



Olesia Smolinska

ORCID: 0000-0003-1612-2830

Stepan Gzhytskyi National University
of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnologies
Lviv, Ukraine

Philosophy of life and professional choice of the individual in the works of Jan Amos Comenius: the role of the teacher as a guide in the world of values

DOI: 10.34739/szk.2025.12.01

Abstract: The article examines the philosophy of life and professional choice of the individual in the works of Jan Amos Comenius based on the work "Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart". The relevance of the study is due to the need to understand the processes of life and professional self-determination in the conditions of modern socio-cultural transformations, the increase in the number of alternatives for life choices, the instability of the labor market and the strengthening of the influence of external factors on the formation of personal orientations of young people. The research problem is to identify the philosophical and pedagogical principles of life and professional self-determination of the individual in the legacy of Jan Amos Comenius and determine the possibilities of their use for understanding the role of the teacher and higher education institution in the process of forming a culture of responsible choice. The aim of the article is to identify and interpret the ideas of Jan Amos Comenius regarding the life and professional self-determination of the individual, as well as to substantiate the role of the teacher as a guide in the process of a person's search for the meaning of life, vocation and professional purpose. The methodological basis of the study is historical-pedagogical, hermeneutic, comparative and interpretative methods, as well as the analysis of scientific works devoted to the problems of life philosophy, vocation, self-knowledge and pedagogical support of the individual. As a result of the study, it was established that in the work "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart" life choice is presented as a process of searching for the meaning of existence, which takes place in conditions of uncertainty, external pressure and the need for critical reflection on social stereotypes. It is shown that professional choice in Comenius's concept goes beyond the choice of a specific profession and is considered as the realization of a vocation and a form of service to society. It is substantiated that the image of the guide in the work reflects the complexity of pedagogical support, combining the support of the individual with the need to preserve his inner freedom and autonomy. The conclusions of the study indicate that the pedagogical heritage of Jan Amos Comenius retains methodological significance for modern education, and the higher education institution and the

teacher can be considered as important subjects of the formation of a culture of life and professional choice, the development of reflection, critical thinking and responsible self-determination of the individual.

Keywords: pedagogy, philosophy of education, Jan Amos Comenius, life and professional self-determination, vocation, pedagogical support, culture of choice

Introduction

The problem of personal and professional self-determination is one of the key tasks that accompany a person throughout his or her life. In modern conditions, it is actualized due to ultra-rapid social, economic and technological changes that significantly transform life strategies. Globalization processes, digital transformation, labor market instability, the emergence of new professions and the rapid disappearance of certain types of activity necessitate the need to adjust professional plans and life guidelines. Under such conditions, the choice ceases to be a one-time action, accompanied at a young age by professional consultants, teachers, parents, traditions, gradually turning into a continuous process of independent decision-making associated with the definition of personal values, goals and methods of self-realization. However, there is a specificity of the first choice for young people who are at the stage of choosing an educational trajectory and profession. This is a large number of alternatives, which, on the one hand, expands opportunities for development, and on the other hand, generates uncertainty, doubts and difficulties in making decisions. This is also the minimum of personal experience and primary ideas about professional activity, that is, in fact, only about its external details, such as: time, salary, career extremes. In such conditions, not only the possession of information about professions or labor market requirements becomes important, but also the ability to self-knowledge, critical reflection of one's own capabilities, awareness of life priorities and responsibility for one's own choice.

In the pedagogical dimension, the problem of life and professional self-determination is associated with the need to support the individual in the process of finding one's own path. A modern teacher increasingly plays the role of a mentor, consultant and facilitator, who helps students understand different life scenarios, form a system of values and develop the ability to make independent decisions. That is why the appeal to the philosophical and pedagogical heritage of Jan Amos Comenius, on whose ideas the school (and

not only) educational system is still based, has a methodological character. In the work "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart" he offers a deep understanding of a person's search for his place in the world, the interaction of external circumstances and internal beliefs, as well as the role of a guide in the process of knowing himself and the world around him. In this context, the ideas of J.A. Comenius can serve as an important theoretical basis for understanding modern processes of life and professional self-determination of the individual.

The purpose of the article is to identify and comprehend the ideas of Jan Amos Comenius regarding the life and professional self-determination of the individual, presented in the work "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart", as well as to determine the role of the teacher in accompanying a person on the path of finding the meaning of life, vocation and responsible professional choice. One of the key publications in the 20th century in terms of the topic under study is the article by H. Kamler "Life Philosophy and Life Style" (Kamler, 1984), where the author distinguishes two types of values that perform different psychological functions: values of life philosophy (life philosophy) and values of lifestyle (life style). According to the author, the former provide a person's personal identity and are related to his or her deep beliefs, while the latter form social identity and largely depend on social approval and expectations of the environment. In the context of the problem of life and professional choice, this idea is important, since it allows us to consider self-determination as a search for a balance between the internal values of the individual and external social requirements. H. Kamler warns that the identification of these two spheres can lead to personal or social identity crises, when a person chooses a life path not in accordance with his own beliefs, but under the influence of social expectations. For pedagogy, this means the need to support the individual in forming his own life philosophy, which becomes the basis of a conscious professional and life choice. J. Florczykiewicz analyzes the ways in which a person knows himself and the world around him from the perspective of the work of Jan Amos Comenius, emphasizing the unity of self-knowledge, knowledge of the world and moral improvement of the individual. For the problem of life and professional choice, this work is important, as it demonstrates that a person's conscious self-determination is based on a deep understanding of their own

nature, abilities and place in society (Florczykiewicz, 2019). E. Wyczółkowska examines the concept of a person in Comenius's legacy through the lens of internal and external freedom, which create conditions for the harmonious development of the physical, intellectual and emotional spheres of the personality. In the context of life and professional choice, the researcher emphasizes that a person's ability to self-determination is directly related to the level of their internal freedom, which allows them to make decisions in accordance with their own values and calling, and not only under the influence of external circumstances (Wyczółkowska, 2019). Researchers of personal philosophy (Lester, Dench & Dadfar, 2025) studied the intersection of professional and personal in the aspects of nihilism, dogmatism, pragmatism and idealism, linking these philosophical views with personality traits. The authors C. Swann, R. Keegan, B. Cropley, I. Mitchell (2018) consider the problems of professional philosophy in the aspect of applied practice in sports, physical exercises or performance in the context of the advisory component of a specialist's activity. The problems of professional and personal self-determination intersect in the plane of vocation. There are a number of studies on this topic in various professional fields. In particular, regarding art education, researcher O. Oleksiuk (2022) focused on the problem of a new educational paradigm in the context of post-non-classical art pedagogy, noting that in this case, existential and creative aspects intersect in the ethical problem of vocation.

Own scientific research on this topic was focused on studying the problem of the professional career of a university teacher (Smolinska & Semeniv, 2024). The publication reflects the results of studying the content of social expectations regarding the career of a teacher, the problem of pedagogical professionalism as a complex dimension on which ideas about career orientations are based, and practically researched teachers' self-concepts about their careers. The selected work "Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart" was also studied by M. Jastrzębski (2021) in the topic of forming the image of the world of scientists, messages of J. A. Comenius addressed to the modern academic world. Literary aspects of semantics and functions of literary characters of this work were studied by A. Borkowski (2021).

Given the chosen topic and the formulated goal, three components of the problem can be distinguished:

1. Life choice of the individual as a search for the meaning of existence in "Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart".
2. Professional choice in the context of vocation and service to society according to J. A. Comenius.
3. Teacher as a guide on the path to life and professional self-determination.

The individual's life choice as a search for the meaning of existence in "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart"

The problem of choice belongs to the fundamental issues of human existence. It is because of the need to make decisions, determine life guidelines and bear responsibility for one's own path that a person realizes himself as the subject of his own life (G. Skovoroda, I. Kant, J.-P. Sartre, M. Heidegger, A. Camus, A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche). But first there was Jan Amos Comenius. In the work "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart" this problem acquires an artistic and philosophical embodiment through the image of the Wanderer, who sets out into the world, striving to find his place among various social classes, professions and ways of life. Already at the beginning of the work, the hero explains the basis of his search - moral maturity: "When I had attained that age at which the difference between good and bad begins to appear to the human understanding..." (Komensky, 1905, p. 9). It is this situation of choice that becomes the starting point of his spiritual journey.

The image of the Wanderer is a universal image of a person who is in search of the meaning of life and his own calling. His journey goes far beyond the limits of movement in space, acquiring an existential character. The hero seeks to understand which place in the world will meet not only his external needs, but also his internal aspirations ("I came to this decision that I should first behold all earthly things that are under the sun, and then only, having wisely compared one thing with another, choose a course of life" (Komensky, 1905, p. 10). He observes the lives of different people, trying to find among them an example of true happiness and harmony, but gradually becomes convinced that external success does not always provide inner satisfaction, therefore it is not enough to find only material well-being (even in a society

of consumerism – O.S.), you also need food for the mind, which reflects a person's need for a full, meaningful existence. An important aspect of the existential dimension of this work is the depiction of the experience of uncertainty and doubt. The Wanderer has no ready-made answers and is forced to independently evaluate what he sees. He is accompanied by guides – Searchall and Delusion, who try to impose a certain vision of the world, but the hero does not fully trust their assessments. This reveals one of the key ideas of the work: a person cannot shift responsibility for his own choice to others. Even with more or less qualified/authoritative advisors, the final decision remains his. Jan Amos Komensky shows that the path to truth inevitably passes through doubt, critical reflection on experience and personal search.

Gradually, Wanderer comes to the conclusion that none of the external forms of human life is able to fully satisfy a person's desire for happiness and inner fulfillment. After getting acquainted with different social classes and professions, he feels disappointment, which is not so much a manifestation of pessimism as a stage of spiritual enlightenment, since the destruction of illusions is a necessary prerequisite for a deeper awareness of one's own nature and true destiny, the only basis for the beginning of independent life choices, a spiritual journey in life. Trying to find his own way, he finds himself in a complex and contradictory world of human relationships, professions, social roles and social values, so the next important motif of the work becomes the image of a labyrinth as a symbol of the space in which a person is forced to choose between truth and illusion, his own aspirations and external influences.

The labyrinth in J. A. Comenius appears not only as a space of physical wandering, but primarily as a metaphor for the spiritual disorientation of a person who is trying to find the meaning of existence and his own place among numerous life paths and social roles. The Wanderer finds himself in a world where everyone offers his own vision of happiness, success and the right way of life, but internal uncertainty and contradiction are hidden behind the external orderliness. That is why the world is described as a labyrinth of possibilities, where a person can easily lose himself, succumbing to illusions or other people's ideas about a successful life. In today's hypersaturated information space, this is a very important thesis, since even developed critical thinking, moral maturity and material stability are not always enough to establish a balance between real life and virtual. If we are

talking about youth, then experience and maturity are still too flexible, not established, as for adults - on the contrary, the orthodox influence of experience "it has always been like this and will continue to be like this" also blocks the possibilities for rethinking, therefore it denies the very fact of possible changes, marginalizes the personality.

J.A. Comenius shows that a person quite often makes his life and professional choices under the influence of social expectations, the desire for recognition or the desire to comply with established norms. Wanderer observes different social classes, professions and forms of human activity, but almost everywhere he notices a discrepancy between the external image and the inner essence. People try to give the impression of happy, wise or successful, hiding their own fears, dissatisfaction and spiritual emptiness. Symbolic in this context is the use of glasses through which Delusion forces Wanderer to look at the world of life. They embody a distorted vision of reality, shaped by social stereotypes, fashion, authorities, and the pursuit of external well-being. In this way, Jan Amos Komensky raises the problem of a person's critical attitude towards imposed models of life success, which in the modern realities of influencers' influence is a rather painful problem.

A special role in the work is played by the images of Searchall and Delusion, who accompany Wanderer on his journey through the world. They symbolize external factors that shape the human vision of reality and significantly influence the life choices of the individual. Searchall acts as a guide who seeks to explain how the world works and help the hero navigate social phenomena, but his knowledge turns out to be superficial and incomplete (profane). In contrast, Delusion consciously distorts the perception of the world, forcing him to see not the true essence of things, but their attractive outer shell. It is not for nothing that Wanderer gradually begins to doubt what he has seen and tries to look at the world with his own eyes.

So, in the first part of the work, Comenius consistently reveals life choices as a process of searching for meaning, which occurs in conditions of uncertainty and numerous external influences. Through the image of the Wanderer, the author shows the need for a critical reflection on social norms and stereotypes that can distort a person's idea of his own destiny. It is the ability to see the world not through the "glasses of Delusion", but through the prism of one's own mind that becomes a prerequisite for conscious self-determination. For the modern rethinking of the problem of professional and life

choices, this idea remains extremely relevant, because a person continues to be in a kind of “labyrinth” of social expectations, informational influence and numerous models of success that can shape (and do shape – O.S.) his idea of the right life path. In this context, the work of J.A. Comenius acquires not only a historical and pedagogical subject field, but also as a text-reflection on the universal problem of preserving personal autonomy in conditions of external pressure and social illusions. Jan Amos Comenius considers life choices not as a one-time decision, but as a long process of self-knowledge, during which a person gradually frees himself from illusions and approaches an understanding of his own destiny. Through the image of Wanderer, the teacher-philosopher shows that the search for the meaning of life is accompanied by doubts, mistakes, external influences and internal struggle, but they are the conditions for personal growth. A person is not born with a formed life position, he develops it through experience, understanding of what he has seen and a critical attitude towards popular patterns of success. That is why the problem of life self-determination in the work gradually goes beyond the limits of general philosophical reflections and acquires a practical dimension: the search for such an activity in which a person could realize his abilities, values and aspirations. Therefore, Wanderer's journey naturally leads him to comprehend the world of professions and human labor.

Professional choice in the context of vocation and service to society according to J. A. Comenius

The search for the meaning of life is inevitably connected with the question of how a person realizes himself in the world. For most, professional activity becomes such a sphere, because it is through work that interaction with society occurs, abilities are realized and life values are embodied. Therefore, after comprehending the general problems of human existence, Jan Amos Comenius turns to the analysis of various professions, social strata and forms of activity. He is interested not so much in the external side of work as in its moral content, the motives of human actions and the connection between professional choice and a person's true calling (in Grigoriy Skovoroda this is the concept of “related work” – O.S.). In “The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart” the problem of professional choice is considered not as a purely practical issue of employment or social status, but as an important

component of a person's life self-determination. Traveling around the world, the main character gets acquainted with representatives of different professions and social classes, striving to find among them a way of life that would provide a person with true happiness, inner harmony and the opportunity to realize his calling. However, he gradually becomes convinced that the external attractiveness of professions often hides contradictions, shortcomings and moral compromises.

A feature of the work is that J. A. Comenius considers professions not in isolation, but in the broad context of social life. The Wanderer visits artisans, merchants, scientists, doctors, lawyers, civil servants, military personnel, representatives of the clergy and other social groups. In each of them, representatives try to represent their own activities as important, prestigious and necessary, but upon closer inspection it turns out that ambition, rivalry, vanity or the pursuit of personal gain are often hidden behind external well-being. That is why the hero increasingly notices the gap between what professions appear to society and what they really are. It is important that the author does not condemn specific professions as such. The subject of criticism is not a person's work, but the loss of its true purpose. The author shows that any activity can be useful for society if it is based on moral principles and serving the common good. On the other hand, a profession chosen solely for the sake of fame, wealth or power does not bring a person inner satisfaction. In this context, Wanderer's opinion that external signs of success are not always evidence of true happiness acquires special importance. Analyzing various spheres of human activity, J. A. Comenius actually raises the problem of the correspondence between a person's vocation and his professional choice. The hero gradually realizes that no profession in itself is able to provide the meaning of life. The decisive importance is not the status or prestige of the activity, but its correspondence to the person's internal beliefs and existing moral values. This approach is significantly ahead of its time and resonates with modern concepts of professional self-determination, which emphasize the importance of personal meaning of work and the realization of individual potential.

The work also traces a critical attitude towards public notions of a successful career. Most of the people Wanderer meets evaluate professions according to their ability to provide power, material well-being or social recognition. However, these very criteria turn out to be insufficient for achieving

inner harmony. The teacher-philosopher shows that focusing exclusively on external indicators of success can lead to a person losing their own identity and moving away from their true calling. Observing different social classes and professions, Wanderer gradually comes to the conclusion that the true value of an activity is determined not by its prestige, but by the motives that guide it. That is why the issue of professional choice moves into the plane of understanding work as a moral phenomenon associated with a person's responsibility to others and to themselves. Gradually, the analysis of different professions leads the author to a deeper question: why do people, when engaged in socially significant activities, often lose a sense of their true purpose? Comenius seeks the answer by understanding the very nature of work and the motives that prompt a person to choose a particular life path.

The description of the professional world as a space of constant competition and struggle for advantages is indicative. In different social strata, people strive more to surpass others or gain public recognition than to perform their work qualitatively. Jan Amos Comenius demonstrates that external signs of success often hide internal dissatisfaction, and the pursuit of personal gain often leads to the loss of moral guidelines. It is not for nothing that the hero sees that almost every sphere of activity is affected by vanity, which becomes the true master of the human world. This problem is especially acutely observed during the Wanderer's observations of people of science. That is, with that stratum that most often operates with knowledge as the quintessence of experience. Describing the activities of scientists, Comenius remarks with some irony: "These merely pour out water" (Komensky, 1905, p. 64). This image reflects those who are engaged in work not for the sake of creating new knowledge or benefiting society, but only mechanically reproducing what is already known, caring about their own authority or position. The criticism is directed not against science, but against the formal attitude to intellectual work, devoid of novelty, creativity and true vocation (the narrative of a scientific worker, not a scientist, is significantly widespread in Ukraine – O.S.).

The work also traces a critical attitude towards public notions of a successful career. Most of the people Wanderer meets evaluate professions according to their ability to provide power, material well-being or social recognition. However, these very criteria turn out to be insufficient for achieving inner harmony. The teacher-philosopher shows that focusing exclusively on

external indicators of success can lead to a person losing their own identity and moving away from their true calling. Observing different social classes and professions, Wanderer gradually comes to the conclusion that the true value of an activity is determined not by its prestige, but by the motives that guide it. That is why the issue of professional choice moves into the plane of understanding work as a moral phenomenon associated with a person's responsibility to others and to themselves. Gradually, the analysis of different professions leads the author to a deeper question: why do people, when engaged in socially significant activities, often lose a sense of their true purpose? Comenius seeks the answer by understanding the very nature of work and the motives that prompt a person to choose a particular life path.

The description of the professional world as a space of constant competition and struggle for advantages is indicative. In different social strata, people strive more to surpass others or gain public recognition than to perform their work qualitatively. Jan Amos Comenius demonstrates that external signs of success often hide internal dissatisfaction, and the desire for personal Another important characteristic of human activity in the work "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart" is its subordination to vanity and external assessments. Already at the beginning of the journey, the hero learns that his guides serve the mistress of the world, Vanity, who determines the rules of social life and the criteria for success. Symbolic is Wanderer's remark: "The Lady Vanity wishes us to see, but not to see with our own eye" (Komensky, 1905, p. 16), which was mentioned above in the context of the need for a critical understanding of reality. In the context of professional choice, this phrase means that society often imposes on a person the idea of prestigious professions, a successful career and desired life achievements, as a result of which a person may lose the ability to independently assess the meaning of his work and its benefit to others. Jan Amos Comenius argues that the true value of work is determined not by the level of income or social recognition, but by its ability to serve good. A similar thesis is developed in his works by the Ukrainian Soviet educator Vasyl Sukhomlynsky, whose humanistic pedagogy is based on the belief that "the human being is good" (Sukhomlynsky, 1981, p. 3) and on the conviction that education is not only about the transfer of knowledge, but also about the formation of human dignity, moral responsibility and the ability to make conscious life choices. Human activity becomes meaningful when it contributes to the

development of the individual and benefits other people. That is why Jan Amos Comenius gradually leads the reader to the idea that professional self-determination should be based not on the desire to achieve personal gain, but on the awareness of one's calling and responsibility to society. This approach allows us to consider work not only as an economic necessity, but as an important means of realizing a person's moral destiny.

Reflections on the social significance of work naturally lead Comenius to the problem of calling. If a profession can be chosen under the influence of external factors – prestige, material gain or social expectations, then a vocation has a much deeper nature. It is connected with the inner world of the individual, his values, moral guidelines and the desire for self-realization. That is why the question of professional choice gradually moves into the plane of answering the question of the consistency between a person's inner calling and his activities.

One of the key ideas of Jan Amos Comenius's work "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart" is the idea that a true life and professional choice cannot be based exclusively on external factors, therefore, Wanderer, getting acquainted with various spheres of human activity, gradually becomes convinced that no profession in itself guarantees a person happiness if it does not meet his inner aspirations and spiritual needs. That is why the central criterion of professional self-determination in the work becomes the vocation as a person's inner need to realize his destiny and find harmony between personal abilities, moral values, and chosen activity. In contrast to the widespread idea of professional choice as a rational decision aimed at achieving a certain social status, Comenius considers it as a component of a broader process of finding the meaning of life. In his vision, a profession is not only a means of earning money, but primarily a way for a person to realize his potential and serve others.

Therefore, a true calling is not reduced to natural inclinations or abilities, but involves the awareness of responsibility for the results of one's own activity and its significance for society. In this context, it is indicative that Wanderer does not find ultimate joy or satisfaction in any of the social conditions that he observes during his journey through the labyrinth of the world. His disappointment is not due to the imperfection of individual professions, but to the fact that most people perceive their activity as a means of achieving personal gain, power, or fame. The teacher-philosopher

convincingly demonstrates that a profession loses its humanistic meaning when it ceases to be a form of service to others and turns into an instrument for satisfying one's own ambitions. That is why the search for a calling involves not only choosing a type of activity, but also determining its moral purpose.

Comenius's views on vocation are closely related to his Christian anthropology. Man is viewed as a being called to constant improvement and the realization of the gifts received from God. Thus, professional self-determination in the work "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart" acquires not only a social, but also a spiritual dimension. This is precisely the difference between external success and true professional realization. Such an understanding of vocation largely resonates with modern studies of life and professional self-determination.

Thus, in Comenius' work, professional choice appears not as a choice of a separate profession, but as a choice of a way of life and service to society. Analyzing various spheres of human activity, the author demonstrates that no profession in itself is capable of providing a person with a sense of fullness of life. The decisive importance in both the personal and social dimensions is not the external status of activity, but its correspondence to the internal beliefs, moral values, and life purpose of the individual. This approach resonates with modern concepts of professional self-determination, which consider a career not only as a means of material support, but as a space for the realization of personal potential. At the same time, the realization of one's own calling does not arise spontaneously - it requires support, dialogue, and guidance from those who help a person understand themselves and the world. That is why the question of the role of a mentor in the process of life and professional self-determination becomes important.

The teacher as a guide on the path to life and professional self-determination

The problem of choice in Comenius's work is not limited only to the internal searches of the individual. The Wanderer is almost never left alone with the world: he is accompanied by guides who explain what he sees, direct his attention and offer their own interpretations of events. Through these images, the author tries to resolve the issues of the limits of mentoring, the ratio of

help and freedom, influence and independence. In this way, the problem of life and professional self-determination moves into the pedagogical plane. However, the search for a life calling and professional path does not often occur in isolation. At different stages of self-determination, a person needs support, advice and guidelines of different levels, they help him to comprehend his own experience in order to make a conscious choice. That is why the problem of mentoring and pedagogical support of the individual acquires important significance in the work. The Wanderer sets out into the world not alone, but accompanied by two mentors – Searchall and Delusion. Symbolically, they personify various forms of influence that a person experiences in the process of knowing the world and making life decisions. Through these images, Comenius outlines the meaning of mentoring, the limits of pedagogical influence, and the danger of replacing independent choice with external control. The image of the guide in the work primarily symbolizes a person's need for landmarks. The world appears as a complex and contradictory space where it is difficult for a person to find the right path on their own. That is why, at the beginning of the journey, the hero agrees to accept the help of those who promise to show him how the world works and explain its laws. The guide in this case acts as a mediator between the individual and the surrounding reality, helping him to comprehend his own experience. In the modern pedagogical context, this function is close to the role of a mentor, tutor, or teacher, who does not determine a person's life path, but helps him navigate in the complex world of social and professional opportunities. The image of the guide allows Jan Amos Comenius to demonstrate the complexity of the mentoring process. On the one hand, a person needs support on the path to self-knowledge, on the other hand, excessive influence of a mentor can turn into a hidden form of control. In the modern dimension, we see such practices as the "shadow authorship" of a scientific supervisor, sometimes excessive influence on an individual educational trajectory, ultimately resulting in a certain passivity of applicants who avoid making decisions about their future profession not only due to the lack of funds for training, but also due to internal uncertainty provoked by moral immaturity. That is why the author gradually moves from symbolic images of leaders to understanding the broader problem of pedagogical support of an individual in a situation of choice.

At the same time, Comenius warns against uncritically accepting other people's instructions. Already in the fourth chapter of the work, the Searchall puts a bridle on Wanderer, explaining this by the need to obediently follow the chosen path: "Now wilt thou...go obediently to the spot for which thou hast started?" (Komensky, 1905, p. 15). In a symbolic dimension, this scene demonstrates the risks of this type of mentoring, which requires not a conscious choice, but unconditional obedience. Pedagogical support in such a case turns into a mechanism of control over the individual, depriving him of the opportunity to independently assess the surrounding reality. The problem of manipulative influence is revealed even more clearly through the image of the spectacles of Delusion. Handing them to Wanderer, she says: "And I give thee these spectacles, through which thou wilt henceforth look on the world" (Komensky, 1905, p. 15). This quote reflects an attempt to impose a certain way of seeing the world on a person. Symbolically, glasses mean a system of ready-made ideas, stereotypes and social attitudes through which a person begins to perceive reality. For pedagogy, this image is especially important, because it reminds us of the danger of transforming education into a tool for broadcasting ready-made truths instead of developing critical thinking and the ability to make independent judgments. Jan Amos Comenius contrasts this influence with the inner freedom of the individual. Despite the external control of the guides, Wanderer seeks to preserve his own ability to think and evaluate what he sees. It is not for nothing that he declares: "Though you have closed my mouth and covered my eyes, yet I trust in my God that you will not take from me my mind and my reason" (Komensky, 1905, p. 16). This phrase reflects the key pedagogical idea of the work: true mentoring should not replace human freedom. The task of the guide is not to make decisions for another, but to help him maintain the ability to think independently and to have responsible personal and professional autonomy.

The duality of the image of the guide allows Comenius to show that the mere presence of a mentor does not guarantee the right choice. The nature of the interaction between the mentor and the person who is looking for his own path becomes crucial.

Another important aspect of pedagogical support is the creation of conditions for the inner search for truth. At the end of the work, the hero finds a true reference point not in external authorities, but in reflection. Christ

addresses him with the words: "Return whence thou camest to the house of the heart, and close the doors behind thee" (Komensky, 1905, p. 199). This phrase symbolizes the need for a person to turn to his own inner experience, values, and beliefs. In the modern pedagogical context, it can be interpreted as an incentive to develop reflection and self-knowledge, without which conscious life and professional self-determination is impossible.

Thus, Jan Amos Comenius considers the support of an individual not as a process of managing his choice, but rather as assistance in discovering internal sources of wisdom and responsibility. In this sense, a teacher acts not as a bearer of ready-made answers (which in the conditions of a hypersaturated information space is a hopelessly outdated idea – O.S.), but as a facilitator of personal development, which contributes to the formation of a person's ability to independently find his own way in the complex labyrinth of life opportunities. The idea of preserving the autonomy of the individual in the process of support is of particular importance for modern education. In the conditions of a higher education institution, it acquires a concrete embodiment in the activities of a teacher who helps a student not only acquire knowledge, but also form the ability to make a responsible choice.

The idea of pedagogical support, put forward by Comenius in an artistic and philosophical form, is becoming particularly relevant in the modern conditions of the development of education. If in the work the function of the guide is realized by individual characters, today the institution of higher education becomes an important environment for professional self-determination. It is at the university that a young person gets the opportunity not only to acquire knowledge, but also to comprehend their own abilities, life goals and professional prospects. In the modern conditions of the development of higher education, the role of a teacher goes beyond the transfer of knowledge and the formation of professional competencies. One of the important tasks of a teacher is to promote the formation of a culture of choice, that is, the ability of an individual to consciously make decisions, critically evaluate alternatives, take responsibility for their own actions and design an individual life and professional trajectory. The relevance of this mission is due to the complexity of the modern world, in which a young person is forced to navigate among numerous sources of information, social expectations and professional opportunities.

The ideas of Jan Amos Comenius, represented in the work "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart", make it possible to consider the formation of a culture of choice as one of the most important results of education. Throughout the journey, the Wanderer encounters different models of life, professions and authorities, but gradually realizes the need for independent reflection on what he sees. It is important for him not to lose the ability to make critical judgments and intellectual autonomy, even under the influence of leaders. This idea has important pedagogical significance, as it emphasizes that true education, especially higher education, should not impose ready-made solutions, but instead develop in a person the ability to think independently, analyze and evaluate life circumstances. In the context of the activities of a teacher at a higher education institution, this means the need to create an educational environment where the student gains experience of responsible choice and reflection.

At the same time, Comenius draws attention to the danger of a distorted vision of the world that arises under the influence of social stereotypes and external authorities. Describing the spectacles of Delusion, he notes: "Now these spectacles, as I afterwards understood, were fashioned out of the glass of Illusion, and the rims which they were set in were of that horn which is named Custom" (Komensky, 1905, p. 16). This quote is especially relevant for modern education, as it reminds us of the influence of established patterns of thinking, social stereotypes and traditions on the process of choosing a profession and life path. One of the tasks of the teacher is to help students critically understand such influences and form the ability to make decisions based on their own values and beliefs.

Thus, the pedagogical heritage of Jan Amos Comenius methodologically substantiates the synthesis of life and professional self-determination as a single process that connects personal search, social experience and pedagogical support. The founder of the largest educational system in the history of mankind shows that a true mentor does not replace freedom of choice, but creates conditions for the development of independence, critical thinking and personal responsibility. In modern conditions, this mission is realized not only by an individual teacher, but also by an institution of higher education as a whole, which, by virtue of its subjectivity, acts as a space for professional development, reflection and self-knowledge. That is why the formation of a culture of responsible choice should be considered as one of the

important functions of a modern university. By helping students to realize their own values, opportunities and professional prospects, a teacher contributes not only to the preparation of a future specialist, but also to the formation of a mature personality capable of consciously building their own life path.

Results and conclusions

The results of the study provide grounds to assert that the philosophical and pedagogical heritage of Jan Amos Comenius contains a holistic concept of life and professional self-determination of the individual, which remains relevant in modern pedagogical theory and practice. Analysis of the work "Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart" revealed that the problem of choice is considered by the author as a fundamental characteristic of human existence. A person's life path appears as a process of searching for meaning, which occurs in conditions of uncertainty, the influence of external factors and the need for constant critical reflection on one's own experience. Through the image of the Wanderer, Comenius demonstrates the complexity of the formation of personal autonomy and the need to free oneself from social illusions, stereotypes and imposed models of success. It has been established that professional self-determination in the work is not limited to the choice of a specific type of activity. Comenius considers the profession as a way of realizing one's life calling and a form of service to society. What is crucial here is not external indicators of success, but the correspondence of activity to internal values, moral convictions and personal destiny of a person. This approach allows us to interpret professional choice as a component of a broader process of life self-determination, based on self-knowledge, reflection and responsibility.

An important result of the study was the identification of the pedagogical potential of the image of the guide in the work. It is shown that mentoring in Comenius's interpretation is ambivalent: on the one hand, a person needs support and guidelines in the process of choice, and on the other hand, excessive influence of the mentor can lead to a loss of independence and critical thinking. That is why pedagogical support should be aimed not at imposing ready-made solutions, but at developing the individual's ability to independently understand life circumstances and make responsible decisions.

The study allowed to actualize Comenius' ideas in the context of modern higher education. It is substantiated that a teacher at a higher education institution performs not only an educational, but also a mentoring function, contributing to the formation of a culture of choice, the development of reflection, critical thinking and the ability of students to design their own life and professional trajectory. At the same time, a higher education institution appears as a special space for the professional development of an individual, where conditions are created for combining self-knowledge, professional development and civic responsibility.

Thus, the goal of the research, which was to identify and understand the ideas of Jan Amos Comenius regarding the life and professional self-determination of the individual and to determine the role of the teacher in supporting a person on the path of finding the meaning of life and professional vocation, has been achieved. Prospects for further scientific research are seen in studying the possibilities of applying Comenius's pedagogical ideas to develop modern models of mentoring, tutoring and supporting the professional self-determination of education seekers in the conditions of a digital society and continuing education.

Bibliography

- Borkowski, A. (2021). *Symbolika i funkcja postaci literackich w "Labiryncie świata i raju serca" Jana Amosa Komeńskiego*, „Siedleckie Zeszyty Komeniologiczne, seria pedagogika”, 8, <https://doi.org/10.34739/szk.2021.08.09>
- Florczykiewicz, J. (2019). *Drogi prowadzące do wiedzy o człowieku i otaczającym go świecie w twórczości Jana Amosa Komeńskiego*, „Siedleckie Zeszyty Komeniologiczne, seria pedagogika”, 3, 53-62, <https://czasopisma.uph.edu.pl/szk/article/view/446>.
- Jastrzębski, M. (2021). *Świat uczonych w dziele Jana Amosa Komeńskiego: "Labirynt świata i raj serca" i płynące z niego przesłanie do współczesnego świata nauki i edukacji*, „Siedleckie Zeszyty Komeniologiczne, seria pedagogika”, 8, s. 169-183, <https://czasopisma.uph.edu.pl/szk/article/view/2714>.
- Kamler, H. (1984). *Life philosophy and Life style*, „Social Indicators Research”, 14(1), s. 69-81. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00315722>.
- Komensky, J. (1905). *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (C. Lut-zow, Peł.), <https://archive.org/details/labyrinthofworld00comeuoft/page/n7/mode/2up>.

- Lester, D., Dench, B., Dadfar, M. (2025). *Personal philosophy toward life and its association with personality traits*. : https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389631921_Personal_philosophy_toward_life_and_its_association_with_personality_traits
- Oleksiuk, O. (2022). *Vocational and career choice in higher art education*, „Musical art in the educological discourse”, (7). <https://doi.org/10.28925/2518-766X.2022.71>.
- Smolinska, O., Semeniv, O. (2024). *Professional career of a university education lecturer*, „Bulletin of Science and Education”, 11(29), [https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6165-2024-11\(29\)-1601-1612](https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6165-2024-11(29)-1601-1612).
- Sukhomlinsky, V. (1981). *To children i give my heart*. Progress Publishers.
- Swann, C., Keegan, R., Cropley, B., Mitchell, I. (2018). *Professional Philosophy*, „Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology”, s. 15-33, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429438851-3>.
- Wyczółkowska, E. (2019). *Comenius' man in the context of internal and external freedom towards physical, intellectual and emotional spheres*, „Siedleckie Zeszyty Komeniologiczne, seria pedagogika”, 6, s. 319-330, <https://czasopisma.uph.edu.pl/szk/article/view/1497>.