most inexperienced, and the most violent in beginnings, his seriousness to keep them away from any deviation. However, it is not enough for the teacher to set an example of self-control, but, thru the severity of the discipline, to control the morals of the young people gathered around him. First, to have parental feelings towards the students and to consider themselves the deputy of those who intrusted their children. Not to have vices and not to tolerate them. His austerity should not be gloomy, his gentleness should not be familiar, lest the former should give rise to aversion, and the latter contempt. To support his students as much as possible with advice about what is honest and correct, because the more often he instructs them, the less often he will punish them. Do not overlook anything that needs to be fixed, but never get angry. Be simple in teaching, hardworking, demanding, but without exaggeration; to answer willingly the questions asked, to challenge those who do not ask. When he praises the students’*

²⁶ QUINTILIANUS, vol. I, 1, 4-5, 12-13.

expositions, he should not be stingy, but not too generous in praise, because the first attitude gives rise to hard work, and the second to self-satisfaction. In criticising those who need to be corrected, do not be bitter, do not offend, because many are distracted from teaching by the fact that they are quarrelling in a tone of hatred. To recite something to them every day, even more, even more so for the audience to take his words with them. For, even if the reading gives them enough examples to imitate, the living speech, as they say, feeds more fully, and especially that of the teacher whom the students, well raised, of course, love and respect. It is difficult to express in words how pleasant it is to imitate the one for whom you have sympathy”²⁷

Books 3-7 are devoted to the problems of invention and the structuring of matter, but also to the authors of rhetorical treatises. Also, in the third book, Quintilian talks about the three oratorical genres: deliberative, demonstrative and legal, but also about different kinds of cases and about the kinds of judicial discourses.²⁸

Books 8-11 are devoted to eloquence, the mode of expression.

In the eighth book, Quintilian talks about the need for clarity, but also about stylistic ornaments.

The ninth book deals with different species of figures, word order and oratorical rhythm.

In the tenth book, Quintilian analyses how the rich and unsurpassed facilities of expression can be appropriated, recommending, in this sense, the Greek and Latin authors, who will have to be deepened for this purpose.

The eleventh book deals with various aspects of eloquence, such as: memory, pronunciation and gestures, as integral parts of eloquence.

The last book, the twelfth, analyses the personality of the speaker and that is why it is entirely dedicated to him. Thus, Quintilian emphasises that a good orator must have a thorough knowledge of history, law, and philosophy, which are basic disciplines in the art of oratory, but especially that he must have an impeccable moral conduct.²⁹

From what is presented, it can be stated with certainty about Quintilian that he is a pedagog-practitioner, who shows the means of training a good speaker, but, at the same time, builds a pedagogy with rich nuances and pragmatic openings. In this regard, he makes many arguments in favour of the full unity between professional success and

²⁷ Op. cit. vol. I, 2, 3-8, 131-132.

²⁸ Eugen CIZEK *Istoria literaturii latine* vol. II, 535-540.

²⁹ QUINTILIANUS, V-XXXVI.

character traits, arguing for a cultured speaker, but especially with an impeccable moral attitude.³⁰

Quintilian's personality was appreciated not only by his contemporaries, but also by future generations. From Quintilian's work St. Jerome (347-420 AD) and Rufinus of Aquileia (345-410 AD) quoted, but also Cassiodorus (490-580 AD). Also, *Institutio Oratoria* can be considered the first systematic treatise on pedagogy, a cornerstone for mediaeval schools of rhetoric, but also for those of the Renaissance period. Quintilian was an opponent of philosophers and their claims that only they can raise a wise man. He says that a truly trained orator is a rational man who does his duty and can be as wise as philosophers.³¹

Many of the methodical rules and didactic principles promoted by Quintilian are still valid today, and therefore, we can rightly consider him as a forerunner of modern pedagogy.

3. Pliny the Younger

Gaius Plinus Caecilius Secudus was born between 61-62 AD, in the town of Novum Comum,³² in the former province of Gallia Cisalpina. The most important source for knowing the life of Pliny the Younger³³ are his letters, because they contain some biographical details. It is possible that his father's family, Caecilii, settled in Comum during the time of Julius Caesar. His father was part of the Equestrian Order, and the paternal and maternal families, thru the positions held by some of its members, had a very good material and social situation. Unfortunately, Pliny the Younger's father died when he was eight years old. He will come to Rome and be raised by his

³⁰ Constantin CUCOȘ, *Istoria pedagogiei: idei și doctrine pedagogice fundamentale*, 35-37.

³¹ N. A. MAȘCHIN, *Istoria Romei antice*, 355.

³² Nouum Comum is today the city of Como, located in the province of the same name in Italy.

³³ Pliny the Younger was so named to distinguish him from his uncle Pliny the Elder, who was one of the most famous orators of his time. Pliny the Elder was a follower of Stoicism, but also a famous personality, due to his erudition. He was the author of several works of science, of which only the *Naturalis Historia* (Natural History) has been preserved. Pliny the Elder lived between 23-79 AD. and died on August 24, during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, suffocated by the gases emitted by it. When the volcano Vesuvius erupted, Pliny the Elder was with his nephew Pliny the Younger on the deck of a ship in the estuary of Pompeii. During this period Pliny the Elder was the prefect of the Roman fleet in the port of Misenum.

mother's brother. Here, under the guidance of Pliny the Elder, he will benefit from a high-level education, attending the courses of the best rhetoric educators of the time, Quintilian, Nicetas of Smyrna, but also the Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus. After the death of his wife, he married Calpurnia, a serious young woman who showed great understanding for his oratorical activity, but also for the literary works of Pliny. They had a happy marriage, but unfortunately, they had no children.

After completing his studies, Pliny's basic activity will be oratory, becoming a famous lawyer. Having a good financial situation, from 89 AD, Pliny will begin a brilliant senatorial career. In the last years of Domitian's reign, when he began the persecution against the senators, between 96-97 AD, Pliny no longer held any office.

After Domitian's tyranny, starting with the Antoninian dynasty, a period of civic peace, personal security, but also a freedom of speech and thought will be established. Thus, during the reign of Nerva and Trajan, Pliny the Younger will begin an exceptional career in the legal field as a lawyer of great value. He also asserted himself as a man of culture, and writers and many influential people gathered in his cultural-political circle. Politically, he held several important positions, and from 111 AD Emperor Trajan appointed him governor of Bithynia province, where he may have died in 113 AD.

Throughout his life, Pliny the Younger established himself as a good writer. Unfortunately, much of his writing has not been preserved. From childhood he showed an attraction to poetry, and of the poems he wrote during his life, only a few fragments were preserved, which he reproduced in his work *Letters*.

During his career as a lawyer, Pliny gave several speeches before the full courts, which he began to publish in 96 AD. Of all these discourses, only *Traiani Panegyricus* (Trajan's Panegyric) has been preserved, which was published in 101 AD. This speech was delivered on the occasion of the inauguration of his mandate as consul, on September 1, 100 AD. The eulogy has ninety-five chapters, in which Pliny the Younger thanks Emperor Trajan, proclaiming him "*optimus princeps*" the best prince.

In *Panegyric* are presented the facts of great value of the emperor Trajan: justice, philanthropy, but also humanity manifested by him, and, to better highlight the personality of Trajan, he put him in antithesis with Domitian. Thus, from a historical standpoint, the *Panegyric* has a great value, because it is a document that gives us information about some institutions, about Domitian's tyranny, but also about the reaction that took place after his death. Also, the Panegyric presents us with the most important information from the first three years of the reign of Emperor Trajan.

The most important literary work of Pliny the Younger is *Epistulae* (The Letters). They contain nine books in which are grouped two hundred and forty-seven letters, which are addressed to relatives and friends, public figures, cultural figures, but also several acquaintances. The tenth book contains the correspondence of Pliny the Younger with the emperor Trajan, during the period when he was governor of Bithynia.³⁴ The nine books of the Letters were published between 97-110 AD. The tenth book was published after 113 AD. or, according to some opinions, even after the death of Emperor Trajan in 117 AD.

The nine books of the Letters present a very diverse theme. They show us the Roman life of the time, but especially the social one. At the same time, we can say that this work is almost equivalent to press articles, covering all areas of social and cultural life. We can see that four of these areas stand out, those related to social and economic life, cultural life, the characters of the time, but also to the matter of Christianity.³⁵

There are two letters in the correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Emperor Trajan, from 112 AD, which are important for the history of Christianity, because, as a governor, but also as judge, Pliny was puzzled about the legal proceedings on to apply them to the Christians he was to judge.³⁶ Thus, Pliny wrote to the emperor Trajan, asking for his advice: *“It is a natural thing for me, master, to turn to you whenever I am in balance. For whom better than you to guide me when you hesitate, or to advise me when I do not know how to proceed?”*

I have never taken part in investigations against Christians, so I do not know what facts and to what extent they are usually punished or prosecuted. That is why I have been very hesitant whether a distinction should be made according to age, or whether I should not make any difference between the very young and the ones in their prime, whether the repentant should be forgiven, or whether the one who was once a Christian it is of no use to him that he denies, if only the name of a Christian should be punished, even if he has not committed any crime, or the crimes that are related to the name of a Christian.

³⁴ Bithynia was a country in Asia Minor, near Pontus and Cappadocia in present-day Asian Turkey.

³⁵ Eugen CIZEK, *Istoria literaturii latine* vol. II, 541-549.

³⁶ Pr. Conf. Dr. Marius ȚEPELEA *Texte alese din istoria bisericească universală*, Editura Universității din Oradea, 2008, 89-90.

For the time being, I have proceeded as follows with those who have been denounced to me as Christians. I asked them if they were Christians. To those who recognised, I asked them a second and third time, threatening them with death; I sent those who remained steadfast in their statements to their deaths. For whatever their confession was, I did not doubt for a moment that at least their unwavering stubbornness and stubbornness should be punished. There were some of the same madness, which, because they were Roman citizens, I wrote down, to send them to Rome. Soon, the very fact that they were being followed, as is usually the case, led to an increase in crimes and different cases arose.

An anonymous letter was circulated, containing the names of many people. To those who denied that they are, or they were Christians, invoking the gods according to the formula spoken by me and bringing offerings of wine and incense to your statue, which I had commanded to be brought for this purpose with the statues of the deities, if they blasphemed Christ, which is said that those who are truly Christians cannot be forced to do anything, I thought I could let them go. Others, who were denounced, said that they were Christians and then denied, saying that they had indeed been, but that they had not been, some for about three years, others for many years, and some for more than twenty years. And they all worshipped your statue and the statues of the gods and blasphemed Christ.

But they claimed that their only fault or mistake was that they used to gather on a certain day at dawn, to sing hymns to Christ as a god, that they were bound by oath not to do any iniquity, but not to commit any theft, robbery or adultery, not to break their word, not to deny justice if they received something in custody. After all this the custom was to part and gather again to eat together, an innocent food; nor did they do it after my edict by which, according to your instructions, I had forbidden eterias. Even more so I thought it necessary to investigate even thru torture, to discover the truth, two slaves who were said to be servants of the cult. I found nothing but a devoid of judgement, exaggerated superstition. That is why, suspending the investigation, I ran for your advice. For the circumstance seemed to me worthy of your advice, given the large number of those involved; there are many people of all ages, of all categories, men, women, who are and will be overwhelmed by this danger. And the plague of this superstition spread not only in the cities, but also in the villages and in the fields; I think it can be stopped and prevented. In any case, the temples that were almost deserted are beginning to be sought,

*the solemn ceremonies, long interrupted, are resumed; meat from sacrifices, which had hitherto been difficult to find, was sold everywhere. From where it can be easily deduced how many people could go, if they were given the opportunity to repent.*³⁷

From the letter we notice that during this period there were some investigations against Christians, but Pliny the Younger did not take part in any of them, and consequently did not know what the deeds for which Christians are accused. Being puzzled and weighed, he appealed to the imperial authority. He tells Emperor Trajan that the accusation against Christians is the name, the mere fact of calling themselves Christians. In this regard, Pliny asks Emperor Trajan whether only the name of a Christian should be punished, even if he has not committed any crime, or whether the crimes related to the name of a Christian should be punished. He also had this perplexity since there was a Roman legal practise, a century ago, in a *senatus-consultum*, which was issued regarding astrologers. According to this decision, punishments were provided for them, without the need for them to have committed other deeds that were reprehensible. The same was done for the Epicureans, who were expelled from some cities, just because they were Epicureans.³⁸

Another dilemma of Pliny was that, by means of an anonymous letter, the names of several Christians had been denounced. Also, especially that, the age of the denounced would have been the first reason for hesitation, because some were very young and others in their prime, and so Pliny asks the emperor Trajan if any distinction should be made by age.

Thru the severe measures taken by Pliny, many Christians were martyred, but there were some who apostatised. He sent those who were Roman citizens to Rome because this Roman citizenship gave them the right to appeal to the emperor's judgement. This letter gives us some information about the antiquity of Christianity in this province, when it tells us that some have been Christians for more than twenty years, that is, thru the 80s AD. Also, from this letter we learn that, during this period, Christianity had spread widely in towns, villages, but also in the fields.

It also gives us some information about the moral life of Christians, but also about Christian worship, the Eucharistic assembly that is practised on Sundays. At the end of the letter, Pliny informs Emperor Trajan that some of the measures he

³⁷ PLINIUS, Ep. X, 96, 343-344.

³⁸ E. J BICKERMAN, *Traian, Hadrian and the Christians*, in: RFIC, 19/1968, 294.

took have led to a revival of traditional religion, because the temples that have been abandoned are beginning to be sought and the pagan ceremonies that have been interrupted for a long time. resumed.

Emperor Trajan's response to Pliny the Younger's letter was short and dictated by administrative needs. He considered that the bloody repressions against Christians would have complicated the situation, which was quite dangerous for the Empire in the context in which, as we have seen, the number of Christians was increasing.

Emperor Trajan answered Pliny the Younger thus: *"You did the right thing, my dear Secundus, investigating the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians. For no principle can be established which is somewhat generally valid. You do not have to search with all your heart; if they are denounced and found guilty, they must be punished, but in such a way that he who promises to be a Christian, and makes manifest proof of this by deeds, that is, by offering sacrifices to our gods, is forgiven for repenting, even in the past was suspected. But anonymous allegations should not be considered in any accusation, as they would be a reprehensible and inappropriate example of our times."*³⁹

Emperor Trajan tells Pliny that a principle that is generally valid for Christians cannot be established. In these circumstances, he will establish a conduct towards Christians, saying that they should not be sought insistently, and when they are denounced, only if they are found guilty, then they will have to be punished. Those who deny that they are Christians should be forgiven even if they have been suspected of being Christians in the past.⁴⁰

What is quite remarkable and worthy of appreciation from the answer of Emperor Trajan is the recommendation he makes to Pliny the Younger, not to follow the anonymous denunciations because they: *"would be a reprehensible and inappropriate example of our times."* It is a recommendation of extraordinary moral value for that time, we could even say unbelievable for a pagan, but which shows the exceptional personality of this great emperor.

³⁹ PLINIUS, Ep. X, 97, 344-345.

⁴⁰ Pr. Prof. Dr. Aurel JIVI, *Studii de istorie bisericească*, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga” Sibiu, 2001, 47-61.

From the writings left by Pliny the Younger we have a real source of information for the knowledge of Roman life during the reign of Emperor Trajan,⁴¹ so they show us the mood of the nobility in the Senate, the literary concerns of this group, the way of life, but also the daily concerns. Pliny the Younger was a rich man, being the owner of beautiful villas, a good manager, but at the same time, as we saw in his work, he was an admirer of literature, recited verses and hoped for literary glory⁴² as he stated in one of the letters to Suetonius.⁴³

Conclusions

The Roman people were formed over the centuries thru the conquests and assimilations of the Italic peoples, but also of other populations, thus managing to express their lucid, rational, practical, and organisational genius in their cultural creations thru which they enriched the world cultural heritage. They managed to transmit to Europe the legacy of the civilisation and culture of Antiquity in the beautiful Greco-Roman synthesis.⁴⁴

Due to the fact that Seneca gave priority, in his writings, to the improvement of the moral life, he managed to be a source of inspiration over time for many cultural and philosophical personalities, but also for some of the Church Fathers and Christian moralists.⁴⁵

Many of the methodical rules and didactic principles promoted by Quintilian are still valid today, and therefore, we can rightly consider him as a forerunner of modern pedagogy.

From the writings left by Pliny the Younger we have a real source of information for the knowledge of Roman life during the reign of Emperor Trajan. Also, in the correspondence between Pliny the Younger and the emperor Trajan remained two letters, from the year 112 AD, which are important for the history of Christianity.

⁴¹ PLINIUS, 1977, 5-27.

⁴² N.A. MAȘCHIN *Istoria Romei antice*, 355.

⁴³ PLINIUS, Ep. VII, 33, 236.

⁴⁴ Ovidiu DRIMBA, *Istoria culturii și civilizației II*, Editura SAECULUM I.O. București, 2013, 342.

⁴⁵ Călin Ioan DUȘE, *Imperiul Roman și creștinismul în timpul Părinților Apostolici*, 232-238.

Therefore, we can say with certainty that: Seneca, Quintilian and Pliny the Younger were exceptional personalities of Roman culture in the first century AD. Thru their writings, they managed to influence both contemporaries and those of future generations, thus making an important contribution to the development of Roman culture, but also universal.