

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317579514>

# Universal-corrective effort of J. A. Comenius represented by the idea of Light corps

Article · March 2014

---

CITATIONS

0

READS

77

1 author:



[Eduard Lukac](#)

University of Presov in Presov

8 PUBLICATIONS 1 CITATION

SEE PROFILE

## Universal-corrective effort of J. A. Comenius represented by the idea of Light corps

Eduard LUKÁČ

Department of andragogy, Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences,  
University of Prešov in Prešov  
street 17 novembra 1, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia  
eduard.lukac@unipo.sk

### ABSTRACT

*General Consultation on an Improvement of All Things Human* represents also for contemporary society many stimuli, how to try to organize a life at the turn of millenium. Light corps in the conception of Comenius should have been one of the all-corrective tools, whose aim was to spread education and edification. The article analyses the main focus of activity of Light corps that J. A. Comenius outlined in his papers *The Path of Light* and *General Consultation on an Improvement of All Things Human*.

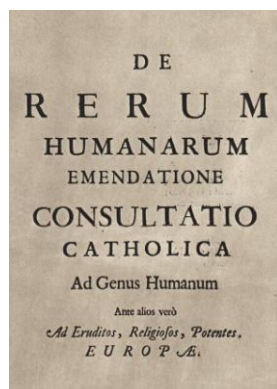
**Keywords:** Jan Amos Comenius, light corps, education



Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670) represents a rare phenomenon in the history, which is involved in many areas until now – theology, philosophy, politics, literature, pedagogy, andragogy etc.

The extensive pedagogical and philosophical work of Comenius represents the current message and source of inspirations also for the contemporary generation. It remains the object of interest for the multidimensional research activities and is the place of practical advice and instruction.

Comenius sees education as an important way to the universal correction of all things human and alongside with upbringing it should lead to the change of society. He sees the most effective way of correction and reform of the condition of nations, churches and communities in the education of young people.



In his lifelong paper *General Consultation on an Improvement of All Things Human* (*De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*), which consist of seven parts (Panegersia - universal awakening, Panaugia - universal enlightenment, Pansophia - universal wisdom, Pampaedia - universal education, Pangelottia - universal language, Panorthosia - universal reform, Pannuthesia - universal warning), „we have one of the most extensive, but in each and every case the mentally deepest justified social project of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.“ (Patočka, J.: 1981, p. 294)

When he wanted to create a rare educational and cultural system of the whole world knowing in Pansofia, the aim of Pampaedia was: „to teach all the people to choose well from the things and events understood rightly in the course of lifelong development.“ (Čapková, D., 1987, p. 184) Comenius came to a very broad understanding of education, which he elaborated in details in papers *Didactica magna* and *Universal education* (*Pampaedia*).

*Universal education* is the 4<sup>th</sup> part of the lifelong paper *General Consultation on an Improvement of All Things Human* (*De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*), which is „the highest philosophically-pedagogical and socially-based project, whose part is also Pampaedia.“ (Pšenák, 1992, p.7) The basic message of this paper is, that correction according to Comenius cannot come from any nation, but everyone has to participate on it. The basis for the accomplishment of the big historical turning point is the deep reform of the scientific, religious and political life and Comenius considered education and upbringing to be very important in this reform, as he was the first one to elaborate education and upbringing in the form of a lifelong process. The aim of this effort should be a peaceful harmonic coexistence of all people based on using a common language (panglotia).

The biggest wish of Comenius, expressed in *Universal education*, is to educate all people in all areas and broadly: „The first thing we wish is that not only one person, or some or many of them could be educated so fully and to full mankind, but all people together and separately, young and older, rich and poor, gentlefolks and baseborns, men and women, in short everyone who had the luck to be born human, so that the whole humanity would be educated in all ages, statuses, sexes and nations.“ (Komenský, Vševýchova, 1992, p. 15)

The wish of Comenius is connected to the idea that all people would become pansofs, which means they would understand the division of ideas of speech and things, understand aims, tools, the ways of acting of all activities and that they could differ the important from the less important, harmless from harmful in diverse behaviour.

The determining role in the reform of society through universal education and upbringing should have according to Comenius educators and especially teachers in school who will practically realize the all-corrective effort. These „universal educators of spirit“ (Pandidaskalia) form alongside with universal schools (Panscholia) and universal books (Pambiblia) the basic triad, without whose harmonic cooperation it is impossible to accomplish universal education – universal educating of the whole humanity, that means of all people (omnes), in everything (omnia) and broadly (omnino). Comenius was an unrelenting critic of the medieval educational system, especially of didactics and the results of the educational process. He wanted to „get the laziness out“ of schools and he tried to place the schools, which he used to call „the workshops of humanity“, on the head of the coming social progress. „On these bases J. A. Comenius formed the idea of permanent and dynamic education for the whole life, meaning lifelong cultivation of the man, universal education as a lifelong process...“ (Srogoň, T. a kol., 1986, p. 97)

It is interesting that even if Comenius believes in the big power of education and upbringing, he does not believe in their total power in forming an individual. „No artist can avoid the fact that sometimes his product will be damaged in his arms; so how, based on the stable law, could such a diverse, confused and from every side unstable being be formed?“ (Komenský, Vševýchova, 1992, p. 123) Therefore, the role of the educator is to protect the children from all negative influences that can influence them.

Comenius outlined his all-corrective project already in the paper *The Path of Light* (*Via Lucis*), which he wrote during his stay in London between 1641-1642, but it was not issued until 1688 in Amsterdam. It was extended in his voluminous document *General Consultation*, in which he set three basic institutions for the realisation of the all-correction: light corps, international consistorium and peace court. „The role of the light corps will be to assure that it will be no need to instruct anyone in the world, not to mention that someone will not know something necessary, because everyone will be educated by God. That means it will create opportunities for the eyes of everyone in the world to turn to this light, in which everyone will see the truth by oneself and in which there will never be delusions or fallacies anymore.“ (Komenský, Obecná..., III. volume, 1992, p. 352)



Comenius knew about the existence and activity of the then-famous scholar organizations and communities – he lists for example the Academy of the Lynx-Eyed (*Academia dei Lincei*, founded 1603 in Rome, Italy, in figure), Academy of the Floral Games (*Académie des jeux floraux*, founded 1323 in Toulouse in France) and The Fruitbearing Society (*Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*, founded 1617 in Germany). Eventually, the paper *The Path of Light* was dedicated to the members of the Royal London Society, „to the servants of light (whose effort in using the light of the natural philosophy from the deep wells of truth starts to have a notable reputation in Europe).“ (Komenský, *Cesta ...*, 1992, p. 17.)

This knowledge could have also inspired him to ideas about creating a whole world institution that would have been responsible for the cultural development of the people in the whole world, to ideas that were formed just during his stay in London, in the time when Royal London Society was already active here. “In its roots this was not an educational society as we understand it nowadays, but it was rather a kind of organization for mutual improvement – the club of gentlemen that discussed about scientific issues.“ (Kelly, 1970, p. 46) Comenius even appeals to all the learned organizations, communities and academies to unify and create the Light corps and to use common activity to contribute to promotion of knowledge to all people. J. Patočka called this Light corps „an international ministry of edification and science, synthesis of the to-that-time academic projects for the all-human organization of the science.“ (Patočka, 1981, p. 295.)

The members of the Light corps should according to J. A. Comenius „have taken care of:

- themselves, as the servants of light
- the light itself, which they had to cultivate and spread
- the schools as the workshops of light
- the representatives of the schools as the light-carriers
- the method of teaching as the purifier of light
- the books as the fillers of light
- the book publishers as the creators of these fillers
- the new language as the best mediator of the new light
- the two other organizations (J. A. Comenius talks here about international consistorium and about peace court - author's note) as helpers of the general spread of light
- finally they should have taken care of the Christ himself as the source of light“

(Komenský, *Obecná ...*, III. volume, 1992, p. 354)

Comenius situated in the paper *The Path of Light* the seat of the highest member of Light corps – its chairman to England as a memory for Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor, „who was the first to give stimulation to ideas about the general correction of sciences“ (Komenský, *Cesta ...*, 1992, p. 173.) The fact that England was willing to provide financial resources to insure the activity of the members and helpers of Light corps was another factor for placing it there. However, it is interesting, that Comenius in the *General Consultation* did not clearly name England to be the seat of Light corps, but he did not even mention any particular country or city. As for organization, Light corps should have been hierarchically structured. There should have been a chairman at its head, „who should help to flexibly proceed the mutual contact to every side in the way that all the members would have announce him everything necessary in a written form, and he would announce it to all the other members.“ (Komenský, *Cesta ...*, 1992, p. 173.)

Aside from the real needs, the communication between him and the members of the Light corps should have been maintained at least once a year, in which the condition of the achieved success would have been evaluated, but it would also serve to solve the problematic areas of the activities.



The individual countries should have had their own Light corps members – Comenius does not define their number and does not restrict, at the head of which ones there should be appointed one main member. Comenius expands this hierarchy in *The Path of Light* by the suggestion that every individual region, as for example Europe, Asia, Africa etc. (actually continents) should have their supra-national representative.

Only the best applicants could have become members of Light corps and their personalities should have served as an example for the other people. Their everyday work should have been eager to spread the light of knowledge to every nation, every home, every soul. Aside from spreading they should have ensured that nothing, that could have made people's minds insecure or discourage them from other knowledge, could have got into knowledge. „Talented men, sophisticated and religious, dearly loving public welfare, chosen from all over the world without a difference, from earthly and churchly status will fit to do this job.“ (Komenský, *Cesta ...*, 1992, p. 169.) Individual nations should have cared for their members of Light corps financially, because these members should have worked for public welfare of the whole society.

As for the activity of Light corps members, Comenius concentrated on two areas of their duties, namely on schools and book publishing. In schools and books he saw the most effective way of spreading the light of knowledge and truth.

He named the schools in this context „the workshops of light“, that any nation and any human society can miss. Their activity should have been accompanied by the continuous enlightening of knowledge and wisdom. Light corps members should have assured, that representatives of church and state were obliged to ensure fluent running of schools. Even the smallest settlement of people should have disposed of at least trivial school, there should be latin school in every town and an university in every country.

Apart from that, the Light corps members should have supervised over the activities of the schools, teachers, professors, rectors, administrators and controllers concerning performing their duties, but not only formally – their activity should have been pleasant, clear, activating and incentive for the pupils. Aside from that, the members should have also instructed those that did not meet the given requirements, stimulate the neglectful ones, but also call off such people from their positions.

The most important mission of Light corps members while taking care of the schools should have been the supervision over using the right teaching methods. Comenius also in this part of *General Consultation* clearly stood against the authoritative methods based on physical violence and memorization that made school a place of drill and punishment. „The members of Light corps will do their best to change all the schools to blissful gardens, they will ensure that everything in schools will be provided without force, but not without it where it is needed ...“ (Komenský, *Obecná ...*, III. volume, 1992, p. 355.) Used methods should have served for direct and pleasant teaching that should have changed schools to playgrounds.

The fundamental part of the Light corps members' activity should have concentrated on the problematics of books, their creating and publishing. In this area, the members should have ensured „that books:

1. were not missing in any nation and language
2. were good
3. were issued carefully, in sufficient amount and were easily accessible
4. were not neglected and did not lie aside like it was until then, but that they were read and understood by the whole folk
5. were cleaned and improved according to the light's increase, or also that new books were created.“

(Komenský, *Obecná ...*, III. volume, 1992, p. 355.)

J. A. Comenius dealt with writing, publishing and correct use of books in more of his papers. For example, in paper *How cleverly use books, the main instrument of education* (*Speech given at the beginning of his work in the bigger hall of Sáros Patak school on 28.11.1650*) Comenius provides „a set of instructions about studying and working with book. He considers books to be the food of wisdom, the source of instruction, examples, morals, laws and religion that need to be valued more than gold and diamonds.“ (Pšenák, 1992, p. 13.) In the fourth part of *General Consultation* with the name *Pampaedia /Universal education/*, the sixth chapter bears the name *Pambiblia /Universal librarianism/* and analyses the using of books as tools of the universal education in detail. Komenský clearly warns in XII. paragraph of this chapter: „Noone can publish any book without the knowledge and approval of Light corps members.“ (Komenský, *Obecná ...*, III. volume, 1992, p. 54)

It is surprising that we do not find the problematics of books in relationship to the activity of Light corps members in Panorthosia, where Comenius characterized his whole Light corps conception, but we find it in the third part of *General Consultation*, in *Pansofia*.

In this part he suggested that useless and harmful publications, which could have endangered morals and spread lies, would be destroyed. But if someone wanted to keep them, they could do it under the condition that inappropriate parts of the books would be deleted and would not have negative impact on people.

The second group of books represent the publications from good and useful authors, who tried to spread the truth, order, love and godliness in their works. Comenius suggested to create collective works from them, which would describe the most important parts from the useful books. Comenius himself proposed to create for example „The fragments of ideas of excellent men“, or philological work with the name „The remains of babylon tower“.

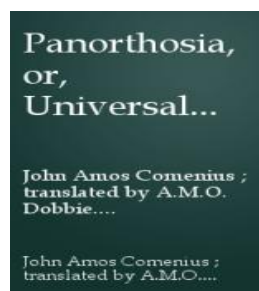
Except for collective works following individual authors, Comenius suggested to create alphabetically ordered registers again following the authors. There would be the most important ideas of every author alongside with the reference to the book where to find them. After completing the ordering of ideas, a general author register should have been created at the end.

All collective works, the extracts of their most important ideas with its registering should have been preserved in the „library of libraries“, „because:

1. the enlightenment century could have known everything
2. from everyone
3. directly without mistakes.“

(Komenský, *Obecná ...*, I. volume, 1992, p. 302.)

The establishment of suggested universal library could have served to the more rational way of searching and processing of information. With the help of Light corps members the universal libraries should have become the effectively running edifying institutions accessible to everyone.



In this way Comenius speaks for spreading of the whole knowledge to all people, regardless of sex, race, religion, social status etc. He refuses any hiding of knowledge or creating artificial barriers when longing for knowledge.

The necessary part for book publishing are book publishers and their workshops, which Comenius describes again in the part *Panorthosia /Universal reform/*, in the chapter about Light corps. Only educated and religious men could have become book publishers and they should have made an oath to faithfully do this craft. Only the representatives of the church, state power and Light corps could have issued

permission to do this activity. Komenský leans on the comparison of book publishing to monetization, which is also permitted only to chosen people.

The most appropriate places for book printers, resp. „the workshops of light“ could have been near universities, which using its institution authority as well as the authority of their professors' personalities would only supported appropriate books' publishing.

The publishing of books could have also been under the supervision of Light corps, resp. of royal, earl, state, church or university authority. If there was a decision to publish a book again, the authors must have been informed about it to have the chance to correct, improve or extend the presented texts.

According to Comenius, books should have been accessible for public, helping to spread the light of knowledge, so their language and design should have also been taken into consideration. „We then need to ask and oblige the publishers urgently not to copy the paper, but wisdom, and not to set profit as their goal, but the light of souls instead, to be the real light servants...“ (Komenský, *Obecná ...*, III. volume, 1992, p. 356.)

The members of Light corps had one more important role: to set together and spread new universal language that could be used to communicate with every nation of the world. This universal language should have met „these three requirements:

1. Its terminology should have covered the whole system of things (visible and invisible), not leaving out unnamed even the smallest thing;
2. It should have included the whole system of sounds to the naming of things (sounds that a human tongue and mouth can produce), not leaving out even the smallest one
3. It should have put the whole system of tones (that can be observed on sounds) into harmony and should not have left out even the smallest difference of things, concepts and sounds.“ (Komenský, *Obecná ...*, III. volume, 1992, p. 181.)

Communication based on such elaborated common language should have served not only to transfer of the until-then knowledge, but also to faster and more effective familiarization with the newest information. „Light corps is supra-national institution for international research in sciences and arts and for developing mutual contacts of students of the world in the interest of fast generalization and mediation of all research discoveries, inventions and new ideas.“ (Pšenák, 1999, p. 248.)

In the conclusion of this part Comenius appealed, that the whole activity of students associated in Light corps would be realised in the accordance with and with the cooperation of the other two organizations – world consistorium and peace court.

Light corps of Comenius has gained many names – for example universal link of intellectuals (J. A. Comenius in his work *General Consultation*), universal organization (J. A. Comenius in his work *The Path of Light*), international ministry of culture and schools (J. Patočka in the cited volume). Now the time has come to try to realize the message of Comenius in real life with the common faith in correction of human things. „International understanding and the life of humankind in peace belong to the most basic values that the world community tries to achieve. Peace conceptions of J. A. Comenius, the conceptions of the world correction and the whole universal correction are conditioned by the suggestions how to solve these problems also at the beginning of the third millenium.“ (Pšenák, 1999, p. 252.)

## REFERENCES

- BAKOŠ, Ľ. (1959) Úvod. In: *Komenský, Jan Amos. 1959. Vybrané spisy IV*. Bratislava: SPN.
- BLATNÝ, L., MAŇÁK, J. (1991) *Jan Amos Komenský. K 400. výročiu narodenia J. A. Komenského (1952-1992)*. Brno: PF.
- CIPRO, M. (1984) *Průvodce dějinami výchovy*. Praha: Panorama.
- CIPRO, M. (2002) *Galerie světových pedagogů. Encyklopedie prameny výchovy. I. svazek: od starověku k osvícenství*. Praha: M. Cipro.
- ČAPKOVÁ, D. (1987) *Myslitelsko-vychovateľský odkaz J. A. Komenského*. Praha: ČSAV.
- ČUMA, A. (1992) *Jan Amos Komenský povedal ... Výber myšlienok z diela Veľká didaktika. K 400. výročiu narodenia Jána Amosa Komenského*. Prešov: Metodické centrum.
- GALLO, J., ŠKODA, K. (1986) *Dejiny pedagogiky dospelých*. Bratislava: SPN.
- KELLY, T. (1970) *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain*. Liverpool: University Press.
- KOMENSKÝ, J. A. (1990) *Ako dômyselne používať knihy, hlavný nástroj vzdelávania*. Bratislava: SPN.
- KOMENSKÝ, J. A. (1991) *Veľká didaktika*. Bratislava : SPN.
- KOMENSKÝ, J. A. (1992). *Cesta svetla*. Praha: Mladá fronta.
- KOMENSKÝ, J. A. (1992) *Obecná porada o náprave věcí lidských. I*. Praha: Svoboda.
- KOMENSKÝ, J. A. (1992) *Obecná porada o náprave věcí lidských. III*. Praha: Svoboda.
- KOMENSKÝ, J. A. (1992) *Vševýchova. (Pampaedia)*. Bratislava : Obzor 1992.
- KOPECKÝ, J., PATOČKA, J., KYRÁŠEK, J. (1957) *Jan Amos Komenský. Nástin života a díla*. Praha: SPN.
- PATOČKA, J. (1981) K filozofii J. A. Komenského. /B/ Komenského Všeobecná porada. In: *Jan Amos Komenský. Gesammelte Schriften zur Comeniusforschung*, (pp. 294 – 317). Bochum: RUB – Comeniusforschungsstelle.
- PŠENÁK, J. (1999) Komenského mierová koncepcia nápravy sveta, *Pedagogická revue*, 3, 246 – 253.
- PŠENÁK, J. (1992) Potocké obdobie Jana Amosa Komenského. In: *Výber z potockých spisov a reči Jana Amosa Komenského*, (pp. 7 – 30). Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského.
- SROGOŇ, T. a kol. (1986) *Dejiny školstva a pedagogiky*. Bratislava: SPN.