

Education – to which ends, for which goals? Comenius answers: self-command, irenism (ecumenism), world peace

Edukacja i jej cele? Dlaczego nauczamy? Edukacja – jej cele i zadania. Odpowiedzi Komenskiego: samokontrola, irenizm (ekumenizm), światowy pokój

Key words: education, Comenius, educational goals

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja Komeński, cele edukacyjne

Abstract:

This paper stresses the demand for the universality of education of every person (as an image of God) according to the humanistic and reformational traditions. Comenius is considered the first one to have conceived an institution world-wide to guarantee realisation of the basic right of education for everybody, in any country and culture. The root as well as the goal of education lies in God Himself. Individual learning, aimed at the autonomous understanding of the Word of God, goes side by side with the responsibility for the “emendation” of human affairs in culture, politics and religion. This is exemplified in the wonderful little booklet *Regulae vitae* he wrote for his pupil Jan Kochlewski in Elbląg.

Streszczenie:

Artykuł ten podkreśla zapotrzebowanie na powszechność edukacji każdego człowieka (jako obrazu Boga) zgodnie z tradycjami humanistycznymi i reformatorskimi. Komenski jest uważany za pierwszego, który stworzył ogólnoświatową instytucję gwarantującą realizację podstawowego prawa do edukacji dla każdego, w każdym kraju i kulturze. Zarówno korzeń,

¹ Manfred Richter, Pastor, Dipl. Paed., PhD. , co-founder of German Comenius Society. Cf. manfred-richter-berlin.de

jak i cel edukacji leży w Bogu. Indywidualne uczenie się, mające na celu autonomiczne rozumienie Słowa Bożego, idzie w parze z odpowiedzialnością za „przywrócenie” spraw ludzkich w kulturze, polityce i religii. Egzemplifikacją tych poglądów jest cudowna, mała broszura *Regulae vitae*, którą napisał dla swojego ucznia Jana Kochlewskiego w Elblągu.

I

I am thankful to be part of our joint research necessary for the roots of pedagogy and its goals – research that is probably one of the most important tasks ever of humankind – research that has been and is the task of parents, teachers, clergymen and professors in all times and periods of history, in every country and in every culture and religion.

But in our time – in the era of globalisation – it is also the task of one of the universal institutions of humankind, UNESCO, an institution which deeply obliged to the heritage of Jan Amos Komeński, to whom Jean Piaget, its then leader, paid tribute at its very beginnings². The foundation tries to carry out Komeński's idea that humankind needs an universal body for the promotion of universal education as well as scientific and ethical development. His basic idea was that of a *collegium lucis* which should be founded to take care of this as he explained in *Via lucis* (Comenius 1997) to his friends on leaving London in 1642.

It is research that is acknowledged as the primary philosophical task since the old Greek *paideia*, since Plato and Seneca, since Augustine and the Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries, since Middle Age cathedral schools or the bourgeois citizens' schools. The humanist movement included a reformulation of goals of pedagogy in the 15th century – according to a new understanding of Christianity in the Renaissance

² Jean Piaget, representative of the psycho-genetic school of Didactics, refers himself to Comenius and he pays homage to him as the one who for the first time presented the idea of universal education as a “human right for «All»“, including both sexes, Rich and Poor and every culture, even formulating the concept of an universal institution to care for this – the leading idea of UNESCO [United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation]. Cf. Piaget 2005.

that is to say integrating the wisdom of pagan antiquity and a positive view of secular life. This gave an enormous impulse to the pedagogic endeavour, for which the Florentine new-Platonic Academy or the Spanish humanist thinker Juan Vives may stand as examples. Parallel to this, the late Medieval movement of *devotio moderna* tried to help lay people deepen their understanding of the Holy Scriptures. We see that there were different mainstreams of interest – a more secular one, and a more spiritual one – accompanied by the practical interests of modern life.

It is well known how Marcin Luther stressed this ordering of the city councils to found schools for the basic education of both boys and girls for practical necessities, but at the same time to enable people to read and study the Holy Scripture and to understand basic Christian doctrine as translated into the Catechisms – in the average people's languages: their mother tongue. Even more well-known is how Filip Melanchthon was engaged for the higher humanities trying to combine general cultural education with the reception of the new evangelic view of faith. Generally speaking, it must be said the Protestant culture is not to be understood if not as a pedagogical movement with the basic and final goal of enabling the faithful to understand the evangelical message by reading and living the biblical Word of God. From that came the importance of printing Bibles, Catechisms, Hymn books and other religious literature not only for clerics, but for broad parts of society³.

It was French historian, Jean Michelet, who called Jan Amos Komeński the “genius of pedagogy”. Komeński, also known as Comenius, is one of the central personalities of this debate besides Luther, Calvin and others. He grew up to be a “genius” in Europe and the world in his time in exile in Poland – his second home country, as he called it. This was especially so in his years in Leszno where he was well received along with his colleagues, the priests and the whole of his congregation

³ This aspect is analysed by Jolanta M. Marszalska in a very impressive way in her paper at the symposium organised by dr Wojciech Zawadzki, Diocese of Elbląg, 12 – 1 -2017, cf. Marszalska 2018.

as fugitives for reasons of conscience and for his Protestant faith. They were expelled by the aggressive and intolerant Habsburg policies of Counter-Reformation, but welcomed into a most tolerant Poland at that time by count Rafał Leszczyński.

II

It was in this city Leszno in Wielkopolska that he began his incredible career not only as a wonderful teacher and pedagogue - kind to his pupils and wise as a personality and priest of his "Brethren church": in which everybody was considered to be and really accepted as "brother" and "sister" in the *familia Dei* but also as an author who wrote down his experience in family life and in school teaching. He was a thinker as well as a philosophical and spiritual man who was able to reflect and to interpret what he experienced in life and schools.

What follows is a presentation of my short biography of "Jan Amos Komeński - zarys życia i działalności" (Richter 2016) especially reporting on his time in Poland (1628-1656 - including some interruptions when he was called to visit other countries).

The first period in Poland covers the years from 1628-1641. By then that he had already written his most famous book for the pedagogy of early childhood, "Informatorium of Mothers' School" - the first ever in pedagogical literature worldwide. His own experience with bad schooling in languages had led him to offer schools his books like *Janua reserata* for Latin and via Latin for other languages. He wrote his ideas for understanding natural science in his *Physica* according to Mosaic thinking. And finally, he wrote his first version of *Didactics*, the Bohemian one, later on as the Grand *Didactics* in Latin, finished in 1638, whilst printed only in Amsterdam in 1656 (cf. Kurdybacha 1967). And here it was that he began to expand his ideas of pedagogy to the question which this essay attempts to elucidate: Education - to which ends, for which goals?

To give a first and brief answer: It was to "Pansophy" that he wished

to guide the way of pedagogical thinking⁴. This concept means more than information or science or knowledge - it means wisdom. We cannot understand the meaning of this concept if we do not at least correlate it with the biblical concept of “Sapientia” (according to the Latin Version of the Bible Vulgata), that is to say the biblical writings attributed to Solomon. For Komeński, it includes knowledge of nature and society as well as ethical principles of living. But as already explored in his “Grand Didactics”, it is not sufficiently described without the basic and final correlation of both humankind and the rest of the world of creation with its creator, God himself, as root and as goal of any education. So necessarily it includes theological reflection. As he declared: “everything I wrote and did for the education of youth I have done as a theologian”.

Every possibility of growing into an adult person is quasi inseminated as a basic root in our godly given nature – and education has just to “*educare*, to pool out, to let come out” the given possibilities and to shape them. And the goal is inseminated in the root as well – it intends “the restoration of the *imago Dei* in everybody”.

The fundamental task of pedagogy goes together with the task of restoring the condition of the societies in which individuals live and schools are to be renewed. Komeński – who personally chose to take the surname Amos (a prophet as a social critic!) – understood that individuals and societies have to be renewed in a parallel way - otherwise pedagogy may fail. And it was this insight that led him to the vision of a “renewed society” – for which the goal of *Pansophy* was the leading idea⁵.

⁴ Cf. new aspects by Swetlana Martschukova (Martschukova 2015).

⁵ This aspect of the parallelism between individual and societal formation, renewing (“emendation”) by many aspects is discussed in the quoted volume “Comenius und Weltfriede. Comenius and World Peace” (Korthaase et al. 2005) in which Fritsch explores the societal and political vision of Comenius (Fritsch 2005). It was created and edited as a collection of original texts and studies (about 1000 pages) in cooperation with international partners and the UNESCO by the German Comenius Society

This vision was welcomed by his friends such as Samuel Hartlib in London and made him a desirable thinker for governments in France or Sweden or for the authorities in the Netherlands, Germany and Poland. After his stay in London he settled down in Elbląg for reasons which will be explained in due course. (1642-1648; cf. Richter 2016, 127ff).

III

He had a pupil here – Kochlewski – whom he taught privately at the wish of his father, the chancellor of Lithuania in Vilnius. When he was to leave, he asked his teacher to give him counsel for his future life. The result is the little book *Regulae vitae* where Komeński gives a kind of personal resumé to Jan Kochlewski – leaving him as a pupil - and inviting him to be his young – but adult – friend from then on. This interesting text is presented as an example of Komeński’s advice for individual life and one’s responsibility for oneself and the world in which one lives.

In the English edition of London in 1736 it is translated (Comenius 2005, 578-597):

Some rules for the conduct of human life – shewing the Way of Living:

I Wisely

II Harmoniously

III Peaceably and quietly

IV In Business

V In much Business

VI In the intervals of Business

VII In Travel.

Indeed, by the concept of “Wise”, “Wisdom” the final goal of education is marked – a goal which is to be understood in the Comenian sense of “Wisdom”, as mentioned. And the word “Harmony” means the notion of the godly principle of “Panta” and “Pantes” belonging

together in an energy which balances between the particularities to make the “whole” = “pan” as peaceful living and combining the opposites. This concept must not be misunderstood as a kind of romanticism or infantility - it means the powerful overcoming of sin and hatred and of all kinds of contradictory antagonisms by accepting and following the order of godly-given nature and restoring the *imago Dei* in Man and society.

This little booklet ought to be read by every pedagogue. I will try to summarise his recommendations for Kochlewski with the concept of self-command – whilst at the same time it shows that an individual is never isolated from the world about him and from the society in which they grow up and in which and for which they are living. But as a grown-up with full responsibility for their way of life, they have the faculty of choice. It must be remembered that Komeński was a definite supporter of the idea of freedom of conscience for everybody. It was Prof. Sitarska five years ago in Naarden, the Netherlands who stressed this basic human value as a key to understanding Komeński’s anthropology (Sitarska 2016).

One must also not forget Komeński’s famous allegorical romance written in the Bohemian underground in 1624: “The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart”⁶. There a young person is on the way to experience the world’s reality – and he feels that everywhere the world is distorted, full of lies and is rather like a labyrinth – without any way out to truth, honesty and piety. How to find the “way out”?

In his legacy for Jan Kochlewski, Komeński shows how a young man may find this way out to truth, honesty and piety in the midst of a distorted world – by clear orientation, but in full freedom of decision. The motto which he gave to his pedagogical works in Sarospatak and to his edition of his *Opera Didactica Omnia* (ODO) in Amsterdam is

⁶ In Czech, the original language, in OO 3, 265ff.

well-known⁷: *Absit violentia rebus – Gewalt sei ferne den Dingen* [No force – neither to things nor to people!].

And it is interesting to see how Andreas Fritsch, former president of the German Comenius-Gesellschaft, who gave a detailed interpretation of this booklet, mentioned that it includes the basic principles and ideas of his chef d'oeuvre which he had just begun to write at the very same time in Elbląg. So, as he suggests, it is a kind of “*Consultatio Catholica in nuce*”. We see here exactly the point of connection of the principle of “education” of individuality and “emendation” of society.

IV

The idea of self-command in connection with the adult's responsibility towards society must be defined – in *Pampaedia*⁸ he transforms the scheme of learning in schools to that of life-long learning (Richter 2009; Richter 2017) – a revolutionary idea in his time, though normality in our time. But he was the first to decisively create this idea that life itself is the school of life and we have to learn by living and acting in all our life-time.

Two aspects are worth highlighting: one with regard to religion and the other with regard to politics. First as to religion: the writing of the booklet “Some rules for the conduct of human life” came at just the moment he had finished his irenic writings in preparation of the *Colloquium Charitativum* in Thorn 1645 initiated by King Władysław IV – the details for that are analysed in the author's book concerning Komeński's contribution to the preparation of the *Colloquium Charitativum* in Thorn 1645 (Richter 2013)⁹.

It is important to remember that this was taking place at the time of strong religious controversies between Roman Catholics and

⁷ Financed by the City Council of Amsterdam 1656f., reprint Praha 1957, cf. the symposium in Praha 2007 in honour of its 350th anniversary (Cocholová et al. 2009).

⁸ Comenius 1965; edition in volume 19 of OO is being prepared.

⁹ It is brieflyshortly reviewed in Richter 2016, 127ff.

Protestants in all of Europe, called the era of Counter Reformation or the Confessional Age. The 30 year war was to a great extent religiously motivated. At that time, it was even dangerous to talk with people of another confession of the Christian faith.

However, the Polish King at that time was “wise” enough to request a friendly exchange between the churches. Two personalities were instrumental in achieving this. One was a Franciscan – Capucine Father, Massimiliano, as a Father himself calling Valeriano Magni from the Roman Catholic side. And there was Jan Amos Komeński from the Protestant side. Both were willing to enter into peaceful dialogue. The Colloquy, of course, in that time was not able to reach real “peace” between the churches. Nevertheless, after three months of controversies and dialogues, at least it ended peacefully – with the exchange of good wishes.

Komeński wrote very important essays on Reconciliation asking all Christians to live in peace with one another: *De regula fidei iudicium duplex* (Amsterdam 1658.; reprint: Comenius 2003)¹⁰. Furthermore, he recommends everyone be both a good “Biblicist” and a good “Catholic”. Both churches and their members, as he felt, have to learn from one another. It is exactly that which modern Ecumenism intends – self-command of the churches as bodies in a self-critical way, no different from this task in everybody’s life; exchange of our good traditions– and friendly participation in the common Christian Life and in the common task of giving testimony of Christian Faith by our way of living.

Secondly – the political level must also be mentioned briefly. In the author’s opinion, the most important in that dimension is that Komeński had already asked everybody to participate in political life and decision making: “Omnes”, “Pantes”. Because everybody has responsibilities, everybody has to be led into life by education and has to be taught to learn for himself. “All” means men as well as women, boys and girls,

¹⁰ This is analysed briefly in Richter, 2013 and in Richter 2016,132ff.

even the under-privileged ones! (cf. Stalla 2017). It was revolutionary in his time: the youngsters of the nobility did not always like to have the children of peasants or bourgeois families at their sides. So, he invented school playing which was a great help in accepting his democratic tendencies - he was not ready to give them up¹¹.

V

Of course, Komeński was critical of people who were in political power or in ecclesiastical positions preaching hatred and prolonging the wars of that time. He asked the kings and the clerics to respect the freedom of conscience and religion of their citizens. He particularly addressed them in noble words such as the *Lumina Europae* appealing to their respective responsibilities in Science, Research and Teaching, in Politics and Religion¹². Fundamentally, his desire and request was that everybody participate in peace making and in a peaceful life – as he had also suggested to Jan Kochlewski.

In his next exile in Amsterdam, after Leszno was burned down in the first of the Swedish-Polish wars, he began again to elaborate his *Consultatio Catholica* on “Emendation of human affairs” – whose manuscripts were mainly burned in Leszno¹³ – he added to the former ideas of Didactics and Mathematics in *Pampaedia* the idea of life-long learning in the school of life. But the end of learning, the goal of this – as described in *Panorthosia*¹⁴ – is active participation in the concept of a new, just,

¹¹ In Saros Patak, Siedmiogród/Siebenbürgen, Upper Hungary, he developed the idea of *Schola ludus* – schooling as playing the programs everybody taking roles. Bernhard J. Stalla is preparing a special edition of the famous Opening speech *Oratio de cultura* in Saros Patak 28th Nov. 1650.

¹² Foreword to *Panegersia*, the First Part of the Seven Parts of his Chef d’Oeuvre *De rerum humanarum emendatione Consultatio Catholica*, rediscovered only in 1934 by Dmitrij Tschizewskij in Halle (Comenius 1966).

¹³ For interpretation of this event cf. Dworzackkowa 1997 – by which old misunderstanding (hopefully for the last time: Giertych 1964) is corrected.

¹⁴ The Sixth Part. In German: Comenius 1998a. In Latin to be published in OO 19.

truly Christian society, showing the characteristic features of the reign of Christ. The goal of an individual lifetime is much more than even that: it ends in God himself. The last passage of Learning in Life, the last “school” is learning as a “senior”. And that means learning to die, the *ars moriendi*, as Christian tradition says: learning to leave what is of the earthly time and this World.

Reflecting on the goal of “life-long learning” in the sense of Komeński – *ars vivendi* – one should also consider what he wrote in his “Testament“, which were his last words and advice to the faithful and to his readers in *Unum necessarium*. It was written in times of weakness and advanced years in Amsterdam, 1668¹⁵. Here he refers to Christ’s words to Mary, the sister of Lazarus, in the Gospel of Luke 10,42. To listen to the Word of God is the *unum necessarium*. It is that which is absolutely necessary for our life and the only way to get out of life’s “labyrinths”. At this moment, he is ready to leave the ways of his own life to the mercy of God – with, as he himself confesses, all his own “labyrinths”. In this perspective, everybody, be they rich or poor, may look forward to eternity, in Christian freedom of faith, love and hope.

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¹⁵ German translation: Comenius 1998b.

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