

## INTRODUCTION

Here is the 3<sup>rd</sup> volume of Siedlce Comeniological Research Bulletin of the series of EDUCATION STUDIES. The history of its creation, the related difficulties, Comeniological cooperation at the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce, and the emerging idea of ENCYCLOPAEDIC LEXICON of JOHN AMOS COMENIUS were all described in the 1<sup>st</sup> volume. The present volume is entitled *JOHN AMOS COMENIUS – MODERN INTERPRETATIONS AND REINTERPRETATIONS OF HIS WRITINGS*. It is a yearly monograph by many authors. It has already established its position among the European publications about John Amos Comenius. The aim of this great project was to *research the more detailed issues appearing in Comenius' extremely prolific writing, and make them available to the modern reader in a form of wide entries, showing not only a historical depiction of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century culture and science, but also a reflection of modern educational problems.*<sup>1</sup>

Volume one of SiedlceComeniological Research Bulletin (2014) was dedicated to Comenius' writings and his views of education. Therefore, the authors focused on the great educationist's teaching methodology; the methodological foundations of his writings; education and self-education in his philosophical thought; pre-school and life-long education, but also some more detailed issues: the natural method in teaching and teaching rules according to Comenius. Among the strictly educational topics there are also more general ones with a philosophical overtone, which depict the HUMANISM of the *teacher of the nations*. Among them, there are topics related to such Comenius' opinions as those of *educational writings, humanism, egalitarianism, creative work ethos, freedom, responsibility and identity, and also labyrinths*, which are common especially at school, as well as in our lives, since "life is school" according to Comenius. He devotes much of his writing to the teacher and students, which is also reflected in the volume.

Volume two of Siedlce Comeniological Research Bulletin (2015) is – generally speaking – about John Amos Comenius' education science and philosophy. The editor-in-chief's intention was to expose the scholar's educational and philosophical opinions in all of his various writings. Professor SławomirSztobryn's introductory paper makes the reader familiar with the world of modern philosophy of education with Comenius as a representative. On its background, the author presents more detailed issues, such as Comenius' concept of school, human dignity, symbols and symbolism in his writings, as well as self-awareness, life-long education and artistic education of the disabled; natural and exact sciences education. Comenius devotes much of his writings to the book, its role and value in human life, which is reflected in the volume.

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<sup>1</sup> From Prof. SławomirSztobryn's review of SCRB Vol. 2, series of Education Studies, *Jan Amos Komeński- jegopedagogikafilozofia*, edited by Barbara Sitarska, Faculty of Humanities, University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce, Siedlce 2015 (p. 4 of the cover).

The editor also wished each volume to depict Comenius' biography of his stay in Leszno, Poland, his Polish citizenship and rich writings,<sup>2</sup> scientific activity and foreign contacts. This fact somehow justifies our interest in this controversial character.<sup>3</sup>

Nowadays we can observe a renaissance of Comenius and HIS WRITINGS. We are experiencing another attempt to modernize the Polish education system on the one hand, and empower it on the other, therefore we reach for Comenius' scientific output again. Constructive and creative theoreticians are aware of the importance of historic achievements of the past generations, with John Amos Comenius being an exceptional thinker regardless of contestation of some of his ideas. Even if, due to the time lapse, we do not copy his ideas directly, we are certainly inspired by his spirit of change and the courage of his conclusions. In this way, the historical is still alive in the present and exceeds it.<sup>4</sup>

For modern education science, (...) Comenius is a forerunner and a role model of a scholar and educationist, who harmoniously and smoothly combines his own ideological involvement with a rational researcher's approach. He understands perfectly that the foundation of any rules of practical activity must be a sound knowledge of the reality being shaped. In Comenius' times there is not such knowledge yet. He is the first one to attempt to create it. (...) All Comenius' education science is built upon a sound foundation (...), affected by his educational intuition, teaching mastership, as well as his teaching vocation.<sup>5</sup>

The authors of the papers, teachers at the local university and at other universities, were suggested topics based on Comenius' writings and about Comenius. Eventually, Volume three contains the following papers: *Introduction to pansophic foundations of John Amos Comenius' education study* by **Sławomir Sztobryn**; *John Amos Comenius – a theologian, philosopher, educationist and politician* by **Wojciech Sroczyński**; *Comenius' depiction of the family and child* by **Marzena Lisowska**; *Ways leading to the knowledge of man and the surrounding world in John Amos Comenius' writings* by **Janina Florczykiewicz**; *Comenius' man as a "free user of the world"* by **Cezary Kalita**; *John Amos Comenius' concept of teaching foreign languages* by **Adriana Pogoda-Kołodziejak**; *Czech Brethren's files in Poznań State Archives: their history, contents, and meaning for the Comeniological research* by **Kamila Szymańska**; *Music and musical education in John Amos Comenius' writings* by **Grażyna Szymańska**; *Safety of man as a universal value according to John Amos Comenius* by **Renata Matysiuk**. A few texts by permanently collaborating authors have failed to be published in the present volume due to the authors' sickness. They are about to appear in the next volume.

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<sup>2</sup> Korthaase, W., *Wiele ze swoich najważniejszych dzieł napisał Komeński w Polsce*, in: *Jan Amos Komeński a kultura epoki baroku*, STUDIA COMENIANA SEDLCENSIA, Vol.1, joint publication edited by B. Sitarska and R. Mnich, Siedlce University Press, Siedlce 2007, pp. 297-302.

<sup>3</sup> Volume four of SCRB, series of Education Studies, is going to be entitled *John Amos Comenius – controversies and contradictions in/around his writings* (2017).

<sup>4</sup> From Prof. Sławomir Sztobryn's review of Vol. 2 of SCRB, series of Education Studies, *Jan Amos Komeński- jegopedagogika I filozofia*, op. cit. (p. 4 of the cover).

<sup>5</sup> H. Muszyński, *Mysł edukacyjna w obliczu transformacji. Z pedagogiką przez życie*, vol. 2. Quotation from the subchapter: *Mysł Komeńskiego w świetle współczesnej pedagogiki*, John Amos Comenius State School of Higher Vocational Education in Leszno, Leszno 2016, pp. 289-290.

Analyzing and interpreting Comenius' views on different issues in individual papers, one can state that the Thinker proves his holistic character of perceiving the reality. That is why a conviction appears that the number and depth of these papers, their analyses and interpretations will never end.

The present volume of *SiedlceComeniological Bulletin* is mainly based on the introductory article about pansophic foundations of John Amos Comenius' education study by SławomirSztobryn, who has been our successful comeniological collaborator for years; the article by Kamila Szymańska, who is an enormous source of information about Comenius and his environment coming from the museums in Leszno and Poznań; the article about foreign language teaching according to J. A. Comenius by Adriana Pogoda-Kołodziejak. However, most of the authors are NEWCOMERS, who have studied Comenius and his writings more thoroughly, and whose interest in this controversial figure has risen recently. IN MY OPINION, THIS PHENOMENON IS VERY POSITIVE.

More and more texts contain descriptions and interpretations of the historical facts from the period of Comenius' stay in Poland, his second homeland (mainly in Leszno). Apart from laudatory texts, with their authors fascinated with Comenius and his writings, there are also more critical articles about this controversial though such an interesting figure. Poland, mainly Leszno, has contributed a lot to the development of comeniology. From a person hardly known to anyone, Comenius has evolved into a famous figure in Europe and outside Europe alike. His fame has survived despite the several centuries which have passed since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, despite the social, political and cultural changes, the national mental changes, and many other transformations.

Every country where Comenius stayed and worked either for a long or short time has its own perception of him and his writings. Each of these countries organizes comeniological research and conferences, whose aim is to transmit and share the constantly gained knowledge and its interpretations with the international participants. However, in many countries the modern knowledge and interpretations in many areas turn out to remain particular comeniologists' OWN KNOWLEDGE rather than become international one. The main reason may be the language barriers, which seems to be unlikely in the 21<sup>st</sup> century! At many conferences, some of the participants deliver their speeches about Comenius and their own interpretation of him in their own language. They probably assume that the languages spoken by the participants are quite similar, therefore comprehensible to all of them. It is a wrong assumption! In some cases, a few unfamiliar words may lead to misunderstanding. Pretending to understand everything only broadens the gaps in the knowledge and interpretation of Comenius and his writings in particular countries. Giving lectures in English does not solve the problem, either, as not all the participants or readers of post-conference publications speak the language, and the translation is expensive and time-consuming. Studying Comenius' writings in original is a source of similar difficulties. Not being able to overcome them, the authors often limit themselves to studying somebody else's interpretations, presented in their own language.

Comenius' words come to one's mind here. He thought that most problems arise from linguistic misunderstanding among nations, and, as usual, he came up with a ready-to-use solution: in his opinion, it would be a universal language. However, it is still utopian in the 21st century, or it is even more difficult nowadays.

These are some of the many reasons why Comenius and his writings are perceived differently in different countries. It is our intention to recall these perceptions in the 5<sup>th</sup> volume of *SiedlceComeniological Bulletin*, although we are aware of how difficult it is going to be. Authors from foreign countries are invited to submit their papers. Their collaboration will be our mutual success. However, it requires mutual respect and partnership.

As we study Comenius' writings, we discover a lot of contradiction and controversy around them as well as around his personality. It is our aim to concentrate on this phenomenon in the next volume entitled "*JOHN AMOS COMENIUS – CONTROVERSIES AND CONTRADICTIONS IN/AROUND HIS WRITINGS* (2017).

Aware of how difficult it was to develop the comeniological topics, the editor of *Siedlce Comeniological Research Bulletin* of the series of *EDUCATION STUDIES* wishes to express her thanks to all the authors, especially those who have taken on this ambitious task for the first time – CONGRATULATIONS! At the same time, she wants to encourage all the interested to join the list of authors. The editor would also like to thank the *AUTHORITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY, THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STUDIES* for all their support. Special thanks to the reviewers: Prof. Sławomir Sztobryn, PhD, and Prof. Anna Kożuh, PhD, whose valuable remarks gave the finishing touches to the volume, and whose positive reviews made us certain of the purposefulness of the project.

*Barbara Sitarska*