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## JOHN AMOS COMENIUS AND THE BEGINNINGS OF COMENIOLOGY

John Amos Comenius (born 1592, Nivnice, Moravia; died 1670, Amsterdam) is considered to be a reformer and thinker of the époque called *the modern age*. Among other famous figures of the period, he is one of those who have had an enormous impact on the course of history, the development of culture, science, and civilization, since most ancient until contemporary times. One could state that the thinker conquered and changed the world, making a permanent place for himself in its history, influencing the philosophical thought, social and religious life both positively and negatively. He was a magnificent figure with a complicated and sometimes impressing life: he took part in crucial events of different countries, he created great immortal works. Comenius was a Czech educationist and evangelic priest, one of the creators of modern education science (Wielkie biografie, 2007: 367).

In his numerous works one can see significant ancient influence (Fritsch, 2007: 143-162). He respected the ancient tradition, where he noticed values that were still useful for modern education. He found the ancient tradition an important part of the European identity (Mikołajczak, 2010: 235). Comenius was a baroque thinker and his "baroqueness" (Beneš, 2007: 235-240) is reflected in his writings, full of opposites, chaos, labyrinths, emblems and symbolism. Due to the universal character of his activity and writings, modern research of Comenius shifts towards different areas of interest. He is interpreted and analyzed as an educationist, author and publisher, scientist, politician and theologian (Kalinowski, 2012: 45-49). He was considered to be a realist, an utopian and an idealist at the same time (ibidem: 48). There are still many controversies around him as a person, his activities and writings (Dworzaczkowa, 1992: 11-22; Bieńkowski, 2000: 5-7; Bečková, 2010: 29-30). John Amos Comenius is considered to be a great humanist and a forerunner of universalism (Łomny, 1992: 19). "First of all he remained a theologian, humanist and educationist. He wasn't simply an explorer of the nature, pure rationalist or sensualist. He remained faithful to the theological vision of the world and of man" (Fijałkowski, 2012: 356).

He was a social and religious activist connected with the reformation. He was educated at the Czech Brethren's school in Strážnice and graduated from Přerov school, where he later became a teacher and finally the head teacher (Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku, 2003: 534). The scientific discoveries of the time and life at the decline of feudalism and the rise of capitalism had an impact on John Amos Comenius' views and activity. He created an educational system imbued with the spirit of real democratism, humanism, and the student's subjectivity (Kunikowski, 2010: 181).

The Encyclopedia "Wielkie biografie" ("Great biographies") (2007) published by the Polish Scientific Publishing House (PWN) mentions Comenius in the first volume, entitled "*Leaders, reformers, thinkers*", describing life and accomplishments of those who conquered or changed the world, influenced its history, the development of philosophical thought, social and religious life. The publication shows accomplishments of mankind through the prism of its most famous representatives' lives and achievements. John Amos Comenius is one of them: a Czech scholar, associated with the rise of modern education science (Wielkie biografie, 2007: 366-367).

Comenius was a great European, a man of the world, a fact which is proved by his numerous travels all over Europe, including Poland. His contacts with different countries and towns famous for searching for truth and the culture of knowledge seem amazing even at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And so does his perseverance in working on theoretical and practical preparation for education of man, probably arising from a protestant approach, which seeks access to people's minds and hearts.

One of Comenius' major achievements is his anthropology, which should be studied in a multidisciplinary way, taking into account natural, social, philosophical and theological anthropologies (Mnich, 2010: 101). One should emphasize the widely understood educational aspect of Comenius' anthropology. For Comenius, the study of man becomes synonymous with the study of man's education, and his idea of man is the idea of permanent "shaping" of an individual. He perceives education as a whole society's most important task and main goal (Mnich, 2010: 103).

Many researchers have aimed at presenting the whole of Comenius' educational science as a system, a universal version of renaissance and baroque philosophy. The content of Comenius' ideology has a lot in common with the renaissance idea of man, mainly through its various attempts to enhance man with certain elements of joy of life, as well as through his connections with the ancient philosophy.

Comenius' study of man is a very definite science. The universal man, man in general undergoes an "existential specification", which often takes place in a specific situation or a period of life, from childhood to old age. What we mean here is a certain existential sense of presenting man in Comenius' texts. Through its contents, Comenius' anthropology is an existential anthropology in its original meaning (existence as an individual's being). The form of

Comenius' study of man is (...) emblematic, not only because Comenius uses emblems and his texts are closely connected with the phenomenon of emblem, but also because he always refers to different examples, and sometimes he even creates his text about man using *Emblemata - Orbis pictus* as a model. Comenius' anthropology is then emblematic, as its contents implicitly require completion with an emblem, which Comenius always introduces. Comenius' anthropology, existential and emblematic, becomes symbolic at the same time, as it presents man in the world of symbols, and depicts his life as a symbolic relationship with God, nature and society (Mnich, 2010:103-104).

For John Amos Comenius, a baroque thinker, it was an especially valuable ability to decipher and create symbols, which brought the Creator's good and almightiness closer to man. According to the Czech thinker, getting to know the world must be all embracing, and symbols make it possible to reach the heart of the matter (Borkowski, 2012: 236-237). The major symbol occurring in his writings is the light ("Way of Light" / *Via lucis*), as "to man and other creatures God is what the sun is to the world". In a metaphoric meaning, light also stood for the brightness and truth of the mind: people's way should be a "way of light" (Comenius, 1973: 5). Other symbols Comenius based on in his writings are: the path (a safe straight path as opposed to wilderness and wandering about); the spring (in Comenius' works the spring sends us (...) to the Almighty, who is the beginning of creation); the labyrinth (a dangerous place, full of ambushes and tricks); the gate (a synonym of senses and reason, but also faith); the wheel (perfection, maternity, harmony and peace); the mirror and the eye (a symbol of prudence). In Comenius' depiction, the symbols make it possible to get to know fully, unifying the sensual and the supernatural (Borkowski, 2012: 238-244).

It is thanks to the symbolism, among others, that Comenius' writings are full of brilliancy and very attractive to the modern reader. They create tension and the atmosphere of intellectual anxiety, arise great interest or even admiration. This may be the reason for his "immortality". Comenius had a great writing talent, his writing style is beautiful and gripping. He could successfully communicate with the reader.

Comenius appreciated the importance of social communication, he could use the accessible communication techniques and it is thanks to those that he gained social recognition and fame. He was fascinated with the art of printing. "One can see the popularity of Comenius' writings as a phenomenon in the history of interpersonal communication, where printing was the means of communication", but also Comenius' "appropriate" texts responding to specific social needs. He appreciated the importance of the mother tongue, the language of the folk, widely understood (Fijałkowski, 2012: 345, 341).

Due to Comenius' theological education and views, his writings "are consequently related to the sphere of sacrum, i.e. what is connected with God, the Trinity, or transcendent reality. Man, created in the image and likeness of

God, continually experiences the presence of the Absolute. Listening to his voice and following his way can make *a man a human being*, who can do a lot for his own sake and for others alike (Szymonik, 2012: 232).

According to Comenius, man's renaissance was to be accomplished through religious faith (he emphasized the importance of the rule of tolerance and a common biblical tradition) and education (he proclaimed a utopian specific program of human things' improvement, which was to be accomplished through universal knowledge: universal books, universal schools, universal scholar societies and universal language (Wielkie biografie, 2007: 367).

Comenius first dealt with educational views at the university of Herborn, where he studied reformed theology and philosophy from 1611. It was then that he got to know Wolfgang Ratke's views. In 1613 in Heidelberg he got to know the idea of Christian irenicism,. In 1614 he took the position of the head teacher of Přerov school. In 1616 he became a Czech Brethren priest. In 1627 he was forced to leave his motherland due to religious persecutions and together with a group of Czech Brethren he went to Poland, where he settled in Leszno in 1628 and started work in the local secondary school. It was there that his greatest works, which brought him international fame, were created (Korthaase, 2009: 297-302), among others the textbook on language teaching methodology *Doors open to languages* (1631, Polish edition: 1633), and the first version of *Great Didactic* (originally Czech *Didaktika česká*, and later Latin *Didactica magna*; the Polish translation of 1956 is based on the so-called Amsterdam edition of 1657). In 1632 he was appointed the senior of the Unity of the Brethren and became responsible, among others, for briefs of church synods, and from 1636 on, for school supervision as well.

John Amos Comenius was an acknowledged universal thinker, exceeding the limits of his own times. He always praised Poland as his second motherland. A lover of freedom, he held Poland up as a role model for other countries. It is there that his visions of the future appeared: overcoming hostility and establishing peace among nations, cultures, religions and faiths, which will probably take mankind a lot of time to accomplish (Fritsch, 2012: 24, 21). As a result of the exile, he travelled to Poland, England, Sweden, the Netherlands and other countries, becoming a European citizen of the world. The study of Comenius unifies in an unusual way representatives of different European nations, but also Korean, Japanese, and Canadian (Fritsch, 2010: 14, 16).

During his numerous travels all over Poland and Europe Comenius promoted his own educational ideas. In England he presented the memorial *Via lucis* – a project of a reform of the cultural and political life (a new version of education, which arose from his reflections of the bourgeois revolution he found there, which didn't let him work peacefully) (Szczepanikowa, 2009: 73). In Sweden he helped to map out a plan of the school system reform and prepared textbooks, which he wasn't satisfied with: he wanted to research things and explore the theory of pansophism, the term he had encountered in Peter Laurenberg's writings in Rostock; he gave it a new deeper meaning of common

knowledge accessible to everyone (Comenius 1956: XII-XIV). At the same time he visited Gdańsk, Elbląg and Toruń, where he improved his educational concepts (especially those concerning the methodology of teaching Latin) and took part in preparations for Dissidents' Conference, organized by Bogusław Radziwiłł; he also gathered information about the situation in Poland for the Swedish. In 1645, as a representative of the Unity, he took part in Colloquium Charitativum, a theological dispute, which was an attempt to reconcile Catholics and Protestants: Lutherans, Calvinists and Czech Brethren (Richter, 2012: 72-73). The meeting was organized in Toruń by Władysław IV Waza in order to restore unity and agreement between the followers of the two religions. It was attended by 76 theologians, who gathered at 36 sessions. Although it did not bring any visible results, the fact that the followers of different religions prayed together and sought proximity in the time of religious war in Europe should be appreciated as an important step in the history of ecumenism. Comenius created methodology of a common religious language, which can still be a role model of scientific approach towards the problem of the religious conflict (Richter, 2007: 167, 178-179).

In 1648 Comenius came back to Leszno, where he became the superintendent of the Czech Brethren. Two years later he co-organized a secondary school in Sieraków, where he could fully accomplish his innovatory teaching program. He also introduced the program in Sárospatak, Hungary, where he went at the invitation of the Transylvanian prince George II Rákóczi. During the Swedish invasion of Poland (1655-1660) he supported the Swedish, writing a panegyric in honor of them and an appeal (1656) calling on the Polish to recant Catholicism and the king John II Kazimierz. Those actions, together with the support given to the Swedish by the dissidents, brought about a retaliation of the Polish army, who conquered and burnt Leszno in 1656 (Wielkie biografie, 2007: 366). Comenius lost his library and manuscripts. He had to escape to Silesia, and then he settled in Amsterdam, where he spent the rest of his life. He was buried in Naarden, the Netherlands, where a Comenius Museum was opened and where international Comenius conferences are held. It is also there that *Opera didactica omnia* was published in 1657.

In Amsterdam Comenius continued working on the project of "human things' improvement", which was to be accomplished - among other things - through education, understood as pampaedia (*Pampaedia* 1948, Polish edition 1973), or the theory of common education of all people - everyone about everything and all life long - embracing the school of birth, babyhood, childhood, puberty, adolescence, adulthood, old age, and death (Sitarska, 2007: 71-82; Sitarska, 2009: 271-280).

Comenius deepened the ideas of Juan Luis Vives, Francis Bacon, and Wolfgang Ratke. He continued the tradition of renaissance humanism and educational optimism. He was a forerunner of the modern teaching methodology and the creator of the concept of uniform education system. He supported the egalitarianism of education; he created a modern definition of educational

encyclopedism, the rule of demonstrative method and the idea of life-long education (Wielkie biografie, 2007: 366).

Comenius cannot be automatically placed in a row with his great predecessors or his contemporary thinkers. He didn't consider himself to be a philosopher in the strict sense – an author of an original, compact and complete system, or an adherent of a particular philosophical school. He is a practitioner first of all. He obtained extraordinary education, he had enormous knowledge, he experienced great suffering, and wished to share his knowledge and experience with others.

He was convinced about a human mind's natural desire for the sublime and an irresistible struggle to set free from the labyrinths, and about the fact that God and the nature don't act in vain. His main conviction was that a man was the most important to his own sake, in order to get to know himself, rule himself and make use of himself. A man's source of happiness is himself and his inner good, which nobody can deprive anybody of. *How would it help a man if he conquered the whole world but lost himself? And the other way round: how would it harm him if he won himself, and lost everything? A man who has himself has everything.* According to Comenius, a man is someone between the Creator and creatures, he is a picture of his Creator [...], a small world and a small God, and should expect happiness from himself and not from the outer things (Komeński, 1996: 18, 144).

Comenius' education studies opened a new epoch in the history of education science, as a science of the people who appreciated the novelty and superiority of the beginning reign over the nature, the people concerned with the tragedy of fighting, social and religious hostility, the people dreaming of reconciliation and happiness for everyone.

John Amos Comenius made a revolution in our way of understanding the different fields of reality, first of all in the field of education. Even before his death his educational concepts aroused extraordinary interest. Many enlightened Europeans were fascinated with his views and ideas, the new educational theory, his educational writings as a whole, and also – or, maybe, first of all – with himself as a school reformer. He was perceived as a practitioner rather than a theoretician. It was this fact that he gripped the modern world with, as most 17<sup>th</sup>-century Europeans did not understand his theories, ideas, or views of education. He exceeded the limits of his times to a great extent and could not expect his contemporaries to appreciate his writings. His ideas could only reach extraordinary recipients, mainly the people interested in education improvement. Fortunately, Europe was then concerned with the reformation of education. This phenomenon was accompanied with the awareness of the great role of school and a change of its profile. Comenius himself concentrated more on the practice of school's functioning and the role of the teacher than on developing the very educational theory. Although the theory appears in his writings, it is only to confirm his practical recommendations. Comenius refers to a number of concepts which are nowadays dealt with by many separate disci-

plines: psychology (especially cognitive psychology), semantics, the logics of thinking and the theory of cognition. The author analyses the process of a child's cognition of the world, how he or she builds and systematizes knowledge about it, what his learning motives are, and even what communication processes take place in the relations between students. Those analyses were necessary for Comenius to draw conclusions about the functioning of the school and the teacher (Muszyński, 2009, 70).

The basic thesis of his education study is that "man should be educated in order to become a human being", and that "every man can become a human being". These ideas always inspired him as he took part in the organization of schooling in different European countries (Bohemia, Slovakia, Poland, the Netherlands, Sweden, England, and Hungary) and in searching for effective teaching methods, working out teaching curricula and preparing textbooks (Żegnałek, 2010:195).

In the course of building his theory of educational activity as a so-called "applied science", Comenius reached for more general proofs provided by "basic sciences". However, in the scholar's times those sciences had not been systematized yet, nor had the relationships between them been established. The thinker was then forced to create more general theoretical proofs of his own concepts focused on the practical side of the school and the teacher. Comenius' writings are extraordinary because he understands the necessity of drawing educational ideas from certain more general proofs concerning a learner's and a teacher's psychology, and the interactions between them, and also because he accepts this way of reasoning as a basis for his research. He perceives a learner as a thinking and feeling creature who is supposed to become a valuable member of the society through his development. All his teaching theories seem to struggle to understand what takes place in learners' hearts and minds. In fact, it is the basis for his education science (Muszyński, 2009: 69-71).

In his educational theories, Comenius takes a learner's psyche as a starting point. His education science is then a "science focused on the child", which in fact only emerged three centuries after his life, in the period named "the century of the child" by Ellen Key. His approach towards the child is moderate and rational: "a child's natural abilities won't develop on their own, they should be helped by good upbringing and education" (Muszyński, 2009: 71).

Comenius' teacher entirely concentrates on the knowledge he should transmit to the students. Moreover, he tries to penetrate into his thoughts and feelings, understand them and take part in their creation. In Comenius' times many branches of knowledge had not progressed yet, so he lacked reliable foundations for his practices. Instead, he based on his own intuition arising from his many years' teaching experience. All his writings are characterized by teaching intuition, which constitutes strong foundations for the teaching mastery. Comenius' writings suggest their author's structured knowledge of man's cognitive abilities development and functioning. The teaching rules he presents in his *Great Didactic* are apparently formed on some theoretical proofs, which

he doesn't state directly. His way of "educational" thinking is worth attention. There is a methodological concept visible in it, according to which the practical rules about education are drawn from theoretical proofs concerning the development and shaping of a learner's psyche (Muszyński, 2009: 84). Comenius contributed to the common output of universal culture. He is an extraordinary phenomenon of a creative talent in several dimensions at the same time: mainly, religion, philosophy, education science, and politics. Each epoch received a piece of his output. In his own epoch his brothers – his fellow countrymen – rejected his religion: the Czech variant of Arianism. Condemnation of this kind of heresy meant either leaving the country or accepting Catholicism. Comenius chose the exile (Łomny, 1992: 19).

The many centuries-old tradition presented Comenius mainly as an educationist who wished to reform the existing school system profoundly, to make the school become a creative institution available to all, with the mother tongue as the language of teaching at an elementary level, with a class and lesson organization and a modern teaching program. Gradually, Comenius was presented in a fuller multi-faceted view thanks to his universal writings. Nowadays, there are two perceptions of Comenius: both as a groundbreaking and utopian 18th-century reformer of the education system (compare Klingerg, 1972), and the creator of a pre-scientific education science and a propagator of life-long learning, the most important basis for the world's improvement. In his extensive writings, an adamant belief in a man's human development and an equally strong conviction about the possibility to improve the world are timeless and generally important ideas. Comenius devoted all his life and writings to discovering best means and optimum strategies to guarantee their accomplishment. It is thanks to those important ideas that he now appears as a constant experimenter and innovator in different areas of scientific study and various roles of practical activity.

Creative and original, John Amos Comenius created broad scientific foundations for new branches of knowledge, such as the development psychology, life-long education science starting with the pre-school age, and theology oriented around the temporal matters of the world. He was able to use the already existing historical, scientific, artistic and technical knowledge in a modern way, in order to create the great program of pansophism, the universal knowledge (Łomny, 1992: 11, 12).

Comenius created important original works of an immortal cognitive value in the field of education science, psychology, history, theology, literature, librarianship and the methodology of writing books, as well as numerous school textbooks, dictionaries and encyclopedias. Also, if you take into account his various political contacts and the whole of his religious reformation and political activity, it becomes obvious that his program of the world's and people's improvement should be perceived in multidisciplinary activities, focused on universal education "without limits", until the last moment of everyone's life. By creating his concept of education until the old age, he became the fore-



runner of geragogy (the education study of growing older and the old age) (Zych, 2003: 535). The basic item of this vision of the improved world was to be the ethical man, shaped thanks to pansophism – universal knowledge, accessible to all people being equal to God. Comenius was a totally religious person. Both in his writings and in his religious activity as a spiritual leader of the Czech Brethren, he fully supported religious education, he was a devoted servant of his own religious group, and propagated the universal value of eternal life. But these doctrines were not enough for him. With all his philosophy and axiology of education, he turned to the earthly living, to the need of man's human growth, to the necessity of improving the unfair world, full of wars, harm, pressure and violence. His democratism and humanism are identical with universalism. Many elementary categories which Comenius thinks human life is supposed to consist of after the improvement are broadened to an "overwhelming" dimension. This is true both about the human rights and the new fields of universal cognition and activity of man, connected with his full philosophical and educational trio: *mens, lingua, manus* – mind, tongue, hand.

In all his various fields of activity, Comenius tries to embrace man in full with all his earthly activities. He is also concerned with a man who is continually a "learner" at "life school", to whom he recommends continuous learning "without limits" (Comenius, 1973: chapters VIII-XVI). To learn continuously means to make the main use of one's life.

Comenius describes the range of real wisdom and universal knowledge with three Latin words: *omnes, omnia, omnino* – everyone, everything, perfectly. He wishes to educate people in an encyclopedic way, but at the same time he appreciates the basic importance of practical usefulness of knowledge and the necessity of continual confrontation between theory and practice. Comenius' ideas and educational postulates presented here define his completely new philosophy of education, totally different from the one of his epoch. It accepts every individual human being's right to develop through educational creation. The humanistic value of this exceptional and universal postulate consists in a wise and ethical man's special mission in the new world. And knowledge and education will make the world better and full of man's happiness. Comenius tried to convince everyone that a man is shaped by his own work on himself. Knowledge is the best and only means of shaping a true, authentically human man. This overwhelming knowledge, full and perfect, should reach a man at school. That is why the school should become a common asset for the whole mankind (Łomny, 1992: 19).

John Amos Comenius agreed with the opinion of a gradual but constant improvement of the world thanks to the development of civilization and culture. He believed that education with the use of a proper method will make the world's disagreements and conflicts disappear and will make it possible to reach a level unknown so far. Such a perception of man's development perspectives is typical of Comenius' all educational writings.

However, the political situation in Europe of that time didn't prophesy that Comenius' dreams of a free motherland and an enlightened tolerant world would come true. That is why the end of his life was filled with mystical moods and seeking prophecies about the coming of a better millennium. In his work *Unum necessarium* (*The only necessary*), where he presented his specific autobiography, he expressed his happiness about, among others, having devoted so much effort to the sake of people, especially youngsters, whom he wanted to bring out of the roadless track of the former education and direct onto the proper track (Bieńkowski, 2000: 18). This opus shows the proper road of human life. It combines secular elements of faith in the human being, in his reason and ability of taking control of the nature and overcoming obstacles on the way to the earthly happiness with elements of the religious concept of the world and life. The seventy-seven-year-old old man looks back on his whole life and confesses that he is truly glad to have had a heart which craved for people's happiness, to have been a man of longing and hope, to have cared about people's well-being, especially youngsters'. He also confesses that he has always wanted to bring mankind out of the labyrinths of the old school, out of the labyrinths of religious and political fights. In the ending he writes: "My life has been a never-ending exile. I have never had a motherland – driven away from one place to another, nor have I had a permanent home" (Comenius, 1996: 138). The outstanding educationist's last months of life and illness were filled with contradictory feelings of hope and doubt, faith in the human being and expectations for the mystical prophecies to come true, and thoughts of peace and people's happiness on earth (Suchodolski, 1979: 17-18). John Amos Comenius died on 15 November, 1670 in Amsterdam, where he had lived since 1656. He was buried in a Calvinist church in Naarden in the suburbs of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

The author of "Sensual world in pictures" (*Orbis sensualium pictus*) did not manage to publish all his works during his lifetime. Some of his manuscripts remained forgotten. They were only discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> and even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and printed not so long ago. In 1935 the Ukrainian philologist and philosopher Dmytro Tchyževskij (1966, Vol. I; 1967, Vol. II) discovered seven manuscripts of Comenius' pansophic writings in the Halle library. They were published in original in full thirty years later (1966, Vol. I; 1967, Comenius, 1966, Vol.II). Among them, *Pansophia*, containing a lecture of the whole of knowledge, is the largest one. However, the researchers' greatest attention was attracted by the opus *Pampaedia* (*Universal education*). Due to its importance, it was translated into Czech, German, and Polish (1973). The influence of Comenius' writings and the glory of his name were bigger after his death than during his lifetime (Bečková, 1980: 16-17).

Comenius came to be called a great, cautious educationist; a good peaceful wise "Comenio". He was pointed at as a role model in Europe during the period of a much more powerful influence of Rousseau and Pestalozzi.

Comenius was still referred to as a great thinker, as was his great love for people and for his mother tongue, his democratically-oriented efforts to organize educational and school matters, the concept of the importance of education, the idea of creating a harmonious personality through education starting as soon as possible. Comenius was appreciated for his demonstrative method and bringing education closer to life, for his school organization and textbooks; he was glorified as a great predecessor, educationist, linguistic classic and patriot.

Comenius had creative continuers of his love for the child and for the homeland, of his conviction about the humanizing and social significance of education (Kollár J.: "like education like man, like teaching like life, like schools like motherland"). Comenius, as well as his followers in the next century, proclaimed national agreement and humanism. In the areas of Bohemia and Slovakia they also referred to the meaning of Comenius' philosophical and political thought during the period of the national renaissance. He was considered to be one of the Slavs who had contributed a great deal to the European civilization. They stressed his educational activity, erudition and personality, the popularity of his textbooks (Čapková: 1991: 42-44).

Comenius' writings served as a tool in fighting for national justice, but also for social justice and the right for education in the face of deepening social conflicts. The humanistic ideas of the great educationist and follower of irenicism were stronger and more strongly emphasized.

The growing economic and social needs of the European middle class emerged due to the improved level of pre-school and school education and the interest in the theory of education. The historical foundations of education were also noticed, and so were Comenius' writings, appreciated for its original function in creating education science and a better school organization. It was especially true of the opuses *Informatorium školy matérské* and *Velká didaktika*.

Comenius was considered to be the founder of modern education science, an educationist, a theoretician of education. He was accepted in most countries. His education science was an impulse for the development of the national school systems, the education and culture in a national and universal human spirit, in the form of a natural, morally mature development of all people. The combination of the national idea and the humanizing reach was characteristic for the most outstanding figures of the Czech culture, also from the beginning of Renaissance. Comenius created a foundation for further creative development of the theory and methodology of the Czech, Polish, European and worldwide education science. His unity of education and social improvement was emphasized as one of the important ideas. The leveled evaluation of Comenius' teaching methodology and pansophism meant a chance for comeniology (Čapková: 1991: 47-59; Kurdybacha, 1957, reprint 1976, pp. 209-210).

The cognitive and historical view of Comenius' activity and writings started to dominate over the practical and educational reflection from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Mrozowska, Dybiec, 1874: 90-108). The historical and popularization writings have always drawn most attention to his educational activity, making the scholars pay much less attention to his religious and political activity. Their other typical field of interest was Comenius' activity in Poland.

He was considered to be an important Czech and Slavic thinker. In the 1990s and later, the university professors J. Durdik, F. Drtina and T. G. Masaryk seemed to understand the unity of the national and universal human factor in Comenius' opus and emphasized the role model of his moral strength and hard-working. The beginnings of the Czech comeniology brought a lot of observations about Comenius' life and writings. The anniversary in 1892 brought strong foundations for interpretation and popularization of Comenius' works (Čapková: 1991: 47 -59). It determined the starting point of the Czech comeniology.

The ideas of Comenius' education science stimulated the improvement of the educational theory and practice. Apart from the influence of the European education science, it is also them that helped the improvement of the Czech educational thought and school practice in the spirit of humanism and social spirit. As soon as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Comenius was recognized as one of the backbones of the European education science. Later, his glory kept rising as his writings were discovered and appreciated.

The great scholar never managed to complete the system of pansophism, but he kept improving it. It remained a living element of his reflections, the object of his intellectual anxiety and hope. He kept looking for new situations in which his ideas of pansophism could be accomplished and people necessary for these ideas. Historians and comeniologists' research of Comenius' pansophism (Suchodolski, 1973: XXIII) is not complete yet, nor is the research of his political activity.

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John Amos Comenius' biography is fascinating, full of difficult choices, dramatic decisions and scientific genius. It has always been the reason of the ambiguous perception of him. The perception of his writings has never been unambiguous or unchangeable. Comenius used to be morally charged with partial responsibility for burning Leszno in 1656 (Szymańska, 2012: 53), which was the reason for his exile to Amsterdam, the Netherlands (Wagner, 2012: 34). There have always been many controversies around him and his writings. Some people perceive him as a priest and a politician involved in fighting the Catholic church, a Czech patriot, others – an outstanding visionary and a crea-

tor of the modern education science (Dworzaczkowa, 1992: 340-342; Mnich, 2007: 137).

Comenius' science was interdisciplinary and integrated. The humanistic contents were combined with mathematical and natural. The humanistic research was completed with empirical research and medical education (Fijałkowski, 2012: 353). Comenius fell into the category of the German "educational movement" of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. His greatness was mainly due to the fact that he was the most literarily efficient representative of this movement's postulate perception. Another aspect of his grandness was his creative ability to synthesize the former teaching postulates in his theoretical works, as well as use them in school textbooks for children, with the best one *Orbis pictus*. It was a "picture book" adjusted to children's real needs, about the surrounding world, which presented a utopian vision of peaceful Christian human society governed by the virtues of righteousness, diligence, patience, justice and mildness (Fijałkowski, 2012: 358). In his writings, Comenius combined the teaching theory with the textbook practice. His books were communicative and interesting. In this way, he got closer to the ideal of scholarship (Fijałkowski, 2012: 354).

John Amos Comenius was undoubtedly an unusual person, and his writings were original. He placed books above all else, and thought that it is necessary to be able to use them properly. It was proved by his famous speech delivered at the beginning-of-the-school-year ceremony on 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1650 in Sárospatak, Hungary, entitled "Efficient use of books, the best educational tool" (Komenský, 1650: 5-25).

Comenius draws interest of representatives of all levels of education and different subjects, representatives of all branches of science, both humanistic and social, natural and mathematical. Everyone can find something interesting in his writings. His life and writings are analyzed and interpreted by educationists, philologists (literary experts), theologians, philosophers, and historians. It seems that everything has already been said about Comenius and each of branch of his activity and writings has been researched. However, a deeper reflection makes us conduct further quality research, analyses and interpretations of his life and writings as there are still empty spaces in this area that need to be filled up. There is still a lot to research, a lot of controversies to explain, a lot of myths to abolish.

For the use of this essay, I looked up the definition of comeniology as a science in encyclopedias and available writings. I did not succeed, however, although all the participants of international conferences, seminars and symposia as well as authors of publications use this term. It undoubtedly seems to be a branch of science, which develops in every country, first of all in the countries where Comenius stayed, acted and created. As a result, there is a Czech comeniology, as well as Slovakian, Polish, Dutch, Hungarian etc. The term of European or even worldwide comeniology is also in use. It is undoubtedly the branch of science whose focus is Comenius' life, educational and political activity and his writings, mainly educational, but also his teach-

ers, colleagues, friends, and students. It is also based on the research of researchers of Comenius and the analyses of their writings about him. It is developing thanks to quality and heuristic research, and remains interdisciplinary and still dynamic.

In Bohemia, the motherland of the Great Educationist, the anniversary year of Comenius 1882 was recorded in the publications as the beginning of the Czech comeniology. In Poland, comeniology emerged in 1834, when the 19<sup>th</sup>-century weekly *Przyjaciel Ludu (People's Friend)* was first issued in Leszno, with the article by Józef Andrzej Łukasiewicz entitled "John Amos Comenius, a former head teacher of the Leszno school" about his biography and writings. "It started large-scale development of the rising Polish comeniology", as Alojzy Konior writes in his book "Jan Amos Komeński i bracia czescy w 380. rocznicę przybycia do Leszna" (John Amos Comenius and the Czech Brethren 380 years after their arrival in Leszno) (1628-2008) (Konior, 2009: 41). In 1847, "Mała Encyklopedia Polska" (Small Polish Encyclopedia) was published in Leszno. It contained a biographic entry on Comenius. In *Leszno Biographical Dictionary* (2004) a biographical entry on Comenius by Alojzy Konior was included. Stanisław Helsztyński's book "Amos's Student" brought a lot to the Polish comeniology (Helsztyński, 1976).

Modern electronic libraries are increasingly supporting the development of comeniology in Europe, including Poland. A dynamic development of electronic repositories can be observed. One can also find there some interesting original materials connected with John Amos Comenius' life and writings, to which unrestricted access is offered (Sztobryn, 2012: 255).

Such names as Adam Danysz (1898), Łukasz Kurdybacha (1957), Tadeusz Bieńkowski (1977; 1980; 2000) and Jan Kvačala are associated with the beginnings of the Polish comeniology. The latter was a Slovakian professor of theology, expert in the Church history, considered to be the most outstanding figure among the comeniologists of the 1890s and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bečková, 1980: 5). Kvačala enriched the knowledge of Comenius with heuristic research conducted in many European countries, including Poland and Lithuania. He also analyzed Comenius' approach towards the Polish environment as a separate problem (Kvačala, 1892). There are still more names related to the beginnings of the Czech, Polish and European comeniology, too many to be listed here.

In Poland, Comenius' writings became to be recognized and interpreted still during his lifetime, at the time his first books were printed in Leszno and Gdańsk. They were either enthusiastically welcomed with little criticism or treated critically and skeptically. The most remarks were about the textbooks, mainly those used at the Polish dissident schools (Lutheran and Calvinist) until 1670 (when he was still alive), as well as his educational recommendations (Bieńkowski, 1980: 85). Some of Comenius' textbooks were present in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Catholic schools, mainly in the Jesuit school libraries, but they were exclusively used by the teachers. It was only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that they became slowly recognized in the Catholic schools as well (Bieńkowski, 1980: 92).

The cognitive and historical view of Comenius' activity and writings dominated the practical and educational reflection from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His historical and popularization writings have always been the highlights of his educational activity, making the readers attract less attention to his religious writings and political activity. Comenius' activity in Poland has always been the Polish scientists' great interest (Danysz, 1921; Kurdybacha, 1957; 1976).

Anniversaries connected with Comenius' life and activity were occasions for popularizing his writings and increasing the number of publications. This tradition started in 1892, three hundred years after Comenius' birth, and has continued until now. Comenius' death anniversaries are also celebrated. These customs are mainly cultivated in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In Poland Comenius' arrival in Leszno is celebrated. Every anniversary is a powerful stimulus for new research and publications. The anniversaries of publications of Comenius' greatest works such as *OPERA DIDACTICA OMNIA* (Amsterdam edition), or his greatest opus ever *DE RERUM HUMANARUM EMENDATIONE CONSULTATIO CATHOLICA* (1966) are also celebrated (Bieńkowski, 1980: 95-96).

The still growing resources of the knowledge of Comenius, mainly comprising analytical works, make comeniology transform from a branch of historical educational and Slavic studies to a separate scientific discipline, at least a separate direction of research. From this research, specific specializations are slowly emerging: the issues of widely understood educational thought (interpretations of Comenius' writings) as well as his philosophy: his opinions of the human world and the natural world. Comenius also attracts the researchers' attention as a writer and theoretician of literature. Less attention is devoted to his political activity (Miąso, 1977: 60). This field has been recently enriched by the activity of the Comenius Museum in Uherský Brod (the International Scientific Conference, 2011), and the publications of the series *STUDIA COMENIANA ET HISTORICA* (2012, 2013). This activity is due to Peter Zemek, PhD.

Nowadays the scholars are familiar with Comenius' works, and he is more and more widely known and appreciated. His writings are quoted, analyzed and translated, and interpreted more accurately. Their parts are known among educationists, teachers and philosophers, where some of Comenius' slogans are quoted. The dominating problems are those of widely understood educational thought, mainly Comenius' most favourite issues concerning the philosophy of man (upbringing, education, organization of the school system and role of the teacher - namely, what can be referred to the present situation) (Bieńkowski, 2012: 335).

In Siedlce, comeniology is a very recent phenomenon, closely connected with the year 2007 (details available in the *Introduction*) and the year when it established cooperation with Werner Korthaase, a former president of the German Comeniological Association. It resulted in international seminars of

John Amos Comenius and four volumes of collective monograph of the series *Studia Comeniana Sedlcensia* edited by Barbara Sitarska and Roman Mnich. The seminars and publications initiated further cooperation, mainly with professor Andreas Fritsch of Freie Universität in Berlin, the then president of the German Comenius Association, Manfred Richter, PhD, a member of the German Comenius Association in Berlin, professors Marta Bečkova and Jiří Beneš of the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Peter Zemek, PhD of the Comenius Museum in Uherský Brod, the Czech Republic, and professor Martin Golema of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia.

Poland has established cooperation with the Comeniological Institute at the John Amos Comenius State Higher Vocational School in Leszno, founded in 2007 by professor Heliodor Muszyński, who was its first director. It is currently managed by professor Aleksander Mikołajczak. The institute has set ambitious aims: to conduct studies of Comenius' writings, to popularize his educational ideas, to introduce Comenius' creative concepts into the modern educational practice, to organize and develop international contacts and initiatives towards introducing Comenius' ideas into social and educational policy in different countries. The institute has numerous achievements: it has organized two international conferences of Comenius' writings in Leszno and an exhibition devoted to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Europe's cultural contacts taking into account the role of Comenius. In cooperation with the Pedagogical University in Human (Ukraine), it has created another comeniological institute. It has also taken initiative to create the League of Comenius' Towns, an association of a number of towns in Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Russia, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

In 2011 we established cooperation with professor Bieńkowski, a great contemporary comeniologist, the author of many important works, who has contributed to both Polish and Czech comeniology in cooperation with professors Marta Bečkova and Dagmar Čapková, which resulted in common publications. In the same year (2011) we established cooperation with professor Sławomir Sztobryn of Łódź University, who deals, among other things, with the Polish comeniology in modern electronic libraries, and Adam Fijałkowski of Warsaw University, the author of the work "*Tradycja i nowatorstwo w Orbis sensualium pictus Jana Amosa Komeńskiego*" ("*Tradition and novelty in Orbis sensualium pictus* by John Amos Comenius").

At the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce the scientific employees of the Department of Education Studies are involved in all the comeniological activities, with the leading Sub-Department of Teaching Methodology (the Institute of General Teaching Methodology, the Institute of Pre-School Education and the Institute of Early School Education) and the Department of Modern Languages and Interdisciplinary Studies.



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