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## **Pansophism as John Amos Comenius' idea of lifelong learning**

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**Abstract:** Pansophia (omniscience) is John Amos Comenius' philosophical idea which, related to his idea of lifelong learning, can be described by the words *To teach everybody... everything... about everything... with all the senses... with the use of natural methods... forever*. These are the key thoughts of John Amos Comenius' two leading and closely interrelated ideas. According to the author, the idea of pansophism does not exist without the idea of lifelong learning, and the other way round: the idea of lifelong learning cannot exist without the idea of pansophism. In the article, the author attempts to present pansophism as the thinker's idea of lifelong learning, including the idea of self-cognition as a foundation of pansophic education, which lasts throughout everybody's life. Such education has two dimensions: institutional and symbolic with a philosophical overtone. The author mainly refers to the issues analyzed within her seven years' comeniological research, as well as to previous interpretations and reinterpretations of available works by Comenius and about Comenius, aware of their deficiency.

**Keywords:** John Amos Comenius, pansophism as a philosophical idea, John Amos Comenius' idea of lifelong learning, idea of self-cognition, knowledge, man raised and educated in the spirit of pansophism

*Knowledge should be a living tree which grows out of the root,  
branches, blooms and bears fruit, rather than a pile of chopped wood.*

John Amos Comenius

To teach everybody... everything... about everything...  
with all the senses... with the use of natural methods... forever...

(Barbara Sitarska  
– on the basis of John Amos Comenius' ideas of pansophism and lifelong learning)

## 1. Introduction

John Amos Comenius, Jan Amos Komeński, Jan Amos Komenský (b. 28 March 1592, Nivnice (Moravia), d. 15 Nov 1670, Amsterdam) are all versions of the name of the same scholar, commonly present in the literature. He is most frequently associated with two concepts, “pansophism” and “pampaedia”, which are mainly familiar to comeniologists.

The Czech educationist and Evangelic priest, one of the creators of modern pedagogy, paid great attention to upbringing and education of man. He treated knowledge as “the light and cure for all evil”. According to Comenius, teaching is not just transmitting knowledge, or the ability to use things, but it is “man’s liberation from the trap of ignorance, i.e. the ties that do not let him become a human being. In turn, he understood upbringing as “the process of the liberation and development of humanity” and considered it to be a “matter of man’s entire life, equally necessary and important in all its stages. It can even be stated that the more a person’s life becomes serious and responsible, the more important upbringing becomes” (Sitarska, 2007: 72).

Comenius’ writings can be divided into three main stages, directly related to the stages of his life, as anything that takes place in one’s writings has its origin in his biography (Sitarska, 2018: 214–224). This fact is also emphasized by Jan Hábl with the example of his analysis of Comenius’ anthropology in the early stage of his life and writings. The author pays attention to the dynamic development of the concept of humanity, and therefore the development of anthropology in (the life and works of) the “teacher of the nations”. It is the “outer factors in Comenius’ life (that) shaped the changes in his understanding of man and their implications for the following educational and improvement projects, which turned out to be so brilliant and important for the European cultural heritage” (Hábl, 2017: 199; author’s own translation).

The first stage of Comenius’ writings is closed with the work “Great Didactics”, “presenting the universal art of teaching everybody everything” in schools “where all the young people of either sex and with no exception had a chance to educate themselves, dignify their morals, get imbued with the spirit of piety, and so use their boyhood to get prepared for everything that belongs to the earthly and future life in a compact, nice and thorough way” (Comenius, 1956: 3). In this stage of his educational writings, he associates education with school as an institution in the period of childhood and youth (up to the age of 25).

In his further life, Comenius developed a completely different, more philosophical way of thinking of man's life and education, based on his observation of himself and the lives of people of different environments from his background. It took place immediately after he wrote *Great Didactics* in 1639 (Comenius, 1657: Amsterdam Publishing House). John Amos Comenius was going to write a work that would present didactical issues on a broader philosophical background than in *Great Didactics*, which concentrated on the school education of children and young people (Ibidem). It would "consider the common care of human "suitabilities" and introducing such an order in the works performed throughout one's life that could make the human mind become a garden of delight through pleasant effort in all the years of life" (Comenius, 1973: 3). This work was *Pampaedia* (Comenius, 1973: 300). It included the original idea of lifelong learning, based on the author's own philosophy of life, which had been growing up in his mind for a long time, and whose elements had appeared in the previous works (before *Pampaedia*). It was pansophism.

Comenius recognized the need for universal knowledge about everything for everyone, forever – accessible throughout your life, hence his idea of pansophism, of the "improvement of human affairs", of a specific reform in this field, which was to be supported with philosophy - a bastion of the truth ("every human being should be a philosopher (...) in order to be able to follow the principles of things himself and show them to others" (Comenius, 1973: 29); religion – a fortress of piety; and politics – a tower of security all over the world.

John Amos Comenius' idea of lifelong learning is still a foundation for contemporary educationists. "The modern tendency towards lifelong learning was first created by Comenius in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the middle (fourth) part of *Pampaedia*, his main work "About the improvement of human affairs" ("De rerum humanarum emendatione consultation catholica" – with "catholica" meaning "universal, general")" (Richter, 2017: 228). *Life-Long Learning (LLL)* "is nowadays a general tendency in the face of dynamic changes in the world, which cannot be avoided by any country. The contemporary education system must take into account adult education and permanent education as a concept. The state is obliged to accept its citizens' necessity to learn throughout their lives and prepare an offer of further education in the form of public institutions such as folk universities" (Ibidem).

According to Werner Korthaase<sup>1</sup>, *Pampaedia* is a proof of the appearance of the branch called “adult education”.

Pansophism is full of content which should be interpreted as “omniscience”, or the general of knowledge of man (and for man) about the world. It is a “holistic and basically harmony-lead program of gaining the state of humanity by people, (...) however, it is marked by unilateralism, which is impossible to avoid in this case, and raises from the a priori assumption that man is only able to reach this fullness by following God’s path (Sztobryn, 2016: 27).

For Comenius, “God is the starting point and the destination, as well as a guarantee of the Truth”. According to Sławomir Sztobryn, such a way of constructing a system “creates a danger of *ignotum per ignotum* mistake and can destroy the logical value of the system from the inside (“God does not copy anyone but himself”; “God draws the objective and the creative power as well as the form from himself, and only takes the matter from nothing”). If you look at this universalistic and theocentric model from the perspective of events which Comenius was involved in and the attitudes he took (dislike of the Aryan, negation of atheism, lack of understanding for Copernicus’ and Descartes’ theories, political errors), you must state that his pansophic aspirations had no chance to get fully proved” (Sztobryn, 2016: 27).

In the Introduction of *Pampaedia*, a work written in the religious convention, the author stated that the idea of pansophism was to lead “all people to education, and education in the area of the whole of matters and, finally, such firmly established education that would make them become new people in the true image and likeness of God” (Comenius, 1973: 6); (Patera, 1892: letter XXVI).

In the educational work based on philosophy, Comenius analyzed education in regard to philosophical and social improvement of the world, wrote about a special role it would have in a person’s spiritual life. *Pampaedia* is a pansophic work, part of a great seven-volume unit and it “is inseparable from Comenius’ pansophic ideas, constituting their educational accomplishment” (Suchodolski, 1956: XXIII). Pansophism is knowledge of the world, but it belongs to man. The author assumes that education should lead to understanding of the world by man and for man. Pansophism enables man to shape his humanity, which makes it educational knowledge by its very nature, and in the process of education “the whole of man” is shaped

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<sup>1</sup> The text Richter (2018) is dedicated to the memory of Werner Korthaase, late honorary President of the German Comenius Society, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death in May 2008.

by “the whole of the world” (Suchodolski, 1956: XXXIX). Pansophism, Comenius’ philosophical idea, is imbued with a deep belief in the possibilities of man and the human mind.

Throughout his life, Comenius developed the idea of pansophism, or universal and useful knowledge, which included the foundations of omniscience and was supposed to serve the improvement of the world. He made it a foundation of his theory of upbringing and education” (Sitarska, 2014: 190). In his philosophical concept, the scholar assumed public access to universal knowledge for all people – “equal by divine appointment” (Sitarska, 2011: 69). “Pansophism is knowledge of the world, but also knowledge owned by man and for man” (Ibidem: 197).

The assumptions of pansophism were to be clear, reliable and true. To achieve this aim, he intended to develop an artificial language of science, called the pansophic language (“universal language”). The common language was supposed to be the basic means of communication, enabling its users to exchange ideas rationally. Comenius would emphasize that all the misunderstandings among people or nations arouse from the lack of such a universal language.

Comenius suggested using natural methods of teaching, which he sought all his life. He paid most attention to the syncretic method, consisting in comparing “parts with parts and wholes with wholes”, and then all the elements with one another. It makes it possible to accomplish the pansophic assumptions in getting to know the world, i.e. depict the world as a whole and notice its harmony (Sitarska, 2014: 199–200), as “the truest reasoning and related experience indicate that everything should be analyzed as a whole, not in pieces”, so it makes it possible to depict the world as a whole and notice its harmony (Comenius, 1973: 58). In practice, the accomplishment of the idea of gaining universal knowledge included the concept of creating a specific educational structure, composed of the new pansophic language available to everyone (“universal language”); “universal books” to be read by all people; “universal schools” where everyone could learn regardless of their sex, worldview or religion, race, nationality, or social and economic status; and a scientific institution – college of professors.

According to Łukasz Kurdybacha, pansophism was an essential completion of Comenius’ educational works and it gives them a deeper significance. In pansophism, Comenius defined the rules of logical relationship between the presented content coming from different branches of science, so that “everything originated from the same rules, approached the same

aims, and there was continuity between the different branches of knowledge” (Kurdybacha, 1958: 23). “Educated in the spirit of pansophism, man was supposed to be able to study the world and its phenomena with the use of his sensory experiences and his mind, which was supposed to lead to his accuracy of thinking and the abolishment of all the false ideas as well as to the unity of all mankind” (Ibidem: 25). Kurdybacha imputes an enormous social role to the idea of pansophic education, concerning social division. Eventually, it was supposed to bring about the abolishment of social and religious divisions.

The scholar gave pansophism a completely different significance than his predecessors. He made this philosophy, or knowledge of everything and for everyone, gained for the entire life, the core<sup>2</sup> of a specific system called the “art of teaching”. His interests and knowledge were undoubtedly extensive and extended into many scientific branches. However, there are a lot of ambiguities or even contradictions in his works, which suggest gaps in his knowledge, a fact he was aware of, and therefore arranged cooperation with appropriate scholars, mainly those educated in medicine, but also philosophy and didactics. Since pansophism is a system of knowledge, a specific whole, which was supposed to be something much more than the sum of its particular elements, added systematically with the gaining of knowledge by its creator. It is an open and permanently modified structure. It is much more than a “traditional” encyclopedia, that of Comenius’ times and contemporary alike. This may be the reason why it has survived up to the present, up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we, contemporary people, can analyze and interpret it in different ways, as many as our knowledge allows. The wisdom it includes often enables us to get knowledge about ourselves, or allows self-cognition: “everyone is the world for himself, so do not search for yourself outside yourself”, or “man is the source of cognition for himself”, as Comenius wrote – and it is a hint for us and for me personally that everyone’s key task is self-cognition throughout his life<sup>3</sup>. This is a perception of John Amos Comenius in contemporary education.

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<sup>2</sup> The belief that pansophism was the core of all Comenius’ works was launched in comeniological literature by Sławomir Sztobryn. It is close to my understanding of pansophism. Łukasz Kurdybacha’s interpretation of pansophism as a completion of pedagogical works does not fully capture – in my opinion – the essence of pansophism.

<sup>3</sup> This conviction motivated me to assign end-of-term tasks for my 2<sup>nd</sup> year students of *Early School Education and Pre-school Education* for the subject *Psycho-pedagogical conditions of the work of the teacher and 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade students*: “Project of my own path of development and professional advancement”.

The idea of self-cognition is having a resurgence and is the main idea throughout human life, starting from the moment he is able to reflect upon himself: his attitudes and systems of values he follows. It is easier for man to “register” and analyze his own personality throughout his adult life, mainly through self-cognition, thanks to his autobiographic memory. “The subject, a living thing, striving for satisfaction, joy, happiness, serenity, peace and power, wishing to rise higher than the already achieved level or at least maintain the achieved position, learns how to get to know, also get to know himself, learns how to learn from personal and inter-personal experience” (Sitarska, 2010: 317). Grown-ups learn from themselves and for themselves. As a result, they experience a psychodynamic phenomenon of re-commitment to life, when the grown-up realizes the fact that he has mostly got educated by himself, and he can continue doing it, even more aware, as education has no limits (Ibidem).

In the third stage of his life and writings (the final years), Comenius visibly went away from the universality of knowledge – pansophism, in which he turned to earthly life. Instead, he turned to strictly theological philosophy, which proclaimed the need to get to know the only and most important thing in everybody’s life: God (the only.... necessary one). This idea was included in the work “Unum necessarium/ The only necessary one” (1966), which seems to be in contradiction of the idea of pansophism. It was his autobiography as well as a peculiar kind of last will. It is his age that assigned the creator of Pansophism with a new area of creativity. This philosophy can be interpreted as the theologian’s reflection upon his own life and the previous period of his creative work connected with pansophism, the idea of harmonious unity in getting to know the world and man. The work on pansophism, permanent and still open, kept the creator tense and insatiable. He would make sure that the work would never end and that it required repeated modifications due to new knowledge appearing in all spheres of life. It required continual deep reflections from its creator. However, it gave hope for fulfillment. As an old man, he already knew that he would not finish his great life work despite his efforts, and he was in despair. “Unum necessarium” was a natural consequence of his failure – as he felt it – to accomplish his greatest work – pansophism. We can risk a statement that John Amos Comenius did not feel fulfilled in his creative work or life. Nowadays, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are interpreting it anew and trying to give it another meaning. We are – I am – more optimistic about its present relevance, but in a different way, in different social, cultural, existential, or educational conditions.

As the president of the secondary school in Leszno and author of school textbooks, in his letter to Bogusław Leszczyński, Comenius wrote that he was working on a small pansophism for school use: "Pansophiola", and presented his plan of developing a seven-volume set of textbooks for factual education: "Introduction; Metaphysics; Selection of useful information about the nature; Man and his creative activity; Religion; The supernatural; Practical meaning of pansophism" (Dworzaczkowa, 2003: 57). It was the announcement of the accomplishment of his great task of introducing pansophism into the school education of that time, which, as it turned out later, could not come true, although Comenius kept working on *pansophiola* for a long time despite his problems with pansophism.

When Comenius announced his idea of pansophism, unfavorable opinions on it appeared in Europe apart from numerous supportive ones, especially of the Fathers of the Church, superior priests, and bishops, who accused Comenius of ignoring God in all his pansophic aspirations for the "improvement of human affairs", and making the whole unusual specific reform dependent on man and his work on himself. It was not easy for the thinker to explain the idea to the clergymen. The way to public announcement of Comenius' idea of pansophism – omniscience was long, arduous and full of labyrinths. In his environment, the idea aroused doubts and reservations. Even the Unity of the Brethren, which included Bohemian and Polish Brethren, accused the theologian of mixing the human and divine matters together improperly, and some of them even interpreted the omniscience as heresy and denial of God (Richter, 2016: 117–118).

The attacks on "pansophism" were mainly from the point of view of orthodox Calvinism. It should be mentioned that Comenius presented his pansophic views to his students. "A scandal erupted when a pious matron was in terror to hear her son's "unrighteous" statements. Eventually, Comenius was exonerated (at the Convocation of 21 March 1639 he had a dispute with his opponents), but after those difficulties he was even ready to give up his presidency. There were even more difficulties in the school: publishing problems and further criticism of pansophism, which he had no intention to give up anyway. His problems accumulated, the situation got even worse as his protector Count Bogusław Leszczyński soon converted to Catholicism and stopped supporting Comenius' activities (Dworzaczkowa, 2003: 58–59).



## **2. Pansophism as John Amos Comenius' idea of lifelong learning - characteristics of the key concepts**

According to *Encyklopedia PWN*, "Pansophism [from Greek 'omni-wisdom'] is the name of a philosophical and religious movement started by Paracelsus<sup>4</sup> in Germany in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, aimed at gaining universal knowledge. In education science, the term "pansophism" is known from the works by J. A. Comenius, such as "Prodromus pansophiae" (1638), "Schola pansophia" (1651); he used it to refer to a great synthesis he worked on all his life, which was to comprise the complete knowledge of reality: God, the nature, and arts". The whole philosophy of omni-wisdom is based on omni-education, with wisdom and light obtained in the course of upbringing and education, which lasts throughout human life. These two leading ideas based on Comenius' philosophy are therefore closely interrelated.

Pansophism is Comenius' philosophical idea which reflects his life, ideals and aspirations, his views and attitudes towards the nation, his confreres, poor and simple people. Through pansophism, he wanted to indicate "simple and effective ways of improving churches, states, schools – everything that is human and for the benefit of all" (Ibidem). It was supposed to have social and educational functions. It was his favourite idea and his biggest dream. John Amos Comenius created an independent and original concept of pansophism, going far beyond the previous pansophic studies. For his times, it was a brilliant idea. This fact is emphasized by present-day educationists and philosophers, referred to in this text.

Comenius' pansophism was to constitute a specific compendium of knowledge about the whole of reality. However, it went "far beyond the frames of simple summary omniscience and had an egalitarian motif, since this omniscience, as intended by Comenius, was to be gained by everyone. These reasons, among others, make Comenius superior to other encyclopedists (concepts of encyclopedias were older than Comenius' writings) (Sztobryn, 2012: 261).

John Amos Comenius was the creator of a system of pedagogy related to the nature. In his times, "nature" was understood, among others, as the essence of man. For the pedagogue, the nature was the "primary and basic spiritual system of us, which we should be restored to, as to the

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<sup>4</sup> It is unclear who used the term "pansophism" for the first time. As Bogdan Suchodolski reports, it was Peter Laurenberg, a professor of Rostock University, in his work entitled "Pansophia, sive paedia philosophica" (Suchodolski, 1956: XVII).

initial state (...). At present, this notion is understood in a different way, which gives rise to many misunderstandings related to his comprehension of the nature. Comenius' education science fits into the 17<sup>th</sup>-century "natural system of culture", and into the humanistic vision of the "pedagogy of ideals". In his writings, the pedagogue approached the world of children's images and interests like nobody before, and the crowning achievement of his overall program of education improvement was the work "Orbis Pictus" (1667; 1658; 1805,1809, 1818; 2015) (See: Fijałkowski, 2015: 6–9).

Comenius was discovered "again and again" by John Patočka (1907–1977), "the most prominent interpreter of his philosophy" (Schifferová, 2010: 110). According to this philosopher, Comenius cannot just be called a thinker of the Early Modern period or even Late Middle Ages, who had lost touch with the development of philosophy in his times. On the other hand, it must have been impossible to label him one of the so called Modern 17<sup>th</sup>-century philosophers, such as Descartes. In the history of philosophy, Patočka finds him ambiguous, as if he was standing between the two epochs. However, as Patočka claims, he can be considered to be an enthusiastic advocate of rationalism, as it was the foundation of his idea of improving mankind. In this respect, his THOUGHT can be defined as a relationship between the medieval rationalism and (early) enlightenment (Mout, 2013: 175–176, 178–179, author's translation).

The way how Comenius' reformist pedagogical thought is interpreted (...) says a lot about the cognitive representations of Patočka's philosophy of education. The comeniological "improvement of human affairs" is interpreted by the Czech phenomenologist through the prism of his perception of the philosophical condition of the modern age and its specific tendencies. In this context, Patočka refers to two "spiritual states" typical of the condition of the modern period, understood as a peculiar foundation. They give rise to various philosophies of education and their consequences. The philosopher strictly identifies these philosophies with the Cartesian concept of a "closed spirit" on one hand and the comeniological concept of an "open spirit" on the other (Gara, 2019: 197–198).

The category of an "open spirit" – as the one of our interest – "is not perceived through the prism of the figure of the subject as a "distant observer", closed within the limits of the world of his own rationality. Rationality is one but not the only dimension of human existence fulfillment. As an "open spirit", man is also treated as part of the surrounding world, and his existence "is involved in the world and its problems". That is why the anthropo-

logical model of an "open spirit" is perceived through the prism of man's responsibility for himself and for the surrounding world (Ibidem: 198). An "open spirit" experiences the surrounding world as a whole, and the essence of his existence is continuous pilgrimage and travelling, during which he mostly experiences a drama of wandering, experiencing mystifying dimensions of the sense and meaning of his own way, and of the guardians' and guides' lies. An "open spirit" is nevertheless motivated by a continual move of escaping from the Platonic cave of shadows and of casting off the chains, so that his movement is no longer just a fiction, aimless wandering and miserable bustle (Pelcová 2014: 173–175; quoted after J. Gara, Ibidem).

As Comenius believed, man had a great mission to complete: he should develop his humanity. The thinker pointed to pansophism as a synthesis of man's activity, leading to self-cognition. He believed in the unlimited development of cognition and human abilities, and in the harmony of the soul and the body, which man was seeking. John Amos Comenius' concept of lifelong learning is based on the pedagogue's idea of "universal education of all mankind" (Comenius, 1973: 9). The thinker "proclaimed respect of the freedom and rights of people of each status, a belief in the spiritual and material advance of mankind, the need for open access to education" (Dworzaczkowa, 2003: 79).

The universality of education was Comenius' passion, although he was aware of the obstacles on the way to this aim. They were both obstacles rising from the state society and some pedagogical obstacles. School was a labyrinth to him (Comenius, 1964: 511), which only few students were able to save themselves from.

Pansophism was Comenius' spiritual weapon in his fight for freedom, tolerance, and harmonious co-existence among people. He thought that only a man who was brought up and educated in the spirit of pansophism could understand and accept those values. Pansophism was supposed to be the way to the renewal of societies, the improvement of human affairs, and therefore to the abolition of ignorance, fanaticism, or violence. Comenius was certain that the above aim could be obtained through pansophic education, consisting in man's adaptation for life in a comprehensible world. He hoped for full understanding of the world, i.e. the nature, man and God (Bieńkowski, 2000: 89). Pansophism was supposed to be the "light of the mind to enlighten all the dark, which was to show all people the whole of things" (Kvačala, 1902: 299–300: quoting Bieńkowski 2000: 88). "Pansophism comprises all the things that are necessary for all the people who

wish to be wise, so that, by seeing everybody's aims and the means to achieve them as well as the right way of using these means, in full light, they become able to direct everything they own to the right aims, and pursue these aims with no risk of error, through measures which are good and reliable, and whoever does so is wise" (Comenius, 1964: 582).

Pansophism – the philosophical idea, which all Comenius' writings are imbued with, is identified with the truth by the author. "Everybody, everything about everything" is an idea of the equality of mankind in wisdom, a conviction that there is one truth (after Plato), which people are able to reach by learning with the methods described by Comenius" (Sztobryn, 2012: 262).

The pedagogue would strive for dissemination of knowledge through pansophic education: mild and effective enlightenment of the mind and heart. Hence his love of the egalitarianism of schools and the egalitarian idea of didactics as the art of "teaching everybody everything" – among others in "Great Didactics" ("he meant greater access to schools and their adaptation to the social and economic needs of the time; he was influenced by the Bohemian Brethren's egalitarian social concept") (Fijałkowski, 2000: 63, 67, 66). As stated by the Czech researcher of John Amos Comenius Naděžda Pelcová, "Comenius is considered to have been the originator of modern didactics. However, I believe he did not only meant to improve the ways of teaching particular subjects. What he wanted was to reform the school education" (Pelcová, 2019: 48).

As Comenius believed, throughout your life, through the consecutive "schools of life"<sup>5</sup>, you should strive to get to know yourself in order to be able to achieve perfection, success and happiness. The way to this aim goes through hard and creative work on yourself and your own development. Modern man pursues the same aim, and he also relies on self-cognition, which appears to be the most difficult task. With all his philosophy and pedagogical axiology, Comenius turned to earthly life. In all the branches of his various activity, he tried to comprise man as a whole with all the areas of his temporal life. He also dealt with man who is at "school of life" all the time, and to whom he recommends permanent learning "with no limits" (Comenius, 1973: chapters 8-16).

Comenius believed that schools used inappropriate teaching methods and principles. He suggested natural teaching methods, which he sought all his life, and didactic principles which were supposed to make learning

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<sup>5</sup> I am writing about it in point 4.

fun and easy. It mainly depends on the teacher who is devoted to his work as well as on the students themselves, who participate in the process, which takes place outside school as well. That is why he suggested that people should "(...) not [only] gain knowledge from books, but from the sky, the earth, from oak and beech trees", i.e. get to know and explore "things themselves rather than exclusively someone else's observations and testimonies about things" (Comenius, 1956: 161). Such education at the elementary level was supposed to bring solid results at further levels of education, also after leaving school as an institution. Comenius' man remains in a never-ending process of education, which he calls lifelong or permanent learning ("the entire life is school"). As an idea, it fits into the modern research direction and is a priority idea of the modern education in Poland, Europe and worldwide.

In Comenius' writings, school appears both as institutional and extra-institutional, symbolic. However, in all these kinds of school, at each level and stage, education is equally important for man's development, and its dimension, responsibility and degree of difficulty is even bigger in the symbolic, extra-institutional school (Sitarska, 2014: 204).

Comenius strongly believed that knowledge and education would make the world better and full of man's happiness. He tried to convince everybody that a human being is shaped by his work on himself. The best and only material to shape a real and genuinely human individual is knowledge. This overwhelming knowledge, full and perfect, should get to an individual through universal school for everybody. That is why school should become a common good for the whole mankind.

The mature concept of Pansophism – Omniscience appeared at the time of Comenius' acceptance of the presidency of Leszno secondary school<sup>6</sup>. Comenius' pansophism "was not supposed to be an encyclopedic collection of information from various fields, but to present the world and man as an organic whole, macro- and microcosm, include everything that man needs to live, improve himself, conduct any kind of social and intellectual activity" (Dworzaczkowa, 2003: 56–57). Therefore, he did not want to describe particular subjects of teaching; as he wrote, "knowledge should be a living tree, which grows out of the root, branches, blooms and bears fruit, rather than a pile of chopped wood" (Ibidem).

In his pansophic works, Comenius showed man the ways to self-cognition. They lead through subsequent stages of lifelong learning. However,

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<sup>6</sup> The exact date of this event is impossible to be specified. It was probably 1638 or the year before.

he believed mostly in pansophic education and reflection on one's own life. For John Amos Comenius, the difficult and abstruse way to self-cognition was also the way to harmony that had been sought in the world of chaos (Sitarska, 2015: 145). This idea of Comenius' seems to be timeless. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in which he lived, he felt the chaos in the world and sought harmony, both in the narrower meaning, referring to an individual – the harmony between the soul and the body - and in the broader meaning, referring to mankind. He presented the world as full of violence, cruelty, cunning and envy, in which the poor and hardworking suffered poverty and harassment (it is especially visible in the work *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart...*) (Sitarska, 2012: 133). In science there is also – he wrote - a real “labyrinth”: pointless discussions are carried on, research of superficial and unimportant problems is carried out, there is envy and religious intolerance (Bieńkowski, 2000: 10). He was the most critical about medicine, law, and especially philosophy, which “does not serve people” (Suchodolski, 1979: 9).

### **3. Interpretations and reinterpretations of John Amos Comenius' pansophism by selected Polish and European comeniologists**

On the basis of Bogdan Suchodolski's analyses, Sławomir Sztobryn indicates that “in Comenius' view, pansophism is a static system of knowledge which reconstructs objective reality, penetrates the deepest layers of existence like the Heraclitean Logos, and allows for predicting the future” (Sztobryn, 2016: 26). As far as never-ending gaining knowledge is concerned, it is a system of “human omniscience (i.e. the knowledge of all things under heaven that we are allowed to know, talk about, or do)” (Ibidem, quoting: Comenius, 1964: 84).

“Pansophism was intended to comprise the whole of human knowledge but it was not its special characteristics as compared with the previous attempts of an encyclopedia (...) or the later ones, like the Great French Encyclopedia, with the only exception that its aim was to “improve all human affairs”, therefore it had emancipative and moral-social as well as informative and educational functions. The researchers agree that the improvement of human affairs can take place – in Comenius' concept – first and foremost on the ground of education. Beyond education, humanity is aporia (Sztobryn, 2015: 91) Comenius' “exact didactics is imbued with a predominant religious element. If humanity is the consequence of appropriate education, this education must concentrate on three forms of reality:

God, who created the two others, the world of the nature, whose part man is, and man himself. Here is the triad of the forms of reality and their system of hierarchy. This system of triads is a formal philosophical and educational corset of Comenius' position" (Ibidem: 93).

According to Sławomir Sztobryn, "the idea of pansophism constitutes the structural core, the guiding idea of John Amos Comenius' philosophical, social and didactical doctrine (following the route of tripartite character), which integrates – at least in theory – the whole of knowledge available to man and determines a certain perspective of building individual and collective life" (Sztobryn, 2016: 30). In "Pansophiae prelude", "Prelude to omniscience", Comenius indicates "three things (nowadays we would say: thematic circles) that exhausts human knowledge or even omniscience: getting to know God, the nature, and art" (Comenius, 1964: 84). The pedagogue includes the meaning, significance and range of the idea of pansophism. As art, he understands any human artifacts; as the nature – what "is born and works by itself"; and as God – "anything that the power, wisdom, and goodness which were latent for ages have revealed so far in words or actions" (Ibidem).

In Comenius' opinion, these three circles exhaust the range of knowledge that is cognitively available to man, although each of them can be explored differently. The versatility of cognition, according to Comenius, is dependent upon its genuineness, order and fullness (Comenius' triadic system of thought applies in all of his works). The pedagogue would strive for harmony between the perfect divine world and the world of the nature, created by God. In the world of the nature there is harmony, which is another principle of Comenius' pansophic thought. The criteria of the triad have to be met here as well (Ibidem: 88–89).

John Amos Comenius' triadic system was discovered by the Czech philosopher John Patočka, who analyzed his metaphysical thinking. Apart from the Biblical divine persons, the triads are: "Power, Wisdom, and Love (or Goodness), which are necessary for human actions (or living), understanding (or light), and will (or love). He emphasized the universal virtues: faith, hope, and love. He created a Decalogue based upon "true, good and practical things, i.e. things which we should believe in, love and choose or practice" (Pavlas, 2016: 211, author's translation).

Petr Pavlas exposed Comenius' triadic system directed towards man's work on the development of humanity in all its areas: intellectual, mainly based on wisdom; emotional, based on love and broadly-understood

goodness; and volitional, based on man's will. For this, man needs universal (ageless) virtues. Comenius' triadic system, referred to by the author, was reinforced with the Decalogue, which should be followed and believed in. Comenius' tendency for triads and their modern classifications were described by John Čížek (2016:15–17).

John Patočka divided Comenius' work into three periods: pre-pansophic, pansophic, and panortotic (Patočka, 1997: 175). They reflect all Comenius' life and writings like a mirror<sup>7</sup>. In his thought over all of those periods, organic relationship between philosophy, theology and politics is visible (See: Misseri, 2017: 13, author's translation). Pansophic foundations of the education sciences which were, according to Patočka, created by Comenius, are an "expression of Comenius' fight for man's transformation, exemplified by his postulate for common recovery" (Patočka, 1953).

On the basis of his interpretations of John Amos Comenius' pansophic works included in "De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica", John Čížek attempts to reconstruct the genesis and development of the idea of pansophism in his writings. The concept of pansophism, going back to the ancient philosophical thought, became a very common topic of discussion in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Čížek, 2019: 199, author's translation), and it is also the main topic of comeniological seminars and discussions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The author's research suggests that Comenius developed a pansophic program, or a program to create one universal science including the findings of both profanum and sacrum, in the field of philosophy and theology at the end of the thirties of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Through the analysis and interpretation of Comenius' "Pansophism", stages of development of Comenius' idea of pansophism can be distinguished, with the final stage of its transformation into the idea of a common reform, panortotia. The analysis of Comenius' correspondence makes it easier to understand the author's more private reasons for creating the idea of pansophism (Ibidem).

Reviewing Comenius' writings of the three periods specified by John Patočka, it is possible to notice Comenius' attitudes towards ethical issues mix together: on the one hand, there is a classic set of virtues, on the other hand – a program of reforming the human culture in a broad sense, including every person in the world. This program draws its roots from the idea of all people's equality, free will and reason. Comenius' program is universalistic as well as Christian. Comenius wishes everybody to learn everything that is necessary

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<sup>7</sup> I am writing about the three periods of Comenius' life and writings in *Introduction* (pp. 2-6).



for a good earthly life in every possible way. The most useful idea of how to do it is a “mixture” of the improvement of the perception of the world’s phenomena, preaching the old wisdom and the Christian Scriptures. Comenius places the virtue of prudence high in the hierarchy of virtues, which reflects the classic view of ethics. Prudence has strong Aristotelian and Thomistic implications, and it was considered to be a combination of moral and intellectual virtues in ethical debates. This ethical virtue is an adequate bridge between a strong will (so that you can achieve what you want) and a wise choice in ruling yourself and others (the most rational or appropriate option to achieve highest aims) (Misseri, 2017: 20–23, author’s translation). Prudence as an ethical feature turns out to be the key to “reforming” the human nature (“anything that is human”), to the improvement of human affairs (See: Ibidem: 29). So how should we teach people to be prudent, to be able to control their temper, as this feature seems to be the axis of any kind of happiness in the individual dimension, peace in the world, and integration between nations? This is the author’s rhetorical question at this stage of research. It is a good thing it was asked as it may be an inspiration for the reader – comeniologist to continue research in this field.

The concept of the nature appears throughout Comenius’ pansophic works. John Čížek’s research indicates that Comenius’ idea of the nature is inseparable from his anthropological view of man as a component of the material world, which, however, outclasses the world and rises above it through his immortal mind and its three components: reason, will, and causative or executive powers. The result of man’s activity is the world of his creation, the world of morality and the world of the spirit, in which the nature is driven to perfection. “Natura humana” penetrates through “Pansophism” and the whole “Consultacio” (Čížek, 2014: 92, author’s translation).

This issue is referred to by the expert in Comenius’ legacy Naděžda Pelcová of Charles University in Prague. On the basis of Comenius’ idea included in *Great Didactics*: “Since whoever we are and whatever we do, whatever we think, say, create, achieve (...) is rising towards perfection, step by step; by climbing towards perfection we reach higher and higher levels, however, we never reach the highest one” (Comenius, 1958, 63–64) – as Pelcová emphasizes, “as the highest being in the hierarchy of creation, man should also set highest goals” and should not quit continuous self-improvement. “A project of universal education was presented by Comenius in his work *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*. The title itself suggests the necessity of *consultatio*, or “deliberation”, for improvement (...).

This, in turn, suggests that a change for the better never comes from the top, as an imposed reform or a miracle from heaven” (Pelcová, 2019: 50).

According to John Čížek, a researcher of Comenius, the foundation of the whole “Pansophism” is the human mind – the inner source of light, which, with all its content, is something quite universal and common for everybody with no exception. Comenius calls the content of the human thought a possible world, the foundation of the human mind. “It corresponds to the conceptual triad: reason – will – causative powers. Man was given the reason to enable him to tell the difference between things. He was given free will by God to let him miss the reason, achieve what is known as good and beware of evil. Last but not least, his mind was given abilities to let him achieve what his will desires. The foundation of this triad is the three predispositions of every action: to know – to want – to be able” (Čížek, 2014: 52–55, author’s translation). As Comenius indicates, man is obliged to strive continuously for his own perfection. Man has to focus his reasoning on the truth all the time, miss good with his will, and then use his abilities exclusively to accomplish the truth and good (Ibidem).

“As soon as his times, Comenius succeeded in predicting the coming of such times one day that the world’s treasures would be useful to everyone rather than only to a few individuals or a small group as they used to. He outlined a vision of the future in which everybody would be able to exist, live and act freely in the conditions of permanent peace and mutual friendship, and to be satisfied with the accomplished educational path” (Hampl, 2017: 188).

In “Pansophia Humana”, Bernhard Stalla provided an interpretation of John Amos Comenius’ pansophic philosophy. For Comenius, it is a necessary precondition of the world’s recovery to create human wisdom – “Pansophia Humana”, as people’s ability to be perfect in true humanity. The theologian, philosopher and educationist John Amos Comenius explains the interaction between the three elements of “Pansophia Humana”: “Knowledge – Actions – Faith” in human areas of responsibility and the areas of activity of science / philosophy – religion – politics, as a precondition of creating philosophical knowledge (seeking the truth and wisdom) (Stalla, 2019:190; author’s translation). John Amos Comenius wishes “everybody to have access to knowledge in order to gain insight into the world and people, to understand the essence and significance of all things in the basic order, and to learn how to live with other people in the conditions of peace, integration and responsibility for oneself and the whole mankind” (Ibidem). “Through

the pursuit of power, dominance, profit, influence and the resulting conflicts, arguments, hate, envy, wars, man is destroying this perfect order of the world. In "Pansophism", John Amos Comenius expressed his hope that the world as a whole could be renovated" (Ibidem).

In another work, Bernhard Stalla interprets education gained through the spirit, on the basis of his own research. "Comenius defines "spirit" as the inherent force of our soul. It lets us understand the essence of things, make conscious decisions, act in accordance with them, and finally, control these actions and find them pleasant. (...) This force allows us to become more similar to God and at the same time it makes us more human (Stalla, 2017: 136; translated by A. Pogoda-Kołodziejak).

Comenius' conviction about the "activity of the spirit who revives the mind and determines the identity of man, plants, and animals" (Sroczyński, 2016: 48) is referred to by Wojciech Sroczyński. According to this author, "Comenius did not answer the fundamental philosophical question of his time: should cognition be taken out of empiricism, or out of the mind? Becoming familiar with Bacon's philosophical system made him conclude that the primary origin of cognition was experience and the senses" (Ibidem). In his time, it was difficult for Comenius, a clergyman, to answer the question about the nature of the universe, of a human being, the role of the senses and the reason, of speech and activity in human cognition, as even philosophers themselves had different, quite unilateral views of this issue. Comenius seems to have taken over (...) some of the sensationalists' views, as he needed them for education which differed from the scholastic memory method (thoughtless repetition) (Ibidem: 48).

Comenius' theological orientation is responsible for making God a reference point for the emerging idea of the world and man, which results in referring to divine wisdom as the ultimate value. Comenius makes the nature subject of cognition, including man (Florczykiewicz, 2016: 54), who is its component, and the reason for getting to know them is man's fuller development understood as approaching divinity through approaching omniscience: "man is born with the ability to gain knowledge about things most of all because he is an image of God [...]. Since God's omniscience is the most prominent of his attributes, his glow must be therefore somehow reflected in man as well" (Comenius, 1956: 44).

As far as Comenius' views of the human being are concerned, Heliodor Muszyński emphasizes the active role of man in shaping his own destiny and granting an individual rights to decide about themselves and shape their own

destiny (Muszyński, 2010: 171). In this way, Comenius emphasizes the automatic character of a human being, who should resolve the dilemmas of his own existence, also moral ones, in his own conscience (Comenius, 1964: 671).

By making man a responsible creator of his own life, Comenius gives a meaning to his earthly existence. For him, human life is not just an inevitable stage on the way to salvation, but it is an independent reality which is worth attention and effort. Thus, man has aims to be achieved here, on earth, which consist in the pursuit of earthly happiness (Muszyński, 2010: 170).

According to Sławomir Sztobryn, a researcher of Comenius' writings, "the idea of schools accompanying man from birth till death may give rise to an anthropological concept which assumes: i/ man's flexibility, ii/ his ability to learn and be educated, iii/ processuality in development, which lasts till death rather than till adulthood. While the first two theses are present in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century pedagogical thought, the perception of man who is continuously developing and changing is an original idea. These attributes of man are in a positive correlation with the philosophical empiricism. Others, such as creative skills, the ability to think rationally, to experience spiritual and religious values, to follow moral values in his life place him closer to the nativist concept due to the somehow divine origin of these abilities. However, in the holistic picture of man these abilities, predispositions or attributes are complementary" (Sztobryn, 2015: 93).

Sławomir Sztobryn emphasizes the original character and accuracy of Comenius' perception of "pansophism as a kind of inner structure of the world and of man and his education taking place in everyday facts he observed yet hidden outside them. Thereby, Comenius – usually perceived as a continuator of traditional encyclopedism – entered a totally new path, which we would call structuralism nowadays" (Sztobryn, 2016: 31). The author refers to *Omnia, omnes, omnino* – the brief motto which "characterizes Comenius' pansophic assumptions extended all over human life, focused on a continuous process of learning, leading mankind to inner and outer peace". For his time, Comenius created a "holistic and harmonious program of transformation of mankind who had cultivated direct, material, temporal, relative values into mankind whose aim would be full humanity based on permanently renewed educational foundation (Ibidem: 30).

Comenius' pansophism was interpreted by the researcher of his legacy Tadeusz Bieńkowski. In his publication, he referred to the pedagogue's ideas which make it easier to understand the work of his life. To learn permanently means to make the main use of your life. Comenius called educa-

tion, or appropriate shaping of the human personality, the art of arts. It is pansophism that was supposed to become such an art (Bieńkowski, 2000: 88–89). Getting to know things is perfect when it is full, real and ordered. Getting to know God, the nature and human abilities was supposed to be like that. Comenius proclaimed the thesis of “teaching everybody everything about everything”, but he only meant what was basic, essential, and the most important for showing man his position, role and tasks to perform in his life on the background of the knowledge of the nature and its character. Comenius’ pansophism was to transform the world of the time and purify it of ignorance, fanaticism, violation and cruelty. Nowadays we would name it dissemination of culture, science, and education (Bieńkowski, 2000: 90).

Wojciech Sroczyński asks a question about the concept of “omni-wisdom – pansophism”, which is the basic philosophical category of his system of education. “It may be presumed that the aspiration to teach *everything to everyone* is a political rather than philosophical postulate. The notions *pansophism* (*pansophy*) mean *omniscience*, *omniscient*. In monotheistic religions only God is the omniscient person. So what philosophy would hide behind this statement if not a political call for the democratization of education” (Sroczyński, 2015: 44, 45).

A completely different interpretation of John Amos Comenius’ pansophic education is offered by D. Benner and D. Stepkowski. They introduce the concept of “formability”. The authors are convinced that the “logic of modern education” is based on the idea of “formability” rather than on pansophic grounds (Benner, Stepkowski, 2012: 9). Thinking and – even more – pedagogical activity have been accompanied by the phenomenon of formability practically since the beginning of time. However, as a concept, “formability” was invented and verbalized only at the beginning of modern times by Rousseau, and became a background to his works on both education and philosophical issues. Both kinds present a vision of man who is forced to seek his own definition or vocation, especially during his childhood and youth, though it is not limited to these periods. Undetermined and open to becoming by his very nature, man has a potential which can be either used or wasted (Benner, Stepkowski, 2015: 50).

The authors of the article attempt to “place” the concept of “formability” in modern education, “whose point is not only not to waste this potential, but first of all, to support and multiply it” in teaching, whose task is to support a pupils’ individual development” (Ibidem). As early as 250 years ago Rousseau tried to verbalize these tasks in an educational project pre-

sented in “Emil”. “Its current relevance does not result from the timelessness of the suggested solutions, but from the fact that the direction set to pedagogical thought has not practically changed” (Ibidem).

Can pansophic education be replaced with the concept of formability? Comenius’ pansophism, in its essence, seems to go far beyond the range of formability. Formability mainly applies to the periods of childhood and youth, while pansophism extends throughout human life, all its areas and periods of development. However, it is based on upbringing as a positive phenomenon, while formability is associated with “negative upbringing” in Rousseau’s educational project. As a result, however, it is supposed to bring about the pupil’s changes for the better. From the contemporary perspective, both concepts are too ideal, although formability is more frequently referred to in educational practice, while pansophism is perceived as abstract and utopian<sup>8</sup>.

In the article, the authors Benner and Stępkowski refer to the question asked by K. Schaller, a German researcher of Comenius: “How could the great 17<sup>th</sup>-century didactician say about himself that “everything he [wrote] for young people” in “Great Didactics” he wrote “as a theologian rather than a pedagogue”<sup>9</sup>. This issue was also analyzed by Naděžda Pelcová. In her publication, she emphasizes that Comenius wrote a lot of pedagogical works on upbringing and education<sup>10</sup>, and that he devoted his whole life to these issues. “However, Comenius should not only be treated as a pedagogue and an education theorist, as it would be contradictory to the spirit of his writings. This spirit is clearly visible in the statement coming from one of his writings, still not translated into Polish” (Pelcová, 2019:48). “All I wrote as a teacher I wrote as a priest” (Komenský, 1957: 27, quoted after Pelcová, 2019: 48).

It may suggest that Comenius felt he was a theologian first of all, which is no wonder as it was his profession, but all his activity went far beyond that profession. In life, it is important how we perceive ourselves, but it is equally important how others perceive us. Representatives of different branches of science perceive Comenius in different ways. It is proved by

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<sup>8</sup> In the research Team *From John Amos Comenius till the present* we are conducting all-Polish research with the use of an electronic survey of John Amos Comenius for teachers and future teachers. It includes questions about pansophism. <https://forms.gle/aWQqja11dVu1r9EQ9>

<sup>9</sup> Benner and Stępkowski’s interpretation was referred to by Sławomir Sztobryn in Volume 2 of “Siedlce Comeniological Research Bulletin, PEDAGOGY series” (p. 92).

<sup>10</sup> His most important pedagogical works include *Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* and *Great Didactics*. He was also author of language teaching textbooks, such as *Janua linguarum reserata* (*Doors to languages opened up*) and *Orbis pictus* (*World in pictures*, 2015). His main work was, however, the unfinished study *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica* (*General Consultation Concerning the Improvement of Human Affairs*).

perceptions of Comenius attempted by Polish and European comeniologists (Sitarska (ed.), 2017: 385). Pedagogues perceive Comenius first and foremost as a pedagogue, then – a philosopher, and finally as a theologian. Philosophers, on the other hand, probably refer to him as a philosopher above all, and theologians – as a theologian. He wanted to be perceived as a theologian himself, and he identified himself with that profession.

Sławomir Sztobryn claims that “Comenius’ idea was deeply utopian and unreal. The connotations he refers to suggest the 17<sup>th</sup>-century scholars’ clear need to order the rapidly growing knowledge and still faster multiplying literature of various provenance and substantive value. However, such an ambitious task had no chances to be accomplished, not only in Comenius’ times, not to mention the fact that it was beyond the possibilities of a single person, a child of his epoch, therefore being subject to all its limitations” (Sztobryn, 2016: 26).

Becoming familiar with available Comenius’ works and analyses of his writings, which attempt to reinterpret his theological, philosophical and pedagogical thoughts, you may notice that they emphasize his novel concept of teaching and education, and the meaning of the theory which proves these processes. According to Wojciech Sroczyński, “nowadays, Comenius’ educational concept is of a rather historical nature and its value can only be evaluated positively in the context of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century European intellectual culture, searching for the traces of its possible influence on the progress of pedagogical thought. Moreover, it turns out that some areas of scientific, political, and religious activity still await further recognition, which would be possible after dissemination of his works that are not available in Polish yet. Then, Polish scholars’ contribution to the interpretation of Comenius’ theology, philosophy and pedagogy might be more significant” (Ibidem: 50).

#### **4. Original interpretations of pansophism and pampaedia as educational ideas**

*Improvement of the world can only take place thanks to an individual's own effort, it can never be ordered to be done by anybody else. Neither can becoming wise: nobody can do it for anybody else, but everybody must live to be wise on his own.*

John Amos Comenius

According to John Amos Comenius, it is only possible for man to achieve full humanity thanks to education. “This humanity includes three

dimensions: (1) being a sentient creature – animal rationale, (2) being the lord of creation and (3) being an image of the divine – *imago Dei* (Comenius, 1956: 43). “In *Great Didactics*, explaining these dimensions, Comenius links them to three aims of education: developing wisdom, morality and piety. In order to achieve these aims, man was given three tools from God: the thought, the hand, and the tongue. The thought represents comprehension, the hand – acting, and the tongue – calling” (Pelcová, 2019: 49).

This combination proves Comenius’ belief that “education is not only limited to the preparation for practical life (the hand) (...) In order to achieve full humanity, it is necessary to develop (...) the universal domain: thinking and speech” (Ibidem). “Since man has destroyed the divine harmony, he must rebuild it himself – nobody will do it for him” (Ibidem: 51). Comenius believes that the world “can return to its original harmony thanks to rising the level of general education” (Comenius, 1973). “The term coined by Comenius, defining general education, is *pampaedia*. It is also the title of his extensive work, centered on man pursuing perfection through permanent education” (Pelcová, 2019: 49).

In accordance with his aims and the philosophy which guides them, in “*Pampaedia*”, a pansophic work on strictly pedagogical issues, Comenius assumes a thesis that the process of education is permanent and requires continuous work on yourself, throughout your life. Leaving school as an institution, primary, secondary or university, is not enough for anybody. After you leave school, real life only starts, difficult adult life full of labyrinths. Since it is not enough to rely on the knowledge you gained in a traditional school, as the “entire life is school”, and the original symbolic school of adult life is even more difficult, as there is no teacher to raise and educate, give instructions about which way to take and how to follow it in order to accomplish your roles in life, which are more and more numerous and difficult. There are no books, either, to instruct you clearly how to live and prepare for professional or family roles. Man is a teacher for himself and relies on his life wisdom, his own philosophy of life, as we would say nowadays.

However, it is just the beginning of this difficult life, as when the children are born, or even earlier, new symbolic “schools” appear connected with giving birth to the children, their infancy, childhood, adolescence. Your own education and responsibility for yourself only is no longer enough. You should also – or probably first of all – take these actions for your children. An especially important stage of this way is to prepare them for school as an institution, mainly shaping their approaches and attitudes (“you must not



scare the children with school”) as well as introducing the values held in the family. According to Comenius, you should arouse the children’s affection for learning as something quite natural as soon as possible, and make them understand its value and significance throughout their lives, so they can experience loneliness for education. This aim is easier to achieve if the parents treat their child like a “great and extremely precious jewel” (Comenius, 2017: 10).

Good education at the elementary level was supposed to bring concrete results at the further stages of education as well as after leaving school as an educational institution. In his concept of lifelong learning, Comenius identified eight age stages, eight different school institutions, and consequently, he described eight separate schools. In doing so, he took into account a person’s entire life from conception till death, and included this philosophy in *Pampaedia*, moving away from the traditional understanding of school as an institution. The remaining schools in his concept are more symbolic than real. He claims that “every age is suitable for learning, and human life has no other point apart from learning” (Comenius, 1973:67). And “it is very easy to make the whole life become school. You just need to give people of all ages what they are able to do” (Ibidem:69). Comenius’ idea of lifelong education is based on his own philosophy of life, which grew up in his mind for a long time, and elements of which had appeared in the previous works (before *Pampaedia*).

Each school has its own aims and tasks. Thus, the “school of birth” was supposed to give “useful advice to parents about the first care of the “already conceived offspring till their birth”, the “school of childhood” was to deal with “careful upbringing of children from birth till the age of six” (Comenius, 1973: 157). The task of this school was to make the children “make friends with the world, which they have to go through, with everything that happens in this world”, and learn to “skillfully deal with people, whose cooperation cannot and should not be avoided” (Comenius, 1973: 159). The third level of education, the “school of boyhood”, was intended for children from six till twelve. Its main aim was to teach the children how to read and write and to familiarize them with the world of sensual things through pictures, as well as to teach them boyhood ethics, based on the sensual reality and the analysis of human nature; to acquaint them with a synopsis of Biblical stories, and the core of the Bible, showing the simplified whole of what you should believe in, expect and do. Another aim was to systematically “polish” the students’ minds: the so-called “brain polisher” was a collection of riddles. Teachers were responsible for “making everything take place as if

through play” and “letting the children see, hear, and touch everything by themselves; pronounce, read, write; draw, do, use everything to their own advantage” (Comenius, 1973: 181–182). Individual classes had quite original names: “Flowerbed, Plant school, Violet garden, Rose garden, Decorative garden, Paradise (holy and moral riddles, fairy tales, metaphors, similarities)” (Ibidem: 182–205). These were metaphoric names corresponding to natural teaching methods suggested by Comenius.

The aims of the “school of adolescence”, or secondary school, were oriented around “learning languages and skills, especially Latin and encyclopedias of scholarly arts, sciences, customs and piety”. It was divided into six classes: of language, physics, mathematics, learning customs, dialectics, and rhetoric (Ibidem: 209–213).

At this stage of development – adolescence – education is extremely important, because such values and abilities as dignity, independence, and freedom, which are included in the very human nature and prove man’s humanity, need special care and development in this period. According to Pelcová, the “Aristotelian-Thomistic rule: *ars imitatur naturam*” (“education is imitation of the nature”) should be applied here (Pelcová, 2019: 49). By studying an “encyclopedia of scholarly arts, sciences, customs and piety”, secondary school students would be able to develop the above-mentioned values, accomplishing individual stages of this level of education.

The school of mature youngsters, or the academy, “was intended for gaining more perfect wisdom”. The aim of this school and academic life was “pure cognition of things followed by using the knowledge in practice, by means of full pansophism, which was hardly mentioned by the previous booklets”. “The method will be a practical presentation of pansophism, comprehensible as funny wisdom, or Practice of the gates of things, using the stage in a pleasant way to show simple ways leading to the awareness of human errors and their correction” (Ibidem: 225).

These were pansophic exercises, and the school was a school of pansophism and panortosis (removing what is redundant, filling gaps, appropriate order) (Ibidem: 226). Such pansophic education was designed to teach young people the following truths and abilities: firstly, the fact that “there is one method referring to the whole and reaching the essence of things”; secondly, the ability to “observe anything they see, read, hear and write thoroughly, and go into richer and richer cognition of things every day, even use other people’s messages (illustrative ones, plays, proverbs, metaphors etc) to get thorough understanding of reality; thirdly, the ability to

“raise various problems freely and reply to the issues raised by others quickly and meaningfully” (Ibidem: 227). Comenius was convinced that such and other pansophic exercises would provide the young people with “unexpectedly more than they promised”. In other words, young people had a chance to get “extremely serious benefits with a minimal input” (Ibidem). The academy was supposed to lead to “mind perfection and consisted in clear understanding of the world of things, perfection of the will, letting you choose what is the best, and perfection of the acting ability, expressed in a perfect use of all things in practice”.

In *School of Omniscience*, Comenius explains everything that concerns pansophism in a way which makes everything comprehensible for everyone. He wrote: “We want to instill in the minds all the best that is there to be learned. In order (...) not to leave anything in heaven, on the earth, in the water, in the underground abyss, in the human body, in the soul, in the Holy Bible, in the arts, in the economic or political affairs, in the Church, finally in life or in death, or in the very eternity, that would be completely unfamiliar to the young candidates of wisdom; so they can know useful things, understand everything, and have experience of real and salutary using everything” (Comenius, 1964: 330). That is how Comenius explains the need of universal knowledge about things in young people, whom he calls “young candidates of wisdom”, “students of the School of Omniscience”.

The knowledge about things should be accompanied by “acting efficiency” to make the young people “capable of anything, efficient, thoughtful, able to cope with any life task in the right time” (Ibidem: 330, 331). In the “schools of life”, as grown-ups, they should use this knowledge as well as gain new knowledge all the time, on their own, without the teacher or books at this level of development. In *School of Omniscience*, the creator of pansophism also strove for the students’ language refinement, or beautiful speech, the “smoothness of beautiful pronunciation” in three languages (Latin, Greek and Hebrew apart from the mother tongue). Finally, Comenius emphasizes that “one should learn all of these completely, act completely, and get complete results” (Ibidem: 331). He refers to Hippocrates’ famous saying: “Short life – long art”.

The academy was followed by “apodemia”, or the school of travelling and journeys. This kind of “school” involved graduates, as “it is necessary to travel in order to air your thoughts and feelings, and to gratify them” as well as to “enable the student to decide with more ease and confidence which profession to choose”. Moreover, travelling develops the ability of dealing

with other people (Sitarska, 2007: 75). It is an extremely important stage of young people's lives, of the development of their humanity: they have a chance to use the pansophic knowledge they gained at school in various life environments of various people. The former can get to know the latter's work, and – most importantly – they have a chance for genuine communication, a chance to learn the other people's wisdom and transmit their own wisdom gained at all the levels of institutional education.

It is the last level of institutional school, but not the end of school in general. A new more difficult stage of gaining knowledge starts, of the work on themselves towards perfection. From the very childhood, young people learn to be responsible for their development, for "becoming" a human being. This fact was as strongly emphasized by the 17<sup>th</sup>-century pedagogue in his *School of Omniscience*, as it is now by contemporary pedagogues and philosophers. The issue of "becoming a human being" in the process of education is approached by Jarosław Gara in his publications. "The idea of responsibility for your own development and "becoming" what you are not yet assumes the subjectivity and proactivity of man as an individual who is able to shape his own life and give it the right direction" (Gara, 2007: 113). According to this philosopher and pedagogue, "education should (...) instill individual responsibility for the person's choices and acts. It should prepare for taking this responsibility voluntarily, so it can appear naturally and spontaneously at a certain stage of development" (Ibidem), moving towards a valuable and perfect life. John Amos Comenius understood education as the "improvement of human affairs" – according to Naděžda Pelcová's interpretation, which I agree with, taking into account the idea of pansophism and lifelong learning.

"Comenius did not narrow down the point of school education to preparing the students for craft or social life, although – as Naděžda Pelcová believes – he must have appreciated practical knowledge and he must have been aware of the role teaching played in gaining it. With the use of modern language, it should be stated that he did not mean democratization of education either, as it is often discussed in the context of his definition of didactics as a universal art of teaching *omnes omnia omnino*, i.e. "everybody everything with all possible means, with reference to the whole". It is no doubt that his wish was to make education available to everyone, and that is why he was the first one to insist on – using modern language again – inclusion, i.e. teaching both girls and boys, as well as disabled students" (Pelcová, 2019: 49).

The next levels of school according to Comenius' idea are purely symbolic. They are: the "school of young men", the "school of men", the "school of old age" and the "school of death". The "school of young men" is based on the assumption that "the world is full of misguided people and there is no other way of liberating them from the mistakes than to take them out of ignorance, the source of all evil". According to Comenius, there are a few reasons why people make mistakes in life: firstly, they have no goals in life, "they do not know which route they should take"; secondly, they do not know ways to achieve the goal; thirdly, "stunned with the activities of the tumultuous modern age, they do not pay sufficient attention to the higher values" (Komeński, 1973: 237).

In "Pampaedia", Comenius shows young people which goals they should make for in order not to die. He argues that "without philosophical knowledge, it is impossible to achieve the highest level of piety, and once the mind is purified it will never get away from the good and becomes Godlike (Ibidem: 238). He clearly places before their eyes the way leading THERE (capital letters by B.S.). He tries to convince young people that the "prudence which guides human actions is the sun, commander and master of any other virtues, the measure and the principle, the yield, the beginning, the middle and the end, the foundation and the climax, and finally, a treasury" (Ibidem).

Comenius wrote about the symbolic schools: "Life is school" – "So you should not reject books (as many people do), and you should consider using them in the right way right now. School requires examples, instructions, and exercises" (Ibidem: 242). Those who have already become mature men should look for general wisdom in books and keep gaining experience in practice (Ibidem: 243).

The point of the "school of young men" is expressed in the recommendation of keeping diaries, which should contain: a description of your life till the present, an outline of the completed academic studies, observations from the journeys, and "what has not been achieved yet and still needs to be done throughout your life". This school is a school of self-cognition, a reflection on your life, a plan, or rather a design for your further life.

The next educational stage of this pedagogical concept is the "school of men", concerning the middle part of life. The aim of this school is "wise management of the issues of life, of everything you do and everything that hurts, and especially love for your fellows; as well as care about your education, good habits and piety collected during the years of your youth, so that nothing of these is lost when put into practice, in the routine of work and

rush of life” – the author addresses adults directly. “All of these should be rather useful now, as all the usefulness of wisdom consists in making reasonable use of life” (Ibidem: 242). Comenius was convinced that “people should be taught how to use the accumulated light of wisdom in all works of their life, so they can go through any good and evil safely and finally find the best solution” (Ibidem).

In this period of life, systematic student education is no longer the point. In this “school”, lack of progress simply means “regress” as there is still so “much to learn”. As Comenius puts it, basic factors of education in this period are “serious treatment of things themselves and varied relationships with other people”. This school is divided into three levels: the first one involves those who start their professional careers, the second one – those who follow their careers, and the third one – those who “finish their careers”. Nevertheless, in all the three situations, the main area and aim of education is just life itself. A starting point of this school is serious, responsible and independent activity (Sitarska, 2009: 276, translated by Gertruda Paciorek) The “school of men” has a more relaxed system, it is not connected with books or teachers. Each individual in it is a book, a teacher, and a school for himself. He gives himself examples and instructions, as well as endless exercises” (Comenius, 1973: 245). The pedagogue gave the “students” of this specific symbolic school advice and educational directives derived from the philosophy of life (See: Ibidem: 265).

In his concept of lifelong learning, Comenius describes the “school of old age” as well, since “old age is part of life, therefore it is part of school, so it is school”. Consequently, it must have its teachers, its regulations, its aims and studies, and its discipline to make progress in elderly people’s lives possible. “Old age is the weakest period of life, that is why it should not be neglected or devoid of help”. Comenius’ concept cannot lack the “school of death”, either – the pedagogue hesitated to postulate this level, however, he came to the conclusion that the equivalent of the first level of school, the school of birth, should exist. Moreover, he thought that in this way full analogy between the structure of existence defined by pansophism and the school levels as the phenomena of life would be reached (Sitarska, 2007: 72–77; 2009: 271–280).

As far as the idea of women’s education is concerned, in his concept Comenius postulated making women equal with men in their right to be educated, which meant that he treated women in the same subjective way as men. He proclaimed the idea of making elementary school, or the school of

the mother tongue, compulsory for all children regardless of their sex, origin, social and economic status, or worldview, as the education it provided was necessary for living. In his concept, however, only men appear in the names of schools (Sitarska, 2014: 205).

According to Naděžda Pelcová, “what Comenius insisted on mostly in (...) lifelong learning was to enable man to achieve eternal life thanks to education, and to rebuild the destroyed harmony of the world. It is no doubt that both aims are based on the Christian vision of reality, which has its origins in Neoplatonism, ordered hierarchically in accordance with the Augustinian spirit” (Pelcová, 2019: 49).

How was pansophic education accomplished in practice? However, as Jolanta Dworzaczkowa's research of Comenius' activity in Leszno suggests, there are no traces of a dormitory for poorer students in Leszno, although there were initiatives of its creation. This fact made it difficult for the poor to learn (Dworzaczkowa, 2003: 76). The students of Leszno secondary school were sons of the Polish nobility (not only from Wielkopolska), the German nobility (local and from Silesia), the Czech nobility in exile and future ministers (both of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches). The students were divided into two categories: “the nobility and theologians” (Jonston in his project). And, although in the time of Comenius' presidency Leszno developed a lot, it seems that few middle-class students graduated from the school unless they intended to become clergymen, the others probably just left school at the lower classes (Ibidem). In the school, they taught ethics, history, politics and law, as well as “military art”. These subjects were the canon of “civic education”. The seminarians were educated outside the regular school curriculum. They were taught theology, the Greek language, and the Scriptures. Comenius thought that an educated man should be able to read the New Testament in original (Ibidem: 75).

The school curriculum of the time of Comenius' presidency differed from his original idea and he was not completely satisfied with what he had managed to achieve in Leszno. His views of what a “school of omniscience” should look like evolved. He intended to accomplish them in Sárospatak, however, he only partially succeeded. Not all of his projects worked well in practice, and what is more, he did not have full freedom to act. It was constrained by the Church authorities', the scholars', as well as the students' parents' opinions (Ibidem: 74).

In his concept of lifelong learning, Comenius assigned eight layers of existence to the eight school levels: the possible world corresponds to the

school of birth, the world of prototypes – to the school of childhood, the angelic world – to the school of boyhood, the natural world – to the school of adolescence; the world created by people – to the school of youth; the moral world – to the school of men; the spiritual world – to the school of old age, and the eternal world – to the school of death (Sitarska, 2007: 77).

Comenius concludes his work, which presents most fully the idea of lifelong learning, with hope for future general agreement on the great usefulness of the common education of minds for the world. He perceives education as an integral part, an element, a trend of life.

All the school levels were imbued with John Amos Comenius' idea of pansophism, according to the concept of lifelong learning. It is visible at every level of education. The connection of man's education with the whole of the world is perceptible, which overcomes his individuality. Comenius taught pansophism at every level, in both theoretical and practical terms. In institutional schools, he taught what to teach (it was a real curriculum for schools of all levels), and how to teach (instructions about teaching methods). He preferred natural methods and learning with all the senses. In the descriptions of consecutive schools in "Pampaedia", he addressed both teachers and students with all his perceptible expression. He taught everybody how to learn, how to gain knowledge, light and wisdom; he taught adults how to live for life's sake and for others; he showed the way to inner harmony (in the narrow and broad meaning) and perfection, as well as the way to self-cognition at each school level presented in the concept of lifelong learning (Sitarska, 2015: 145–153).

Fulfilling his calling, man should develop his humanity, which means to stand out with his mind and wisdom, distinguish himself with his language and speech, be strong in his actions, be decent and kind, and finally pious, worthy of God's kindness as well (Comenius, 1973: 33). That is why Comenius' works pay special attention to the knowledge of oneself, which becomes, to a certain extent, the knowledge of the world. The problem of self-cognition was the main element of valuable human life (Sitarska, 2012: 130–148). The idea of self-cognition, which we rely on nowadays as well, is a foundation of man's entire life, which is school. "Comenius understood man as a whole, i.e. as a being gifted by reason, free will, and acting ability. In his opinion, humanity was not only determined by the intellect, but it was also dependent on the will, what is more, faith, and the fact that man is able to work. Such complementary understanding of humanity determined the foundation of Comenius' views of education, whose aim is to "teach every-



body to remember their dignity and superiority, and try to achieve their own grandeur by all means" (Komenský, 1958: 62).

## **5. Present contexts of reference to John Amos Comenius' thought**

In interpretations of Comenius' pansophism, there is a tendency to treat it in terms of utopia. However, Comenius "does not submit ready-to-use solutions, nor does he consider his suggestions to be ideal (...). Instead, he wishes to share his very important experience and discovery with the reader: (...) the source of humanism lies in ourselves. Man is an exceptional being, who only becomes fully human thanks to the fulfillment of his mission – thanks to the care of the world which was entrusted to him". According to Naděžda Pelcova, it is "Comenius' message, addressed to today's education" (Pelcová, 2019: 52).

In my opinion, however, pansophism should be interpreted in a different way, taking into account Comenius' times and the body of interdisciplinary knowledge, and the present age, with "omnipresent" knowledge overwhelming man and making him unable to choose his content from the information which is available anytime, anywhere, close at hand. Nowadays, such an irreplaceable source of knowledge for everybody about everything seems to be the Internet, except that this knowledge is accessible for everyone regardless of their education levels. Modern man is reached by information from other media sources as well. Its huge amount overwhelms and disintegrates the human mind of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The excess of data, information and knowledge can be perceived as information chaos by an average person (Sitarska: 2011b: 29–30). They feel lost in all of it, they do not know which content to choose, as they are not really certain of its truthfulness and reliability. Man lacks sense of security in this area. Addiction to the Internet appears, and the lines between the real world and virtual reality become blurry. Today's man moves into virtual reality very eagerly and they find it easier to express their emotions there even if they have a problem doing it in real life. They cannot understand their life partner's need to do so. Therefore, they live "together" but "separately" (See: Bauman, 2003: 166, 167).

The process of communication and life in general are often disrupted: growth of reluctance, lack of kindness, aggression, jealousy or even envy may be observed, and the ability of a dialogue with others in the real world is difficult (Sitarska, 2012: 41–44). Therefore, there is a great need for media

education, security education, and health education in its wide meaning. Although such easy access to information may seem to make life easier, it turns out that life is more difficult, considering that we are living in a world which is full of antinomy, uncertainty, and constant anxiety; in a world where nothing is certain or ordered. It seems that “only uncertainty is certain”, as the world is full of chaos and destabilization. The enormous achievements of science and unlimited knowledge in every area surprisingly turn out to have serious deficiencies when confronted with new problems of mankind which suddenly appear. For example, still new diseases bring harm to the world’s population while they “have not overcome the old ones yet”, e.g. cancer (Sitarska, 2010: 75). At present (2020), it is the dangerous Covid-19 coronavirus, whose presence is burdening all of us mentally (especially senior citizens) and disorganizing our lives. We do not often know where the line is between caution (obeying all the rules and regulations) and the courage to help others in need despite possible danger. In Comenius’ times, mankind was also harmed by serious incurable illnesses (e.g. plague – “black death”). He was always keen on helping the sick and the needy himself, regardless of the risk of infection involved (Podsiadły, 2015: 239).

Modern man must be aware of the fact that the achievements of science are a chance for him, for the civilization, for the world, and at the same time they may be a threat for them. The line between them is very narrow and easy to cross. As never before, it is necessary to have a think about the contemporary world, people, their life and lifelong learning. In Comenius’ times, there was less information or knowledge, and mankind had no such dilemmas as nowadays (Sitarska, 2008: 105–122).

Comenius’ specific reform, going far beyond education, and concerning the “improvement of human affairs”, was to be supported – let me repeat - with philosophy, a bastion of the truth; religion, a fortress of piety; and politics, a tower of security. The three bastions, which are understood differently in the contemporary times but are still present in social life, were extremely important to the creator of pansophism. However, we must gain knowledge on these areas on our own, as there is no comprehensive and widely available education in these fields.

What should be understood as “human affairs”, which need improvement, is explained by Comenius in *Panegersia* (1964). It is the title of the first part of *De rerum humanarum...*The word “panegersia” can be translated as “common awakening”. “The creator of pansophism refers to the image of human nature: reason – mind – will; drive for acting and faith. What requires

immediate and necessary improvement is philosophy, religion, and politics. These three areas are seriously threatened with crisis and overcome with disharmony. Philosophy has become shallow as it just speculates. Religion has plunged into arguments about little things, instead of arousing faith in God. Churches, in turn, hungry for power, keep getting involved in secular things. Morality has fallen down, and politics has lost its reliability. Instead of solving the problems of coexistence, it gets involved in armed conflicts" (Pelcová, 2019: 52).

In the place of philosophy, traditionally understood as metaphysics, Comenius proposes pansophism, or wisdom leading to the knowledge of everything. However, what he means is not scientific knowledge, but recon in the order of existence programmed from above. Pansophism makes it possible to transform religious wars into tolerance and ecumenism. Comenius calls for peace in the world. However, peace is only going to appear when everyone (...) has become sensible and wise (...). This constitutes a foundation of the ordered world, in which people will be able to live with one another humanely, (...) and the one who wields power will be able to control himself first and be internally integrated. Thanks to this, he will not get lost in irrelevant details, get distracted or sink into his own selfishness. As an individual, he will be able to adjust to "the whole" (Patočka, 1998: 357, quoted after: Pelcová, 2019: 52).

At present, even though the philosophical education offered to pedagogy students is insufficient, it is still limited (taking into account ethics and aesthetics). There is no *philosophical pedagogy* taught as a subject, either. There are noticeable deficiencies in the students' understanding of philosophy as a science of the sense of life and action. School curricula do not expose philosophical currents as a basis for running contemporary and future schools. The society's knowledge of religion is insufficient, either, even in case of parents of children who attend religion classes (quite apart from the parents' worldview and piety). The situation seems to be still worse in case of the knowledge of politics and for politics. Politicians are not prepared for their roles. It is visible every day, in discussions between politicians of different political persuasions. No-one has ever taught them how to discuss and dispute politely.

The art of discussion is a great skill, which politicians lack, as well as all people (discussion as a teaching method is only introduced in secondary school, and in higher education it is used every day; however, there are no theoretical foundations of good discussion, as people are not provided with

the education in this field at school, nor with the education in disputing (eristic). It may be worth promoting symbolic schools, suggested by Comenius in his pansophism, and introducing the level: “school of discussion and disputing” within the school of mature men and women, addressed not only to politicians but to all people without exception, considering there are a lot of writings on the subject, from the border of logics, didactics and rhetoric. For instance, the art of disputing, the art of reasoning, rhetoric, eristic, and many other publications. The reading list may begin with Arthur Schopenhauer (Schopenhauer, 1993: 23–58; Witkowska-Maksimczuk, 2014). In Comenius’ opinion in the period of creating pansophism, politics was supposed to be home and tower of security. The knowledge of security and for security, especially as far as dangers and pathologies of the cyberspace are concerned, is also insufficient, although there are more or less successful attempts of such education.

In Leszno school, where Comenius was a teacher, and later – the president, these subjects were taught. The teachers were also educated in politics and other important branches of knowledge (logics, rhetoric, eristic, and even martial art).

We should consider which assumptions of pansophism are being accomplished, and if so, in which sense and range, or think and try to articulate the assumptions which have a chance to be accomplished and in what way. Or maybe the reality of pansophism should be considered differently: with reference to every individual student/ person (taking into account their abilities and interests) throughout their lives rather than with reference to the “whole mankind” as Comenius assumed? What I mean here is man in the process of self-education in an extra-institutional symbolic school, following Comenius’ idea. In a school as an educational institution, the teaching objectives for the first three forms are achieved through interdisciplinary content in its entirety, which seems to be in accordance with the assumptions of pansophism. In further education, curriculum minima are accomplished, i.e. knowledge is transmitted in structures, which is intended to guarantee its strong foundations. Comenius meant holistic interdisciplinary knowledge. His encyclopedism did not involve adding new content to the old. To “teach everybody everything about everything forever” meant to “serve” knowledge to the students/pupils in structures as certain units (systemic recognition of the content) – with all the senses and with the use of natural methods – in institutional schools, and in symbolic schools – gaining knowledge on your own, actively, through hard work, relying on self-cognition. Such attitudes, how-

ever, have to be shaped from the very childhood. The creator of pansophism often emphasized that "teaching and learning should be nice and pleasant like entertainment or a game" (Comenius, 2017: 17). The great Czech emphasized the significance of the human world through the accomplishment of the ideals of humanism. What he meant was to create good foundations for education in general, to create conditions for arousing loneliness for education, for understanding its significance and value.

The pansophic message, which most easily and comprehensibly may be expressed with the words: to teach "everybody everything with all possible means and with reference to the whole" should not be understood literally, as it would be utopian in fact. However, it is impossible to "suspect" Comenius of lack of imagination about the possibilities of acquiring such a wealth of knowledge by an individual. He must have been aware of the fast increase of new discoveries, inventions and knowledge, as well as of the fact that the scale of difficulty was growing and the threshold of social requirements towards scholars was rising. "He thought that advance was a constant process, and that it could and should extend and grow. However, he was aware of the fact that advance and development required all people's education as well as great effort from the teachers and scholars, who "pass the torch" of care about the society's upbringing and education from one generation to the next (Bieńkowski, 1980: 14).

Some modern educational reforms seem to be based on Comenius' ideas, although there are no references to prove this fact. First of all, they claim their place in the teaching objectives: firstly, to educate a person (mainly relying on their upbringing), and secondly, to provide the students with strong foundations of knowledge, which should be holistic at the first education level, with no division into subjects. Modern educational reforms are also based on inner harmony (which should be taught to children and young people). All of the above sounds beautiful and exalted, but still abstract to us modern men and women, not in terms of misunderstanding of inner harmony, but rather in terms of its accomplishment.

In modern studies of Comenius, he is most often referred to as a pedagogue (interpretation of his pedagogical works with regard to modern times, taking into account the current relevance of his ideas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century); a philosopher (representative of the European Baroque philosophy and the 17<sup>th</sup>-century encyclopedism), a theologian (the current relevance of Comenius' ecumenism in today's religious conflicts); a writer (representative of the Baroque literature). In every kind of modern discourses (in all of

their ranges), attention is drawn to the modern interpretation of Comenius' ideas. Their priority/ main aim is to interpret modern contexts of John Amos Comenius' pedagogy, philosophy and theology through the achievement of detailed objectives of an interdisciplinary nature. They are mainly: exploring the essence of pansophism as the philosophical foundation of Comenius' ideas and the core of all his writings; exploring the idea of permanent/lifelong learning and the related "concept of man's self-cognition" at every level of his life/ school (periods of life correspond to the schools) (Sitarska, 2015: 145–156; Sitarska, 2018: 227–24).

John Amos Comenius' specific philosophy of life, including a pedagogical message, which he called *pansophism*, played and still plays an important role in the understanding of his pedagogical concept and his approach to the issues of teaching and education/ self-education, and the role of the teacher in these processes. In *Pansophiae prodromus* he attributes a special purpose to it, which he formulates as reaching universal cognition, possessing and using all things. The pedagogue thought that only a man who was brought up and educated in the spirit of pansophism was able to understand and accept such values as freedom, tolerance, and harmonious co-existence among people. Pansophism was supposed to be the way to the renewal of societies, the improvement of human affairs, and therefore to the abolition of ignorance, fanaticism, or violence. Comenius was certain that the above aim could be obtained through pansophic education, consisting in man's adaptation to life in a comprehensible world. He hoped for full understanding of the world, i.e. the nature, man and God (Bieńkowski, 2000: 89). Pansophism was supposed to be the "light of the mind to enlighten all the dark, which was to show all people the whole of things" (Kvačala, 1902: 299–300: quoted after Bieńkowski, 2000: 88).

In my opinion, Comenius believed in the idea of pansophism while he was creating it, and that is why all his works are imbued with the idea. He never thought of it as utopian, which is proved by his power of expression while presenting it. He did not write, after all, that the idea of pansophism would come true in his lifetime; he did not even raise this issue. He must have been aware of the fact that it was and would be difficult to accomplish the idea. At the end of his life, as an old man, Comenius realized that the idea had not come true, nor did he have any reasons for satisfaction (which was included in his biographical work *Unum Necessarium/ The only necessary one*), although he had tried hard to lead mankind out of the labyrinths of life and showed people the way to do it. For him, it was a simple way through

upbringing and more generally – through teaching. And education, as a result of these, was understood as universal wisdom and light, as the “cure for all evil”. It was the source of the world’s change for the better, for the improvement of “human affairs”. It may be called a specific reform, going far beyond the sphere of education. In pansophism, Comenius included his vision of a better future.

Olga Tokarczuk, the Polish writer awarded the 2018 Nobel Prize for Literature, referred to John Amos Comenius and his idea of pansophism in her speech: “We are living in a rush of contradictory, mutually exclusive information, fighting with each other fiercely. Our predecessors believed that access to knowledge would not only bring people happiness, welfare, health and wealth, but would also make the society equal and just. They believed that what the world lacked was universal wisdom rising from knowledge. John Amos Comenius, a great 17<sup>th</sup>-century pedagogue, “coined” the term “pansophism”, in which he included ideas of possible omniscience, universal knowledge, which would comprise any possible cognition. It was also, or first of all, a dream of knowledge available to everybody” (Svenska Akademien, 2019: 8).

In the context of Comenius’ idea of pansophism, Olga Tokarczuk referred to the Internet as a source of knowledge for everybody. “When the Internet appeared, these ideas seemed to finally have a chance to come true in a complete way. Wikipedia, which I admire and support, could have appeared to Comenius and many other thinkers of the current to be mankind’s dream come true: here we are creating and receiving an enormous body of knowledge, which is still completed, updated, and democratically accessible from practically every place on Earth. However, dreams come true often disappoint us. It has turned out that we are not able to face this mass of information, which, instead of unifying, generalizing and liberating, differentiates, divides, closes things in “bubbles”, creates a variety of incoherent or even contradictory, antagonistic stories. What is more, the Internet, recklessly subjected to the commercial processes and dedicated to player-monopolists, is in control of giant amounts of data, which are used in a rather “non-pansophic” way, first of all for programming the users’ behaviour rather than for making knowledge even more accessible” (Ibidem: 9–10).

It is astonishing that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we discover the current relevance of his works, philosophy and pedagogy. As far as Comenius’ pansophic ideas are concerned, I am convinced that they can be accomplished nowadays with their main assumptions remained, but modified and adapted

to the present day, taking into account the social development at the moment, the conditions in which we live, and most of all, the culture, science and contemporary education systems, as well as the philosophical systems which the contemporary education system is based upon.

Also Cempel's idea: *Knowledge in any place and at any time* (See: Cempel: 2005) may serve as the motto of an analysis of the idea of lifelong learning, imbued with the idea of pansophism. Knowledge, constant and interdisciplinary, is gained always and everywhere. Gaining knowledge is no longer only associated with school and young people, but with any place we are in and any time of our lives (Sitarska, 2016: 251). Guided by this thought, Comenius was developing his concept of the philosophical idea of pansophism. The same thought is a guideline for teachers, who have to permanently develop their competencies which are necessary in today's world. Apart from other important skills, they include continuous work on yourself and control of the development of your abilities in terms of their constant enrichment. For learners/ students, the most essential competencies are those of dialogue and communication (See: Kožuh, 2017:17). All people living in today's world are guided by this thought.

\* \* \*

Recalling the interpretations by researchers of John Amos Comenius, you can notice extreme perceptions of this controversial figure: from very positive ones, focusing on the creative, original and universal elements in his writings, through mixed ones (both positive and negative, unclear and contradictory), to critical ones, finding his ideas, mainly pansophism, full of contradictions, gaps, and utopia. Comenius himself is perceived as a complete imperfection: as a theologian, a philosopher, and a pedagogue. Studying these interpretations fills your mind with chaos and takes you "nowhere".

At this stage of analysis of works by Comenius and about Comenius, their interpretation and reinterpretation, the reflection arises: John Amos Comenius and his ideas are impossible to fathom. Every work, every chapter, page, and even every sentence is room for still new reflection and interpretation, depending on current knowledge and interpretation competence, which evolve all the time. The more of this knowledge you gain, the bigger gap appears in your mind. Every day I am writing, my thinking of him as a pedagogue, a philosopher, and a theologian is determined by a particular thought or its interpretation I have just read.



A lot has been written about John Amos Comenius in Poland and Europe, but he is still little known, as the knowledge of him is quite random, therefore incomplete, inconsistent and contradictory. There is still no interpretation continuity, there are gaps in source analyses, and, first and foremost, Polish researchers of Comenius have no access to most of original source scripts, since they have not been translated into Polish. As a result, there is no ordered, structured system of comeniological knowledge and there is not going to be one soon. John Amos Comenius' concept of *pansophism* awaits more thorough analysis, which will be possible after all his available works are publicized in Polish.

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