

# Between History and System. Historical Knowledge in Comenius' *Pansophy*<sup>1</sup>

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By analysing Johannes Amos Comenius' *Pansophy*, this study shows how Comenius squared his idea of a system with his strong sense of history. It discusses how his systematic and historical approaches interact. The monumental, long-standing project of *Pansophia*, originating in the 1630s, was supposed to provide a wide range of information and cover all important subjects. Although Comenius studied history from early in his academic career, wrote several history treatises, and considered history the most beautiful part of knowledge, he seems to have failed to include it in his ambitious pansophical work. History does not seem to play a part in this most comprehensive of oeuvres. To fulfil his aspiring program of universal knowledge, Comenius did not feel obliged to tell the history of the world, respective countries, or the church. The striking absence of history makes Comenius' pansophical enterprise significantly different from his earlier encyclopaedic project, *Theatrum universitatis rerum*, which included several books covering both civil and church history. The lack of such a prominent field of scholarship might be surprising in a book designed to summarise the entire knowledge available at the time. Seeking an explanation for such a remarkable omission, this study argues that excluding history was intentional, based on two significant changes in the author's intellectual predilections. The first was related to the very concept of history, its nature and function. The second was linked to the issue of early modern knowledge organization. While structuring knowledge, Comenius did not omit history, but he abandoned the concept of disciplines in general. In the reconstructed systematisation, the topics concerning time, history and historicity stepped out of traditional historical genres. They are scattered throughout the book in more or less inconspicuous passages, hidden in many specific, non-narrative manifestations. These changes are to be attributed to the highly discussed questions regarding the optimal knowledge system in seventeenth-century scholarly discourse.

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## History vs. System

The historical and systemic approaches are often considered conflicting principles. Both concepts, ‘history’ and ‘system’, imply the organisation of information but the manner of this organisation differs. While history refers to chronological order, the concept of a system subverts this seemingly simple structure and designs the body of information according to some form of internal topical coherence. Early modern scholarly discourse was highly engaged in collecting and organising knowledge. The information explosion resulting from new discoveries, advancing technologies, and the flourishing printing press catalysed various techniques for processing this ambiguous experience. Selective reading patterns, note-taking practices, and the use of alphabetical indexes and synoptic tools are only some among many.<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming amount of books, political pamphlets, and other publications continued to supply readers with a wealth of opinions, theories, and insights that were often inconsistent or outright contradictory. This endless and confusing flow of information affected not only scholars but also society at large and deepened – according to Peter Burke – fear and social anxiety.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ANNE M. BLAIRE, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age*, New Haven 2010; ANNE M. BLAIRE, *Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload, ca. 1550–1700*, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64/2003, pp. 11–28.

<sup>3</sup> PETER BURKE, *Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot*, Cambridge 2000. According to psychological studies, the concepts of fear and anxiety differ. Anxiety is defined as the anticipation of future threats, while fear is defined as the emotional response to a real or perceived imminent threat. In the 1620s, both experiences can be tracked in the sources of Bohemian provenance referring to a climactic social crisis. On the representation of the crisis in the Bohemian Lands in the 1620s cf. JAN MALURA, *How to Tell the Story of a Crisis? Three Historiographic*

Parallel to the flood of information, there was also a flood of attempts to manage it. Notably, two remarkable tendencies, which Barbara Shapiro has described very succinctly, flourished in the seventeenth-century culture of knowledge. The first was a vital “concern with degrees of certainty”; the second was a “concern for systematisation”.<sup>4</sup> While the first aimed to develop more precise methods of investigation and verification to gain more reliable knowledge, the second was supposed to restore the lost unity of knowledge and rearrange its lost coherence. The system – *systema* – became one of the most prominent maxims and keywords of seventeenth-century scholarly culture. Starting with Bartholomäus Keckermann's *Systema logicæ* (1600), *Systema grammaticæ Hebrææ* (1602) and *Systema S. S. theologiæ* (1602), Clemens Timpler's *Metaphysicæ systema methodicum* (1604), Otto Casmann's *Doctrinæ et vitæ politicæ methodicum ac breve systema* (1603), Johann Heinrich Alsted's *Systema Mnemonicum* (1609), Galileo's *Systema cosmicum* (1632) and many others, both the genre and the word itself became very popular.<sup>5</sup> Keckermann's “supersystem” *Systema systemum* (1613) was the emblematic manifestation of the “seventeenth-century spirit of system”.<sup>6</sup> These works, combining compilation with innovation, partly built on the sixteenth-century encyclopaedism, partly rephrased it and replaced its precept to know everything (Angelo Poliziano's *Panepistemon*)<sup>7</sup> with a more modest, yet no easier to manage goal: to know everything important.

Since the early scholarly efforts to compile a body of universal knowledge, history was a part of these comprehensive projects, mostly covering separate sections. For example, one of the most ambitious encyclopaedic enterprises ever, *Speculum maius*, compiled by the 13<sup>th</sup>-century French scholar Vincent of Beauvais, consisted of three sections: *Speculum*

*Accounts of the Estates Revolt and the Bohemian War*, Acta Comeniana 35(59)/2021, pp. 35–68.

4 BARBARA SHAPIRO, *Law and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*, Stanford Law Review 21/1969, no. 4, pp. 729–730.

5 For an overview of some works with the word ‘system’ in the title, see ROLAND MÜLLER, Schriften mit dem Titel “System”, [http://www.muellerscience.com/SPEZIALITAETEN/System/Lit.System\(1556-2001\).htm](http://www.muellerscience.com/SPEZIALITAETEN/System/Lit.System(1556-2001).htm) (accessed on 13 August 2024).

6 DONALD R. KELLEY, *Between History and System*, in: *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, (eds.) Gianna Pomata, Nancy G. Siraisy, Cambridge (MA) – London 2005, p. 224.

7 STEFFEN SIEGEL, *Tabula: Figuren der Ordnung um 1600*, Berlin 2009, p. 7.

*naturale*, dealing with natural phenomena, *Speculum doctrinale*, delivering the summa of scholastic knowledge on philosophy, mathematics, mechanical art etc., and *Speculum historiale*, summarising human history and focusing on the rise and fall of great powers. Such an arrangement was possible as long as history was understood as a thematically defined field, distinct from other disciplines. This kind of system was rather additive, without looking for interconnections between the individual knowledge segments, and the coherence of this kind of system was rather mechanical. Under this assumption, it was relatively easy to include history in the “circle of disciplines”.

For several reasons, the relationship between ‘history’ and ‘system’ became more complicated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Firstly, history became a more complex concept covering a broader semantic field. It was no longer just a narrative of the past but also a factual description of anything real.<sup>8</sup> Since the notion of history was emancipated from its relationship to the past, it lost its disciplinary specificity. Therefore, its positioning within the system of knowledge could become less determined. According to Donald R. Kelley, the problem that entailed the inclusion of history in the system of learning was “its detachment from form and structure, which contrasted sharply with the early modern search for proper pedagogical methods of disciplinary knowledge”.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, historiography gained importance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but at the same time, it also became a hotbed of religious and political interests. Competing historical narratives deepened the ontological crisis rather than fuelled the idea of coherent knowledge. Thirdly, the requirements for knowledge production and systematisation changed fundamentally in the seventeenth century, as was comprehensively declared in Francis Bacon’s *Instauratio magna* (1620), which postulated a total reconstruction of the sciences, arts, and all human knowledge.

Comenius began to deal with questions of knowledge in this intellectual context. As a student and admirer of Johann Heinrich Alsted, he

<sup>8</sup> Cf. for instance ARNO SEIFERT, *Cognitio historica: Die Geschichte als Namensgeberin der frühneuzeitlichen Empirie*, Berlin 1976; GIANNA POMATA, *Praxis historialis: The Uses of Historia in Early Modern Medicine*, in: *Historia*, (eds.) Gianna Pomata, Nancy G. Siraisy, pp. 105–146.

<sup>9</sup> KELLEY, *Between History and System*, p. 224.

was initially an encyclopaedia enthusiast. Yet, he soon became aware of the pitfalls associated with the contemporary culture of knowledge, both in its production and organisation. He was one of the scholars who experienced the notorious “diluvium librorum,” which resulted in a stressful flood of various and often conflicting information:

“Once people carried wisdom in their minds, now they began to lock it up in volumes. It follows that it is confined to books and libraries and seldom appears in men’s thoughts, sayings, or deeds. The cause of this calamity is the very number and variety of books. For there are too many of them. The life of any mortal man would not suffice to read even one-thousandth of them. They are more varied than any brain could bear without getting giddy. Piles of books are, therefore, more for spectacle than for use, and from this, vanity arises. Or, if one’s spirit is set on skimming through it all, this creates the quilt of confusion.”<sup>10</sup>

Comenius suggested measures to regulate the literary overproduction to bring this explosion under control,<sup>11</sup> as well as looked for ways to improve knowledge and reorganise it in a new, more “harmonious” way. These innovations had a lasting effect on history and its positioning within the complex web of universal knowledge.

In comparing Comenius’s early encyclopaedic and later pansophical writings, the position of history marks a notable shift. Although he was concerned with history from early in his career, wrote a series of history treatises and praised it as the eye of wisdom, he did not include it in his monumental pansophical work. History – be it the history of the world,

<sup>10</sup> JOHANNES AMOS COMENIUS, *De rerum humanarum consultatio catholica*, Prague 1966, Panegersia, cap. V, § 15, p. 56: “Olim sampientia pectoribus gestabatur, nunc chartis includi coepta est. Unde sit, ut libris bibliothecisque incarcerationa rarò in hominum cogitatis, dictis aut factis reperiatur. Cuius incommodi vel ipsa librorum multitudo et varietas in causa est. Plures enim sunt, quàm ut relegendae vel millesimae eorum parti cuiusquam mortalis vita sufficiat, magis autem varii, quàm ut ullum tam firmum cerebrum, quod non in vertiginem agi necesse habeat, reperiiri sit. Strues itaque librorum aut spectaculo sunt magis, quàm usui, et sic vanitas proditur, aut confusio certè, si quis per omnia volutare se animum obfirmet, et sic noxa patescit.”

<sup>11</sup> LENKA ŘEZŇÍKOVÁ, *Eruditi censores, salvete per Christum! J. A. Komenský a raně novověká regulace literatury* [Eruditi censores salvete per Christum! Jan Amos Comenius and Early Modern Literary Regulation], in: Ex definitione: Pansofické pojmy J. A. Komenského a jejich dobové kontexty. Studie Martinu Steinerovi [Ex definitione: Pansophic Concepts of Jan Amos Comenius and their Early Modern Contexts. Studies for Martin Steiner], (eds.) LENKA ŘEZŇÍKOVÁ, VLADIMÍR URBÁNEK, Praha 2017, p. 77–102.

of individual countries, or of the Church – has no special place in this ambitious and long-term project. The omission of one of the most prolific fields of early modern learning in a book that was supposed to synthesise the entire knowledge available at his time may seem surprising. It is worth looking at how Comenius squared his idea of a system with his strong sense of history and how he explained the interaction between his systemic and historical approaches. While his first encyclopaedic undertaking, *Theatrum universitatis rerum* (1616–1618), featured history in several books, his later pansophical project simply left it out.

## Comenius: History within the System

Comenius had an interest in history since his return from Herborn and Heidelberg, where he studied from 1611–1614.<sup>12</sup> As a coauthor, he used rich historical argumentation in the anonymously distributed treatise *Retuňk proti Antikristu a svodům jeho* [Protection against the Antichrist and his Temptations] (1617), criticising the Roman Church.<sup>13</sup> Two of his writings dealt with local Moravian history.<sup>14</sup> Also, his unfinished en-

<sup>12</sup> On Comenius' historical writings and his concept of history, see JOSEF POLIŠENSKÝ, *Komenský a české dějepisectví bělohorského období* [Comenius and the Bohemian historiography of the White Mountain Period], *Acta Comeniana* XXII/1964, pp. 61–81; DAGMAR ČAPKOVÁ, *Pojetí dějin v díle J. A. Komenského* [The Concept of History in the Works of J. A. Comenius], in: *DJAK* 9/1, Praha 1989, pp. 7–20; DAGMAR ČAPKOVÁ, *Myslenka lidské aktivity v Komenského pojetí dějin* [The Idea of Human Activity in Comenius' Concept of History], Praha 1983.

<sup>13</sup> JÁN LÁNECKÝ – JAN AMOS KOMENSKÝ, *Retuňk proti Antikristu a svodům jeho* [Salvation from the Antichrist and his Temptations], in: *DJAK* 2, Praha 1971, pp. 225–229. Until recently, historians speculated about Comenius' authorship or co-authorship based on linguistic and ideological similarities with his other text. Cf. RUDOLF ŘÍČAN, *Retuňk proti Antikristu im Gesamtwerk J. A. Komenského*, *Acta Comeniana* 26(2)/1970, p. 249. Jiří Just found new sources in the archive of Matouš Konečný and brought new light to this question. Cf. JIŘÍ JUST, *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte der Brüderunität in der Zeit vor der Schlacht am Weißen Berg: Der Fund des Archivs von Matouš Konečný in Mladá Boleslav*, *Acta Comeniana* 22–23(46–47)/2009, pp. 265–266.

<sup>14</sup> Both writings (*De antiquitatibus Moraviae* and *De origine et gestis familiae Zerotin*) are lost. Their nature can only be inferred from references made by other authors in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially Tomáš Pešina of Čechorod. According to the latest research, these writings (or their parts) were available until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Moravian Krumlov chaplain and local historian Václav Michal Volák used them in his history of his native town of Ivančice. Cf. LADISLAV

cyclopaedic project, *Theatrum universitatis rerum*, probably written in 1616–1618,<sup>15</sup> was to contain a part entitled *Theatrum saeculorum* dealing with history. In the turbulent period after the defeat of the Estates Revolt, he resorted to history in the fictional dialogue *Truchlivý II* [Mournful II], written in 1624 with the neo-Stoic inspirations of Justus Lipsius, using his famous two-volume book, *De Constantia in publicis malis* (1583). The historical references used in this book were supposed to play a comforting role, strengthen the mind, and relieve anxiety and distress in times of war and social crisis. After having to leave Czech lands, Comenius returned to historiographical writings in Lissa in the 1630s. He became a scribe and historiographer of the Unity of Brethren and was entrusted with official historical tasks.<sup>16</sup> He was working on a general history textbook for the Lissa gymnasium, *Historia profana sive politica* (written in Lissa 1631).<sup>17</sup> In addition, he prepared the eighth book of *Historia de origine et rebus gestis fratrum Bohemicorum* (1649) by the Polish Nobleman Jan Łasicki for publication, as well as its Czech translation.<sup>18</sup> His historical activities culminated in his participation in the *Historia persecutionum*.<sup>19</sup>

HOSÁK, *Po stopách dvou ztracených historických děl J. A. Komenského* [On the Trail of Two Lost Historical Works of J. A. Comenius], *Acta Comeniana* 19(2)/1960, pp. 230–234; IVAN VÁVRA, *Po stopách Komenského Moravských starožitností* [On the Trail of Comenius' Moravian Antiquities], *Časopis Společnosti přátel starožitností* 69/1961, pp. 161–162. Recently TOMÁŠ KNOZ, *Gelehrsamkeit und Geschichtskultur des brüderischen Adels in Mähren um 1600: Karl der Ältere von Žerotín und seine Bibliothek*, in: *Konfessionelle Geschichtsschreibung im Umfeld der Böhmisches Brüder (1500–1800). Traditionen – Akteure – Praktiken*, (eds.) Joachim Bahlcke, Jiří Just, Martin Rothkegel, Wiesbaden 2022, p. 280.

- <sup>15</sup> JOHANNES AMOS COMENIUS, *Theatrum universitatis rerum*, in: *DJAK* 1, Praha 1969, pp. 97–181.
- <sup>16</sup> ANTONÍN GINDELY, *Dekrety Jednoty bratrské*, Praha 1865, p. 279; see also JOSEF HENDRICH, *Úvod* [Introduction], in: JAN AMOS KOMENSKÝ, *Stručná historie církve slovanské* [A Brief History of the Slavonic Church], Josef Hendrich (ed.), Praha 1941, pp. 8–10.
- <sup>17</sup> JOHANNES AMOS COMENIUS, *Historia profana sive politica*, in: *DJAK* 9/I, Praha 1989, pp. 365–368.
- <sup>18</sup> *Johannis Lasitii Historiae de origine et rebus gestis fratrum Bohemicorum liber octavus*, (ed.) Johannes Amos Comenius, in: *DJAK* 9/II, Praha 2013, pp. 9–152, 289–340; *Pana Jana Lasitského, šlechtice polského, Historie o původu a činech bratrů českých kniha osmá*, Johannes Amos Comenius (transl.), in: *DJAK* 9/II, Praha 2013, pp. 165–340.
- <sup>19</sup> *Historia persecutionum Ecclesiae Bohemicae jam inde a primordiis conversionis suae ad Christianismum*, in: *DJAK* 9/I, Praha 1989, pp. 199–327; *Historie o těžkých protivnostech církve české hned od počátku jejího na víru křesťanskou obrácení*, in: *DJAK* 9/I, Praha 1989, pp. 49–198. Recently about this work: VLADIMÍR URBÁNEK,

In parallel with his historical interests, he developed ambitious ideas concerning the management and arrangement of knowledge. The systematic unity of knowledge was an emerging concern of the expanding early modern scholarly discourse. The search for ways to collect and organise knowledge became the pragmatic response of the learned world to a far-reaching information explosion.<sup>20</sup> Comenius started thinking about how to clarify and unify knowledge immediately after his return from his studies in Germany in the 1610s. In the Aristotelian manner, with youthful ardour, he threw himself into an ambitious enterprise, *Theatrum universitatis rerum*.<sup>21</sup> His encyclopaedic intention was hinted at by the theatre metaphor in the title, which in this period was losing its figurative validity and becoming the usual technical designation of this genre.<sup>22</sup>

Comenius worked on this volume between 1616 and 1618, following not only Alsted's Herborn inspirations but also domestic manifestations of this genre, Pierre Boaistuau's *Theatrum mundi minoris* translated into Czech by Nathanael Vodňanský from Uračov (1605)<sup>23</sup> and the "lay biblical encyclopaedia" *Theatrum divinum* (1616)<sup>24</sup> by another member of the Unity of the Brethren, Matouš Konečný. Comenius never finished this heroic endeavour. Its intended structure can be deduced from the completed parts and partial mentions in other texts. In a December 1661

*Historia Persecutionum Ecclesiae Bohemicae between History, Identity, and Martyrology*, Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte 114/2023, pp. 265–289; MARIE ŠKARPOVÁ, *Die Historia persecutionum ecclesiae Bohemicae im Zusammenhang des christlichen Martyriumsdiskurses der Frühen Neuzeit: Entstehungskontext – Argumentation – Wirkung*, in: *Konfessionelles Geschichtsschreibung im Umfeld der Böhmischen Brüder (1500–1800): Traditionen – Akteure – Praktiken*, (eds.) Joachim Bahlcke, Jiří Just, Martin Rothkegel, Wiesbaden 2022, pp. 507–534.

<sup>20</sup> HELMUT ZEDELMAIER, *Bibliotheca universalis und Bibliotheca selecta. Das Problem der Ordnung des gelehrten Wissens in der frühen Neuzeit* (Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 33), Köln–Weimar–Wien 1992, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> COMENIUS, *Theatrum universitatis rerum*.

<sup>22</sup> HOWARD HOTSON, *Reconfiguration: The Encyclopaedia Turned Inside Out*, in: *id.*, *The Reformation of Common Learning: Post-Ramist Method and the Reception of the New Philosophy, 1618–1670*, Oxford 2020; online ed., Oxford Academic, 21 Jan. 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199553389.003.0011> (accessed on 30 April 2022).

<sup>23</sup> NATHANAEL VODŇANSKÝ Z URAČOVA, *Theatrum mundi minoris*, (eds.) Hana Bočková, Jiří Matl, Brno 2001.

<sup>24</sup> MATOUŠ KONEČNÝ, *Theatrum divinum, to jest divadlo Boží Angelům i lidem žádostivé v spatřování divného skutku Božího, všeho světa stvoření* [Theatrum divinum that is, the theatre of God desirable to Angels and people in viewing the strange work of God, the creation of the whole world], V Starém Městě Pražském 1616.



letter to Petrus Montanus, he described it as an attempt at a “pivotal work” (*opus principale*) and an “extract from libraries” (*bibliothecarum epitome*), which was to be a “home manual for anyone looking for information on anything”.<sup>25</sup> In the outline of the *Theatrum*, he reveals that it was to be divided into four parts dealing with the natural world (*Theatrum naturae*), human society (*Theatrum vitae humane*), geography (*Theatrum orbis terrae*) and history (*Theatrum seculorum*).<sup>26</sup>

Hence, he sorted the intended work on a thematic basis according to disciplines. History was supposed to form a separate section within this encyclopaedic structure. Unfortunately, Comenius completed only a fraction of the entire project. The part devoted to history remained unwritten. However, we know it was to be further divided into four books. The first book was to be devoted to general problems concerning the age of the world and chronology; the second part was to be the secular history of the world; the third part was planned as the history of the church; and the fourth book was to deal with the “future way of the world and the church until the end of time, and when and how it will happen”.<sup>27</sup> Although the future was yet to come, it was still part of history. History was not limited to the past. It was not reduced to things that had already happened. It was a comprehensive whole that included the entire existence of humankind, from the creation of the world to its demise. For that reason, Comenius intended to thematise the future in this broad framework of history.

The second version of a similar encyclopaedic project, which Comenius called *Amphitheatrum universitatis rerum*,<sup>28</sup> was to be further expanded and divided into 28 books, but its composition probably remained identical.

During the 1630s, Comenius began to abandon the concept of an encyclopaedia. He considered the encyclopaedic organisation of knowledge to be mechanical and unsatisfactory. Instead, he outlined the idea of an alternative, pansophic ordering of universal wisdom, which would

<sup>25</sup> JOHANNES AMOS COMENIUS, *Epistula ad Montanum*, DJAK 1, Praha 1969, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Theatrum universitatis rerum*, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Theatrum universitatis rerum*, p. 119: “O budoucím způsobu světa a církve až do skonání času; a kdy i jak se to stane.”

<sup>28</sup> Comenius did not finish any of these writings. Therefore, the relationship between *Theatrum* and *Amphitheatrum* cannot be precisely determined.

not divide knowledge into disciplines but connect things and phenomena naturally according to their relationships in the world.

*Pansophia* is not divided into disciplines or thematic segments but into eight parts called, metaphorically, “worlds”. The first is an ideal, possible world (*Mundus possibilis*), which builds a pattern according to which God and humans create the other, real worlds. Three of them were created by God (*Mundus archetypus*, *angelicus*, and *materialis*); further three – symmetrically – were created by people (*Mundus artificialis*, *moralis*, and *spiritualis*). The last one (*Mundus aeternus*) closes the cycle of pansophic worlds by returning to God.

In this arrangement, history has no specific place in its classical narrative form. With this approach, Comenius seeks harmonious order in all spheres of knowledge, turning away from encyclopaedic ideals which break knowledge down into separate elements. History hardly appears in *Pansophia*. Comenius’ pansophic project abandons the classification of knowledge, in which history forms a specific field. It deconstructs the classification of learning based on the concept of disciplines and distinct topics. Individual areas of human knowledge become fluid and mutually overlapping. Knowledge is structured according to a higher principle. This “de-disciplining” applies not only to history: all other disciplines also dissolve into the non-chronological, non-disciplinary pansophic system.

We can trace the idea of non-chronological, non-disciplinary knowledge in Comenius’s earlier writings, in which he developed a pansophic scheme more purposefully. In *Via lucis*, written in England in the winter of 1641–1642,<sup>29</sup> and also in his shorter London works, such as the letter *Ad amicos Lesnae in Polonia agentes* from the same time,<sup>30</sup> he singles out history from the pansophic system. In these texts, he speaks about three books that would provide universal wisdom, *Pansophia*, *Panhistoria*, and *Pandogmatia*. Apart from *Pansophia*, the two other books were in some way connected with history. *Pandogmatia* was designed to digest history’s most essential ideas and theoretical knowledge. *Panhistoria* was supposed to provide an account of all actions, accidents, and issues of things

<sup>29</sup> JOHN AMOS COMENIUS, *The Way of Light*, (transl.) E. T. Campagnac, London 1938 (This text was written in 1641 but not published until 1668).

<sup>30</sup> JOHANNES AMOS COMENIUS, *Ad amicos Lesnae in Polonia agentes*, *DJAK* 14 1974, pp. 113–116.

discovered from their origin to Comenius' present.<sup>31</sup> However, despite the promising title of *Panhistoria*, even this work did not seek to present a comprehensive view of history or deliver profound ideas on historians' work, goals, and methods.

The idea of pansophy culminated in Comenius' masterpiece *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*. He began writing this work in Elblag in the mid-1640s; after the destruction of Lešno, he lost the almost finished manuscript. Later, he worked on restoring the lost parts, especially in the first half of the 1660s. Although he did not finish the work, it is clear that the narrative of history and a systematic treatise on the historical method were not to have had a place in this tract. The shift from encyclopaedia to pansophy, resulting in the renunciation of disciplines, inevitably affected the status and function of history.

Upon closer examination, history does not disappear entirely from *Pansophia* but its representations changed significantly. History is hidden in what could be called a subliminal representational level, making it invisible on the surface. At the same time, this approach emphasises history as a principle necessary in the very nature of human existence. Historicity is a principle impressed upon humanity by God for a specific purpose. That is also one of the reasons why history matters and is worthy of study.

History is built into the very foundations of the pansophic project without being just narrated. History is not a mere part of wisdom but as Comenius implies, it was actually the very motive for thinking about pansophy. Behind the whole project of revision and reorganisation of knowledge, there was an evident comparison of the then state of society – including its knowledge – with the previous stages. It also prompted reflections on what phase of history humanity was experiencing at the time, how much time was left until the end of history, and what purpose this time served. Comenius worked intensively with concepts of time and change, which were essential – as the main accidents – not only for his mosaic physics but also for his historical thinking. In the pansophic sense, these concepts – time and change – establish an analogy between physical and historical processes.

<sup>31</sup> For more detail about Comenius' *Pansophia* see e.g. DAGMAR ČAPKOVÁ, *The idea of "Panhistoria" in the development of Comenius' work toward "Consultatio"*, Acta Comeniana 25(2)/1970, pp. 49–72.

The critical question was what history was and how long it would last. Comenius answered this question on a very general level and in very general concepts in *Pansophia in Mundus materialis*, where he wrote about creating the “visible” world. He presented a conception of history as a time span given to the human race by God in order for them to multiply to a finite, pre-determined number. Unlike the angels who were created in their total number, in the case of humanity, God decided differently and created only one man. Thus, the essential reason for history was that a gradual “procreation” may occur, and the human population may spread across the Earth. “Since these things” – that is, the multiplication of the human race – “required a lot of time,” God determined that the world “would last a few thousand years”.<sup>32</sup>

Comenius follows the usual computations based on the Bible without going into too much detail, aware of the differences in contemporary chronologies. The issue that he explicitly deals with is the absence of eyewitness testimony for the event of the Creation. The institution of the eyewitness was crucial for ancient and early modern historiography. Comenius repeatedly returns to the absence of an eyewitness as it represents a critical deficit in a fundamental matter. Fortunately, there are other tools to get information about time and its passing. In order to give people an idea of the categories of time, duration and change, and to determine how far they are from the beginning of human history and from its end, the Creator built “an amazing astronomical clock which accurately measures days, months, years, and centuries”.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia, Mundus materialis*, cap. I, § 11, p. 296.

<sup>33</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia, Mundus materialis*, cap. I, § 11, p. 296. The whole passage in the *Pansophia* reads as follows: “Et quia homines non ita ut Angelos numerò plenò omnes simul producere placuit, sed ad ostendendam multifariam sapientiam suam, stirpem solùm, hominem unum, ex quo per generationem propagarentur reliqui, res autem haec tempore opus habuit multo, assignavit mundo durationis suae annorum millenarios aliquot. Atque ut ne interea taediosa hic esset habitatio, ignaris utinam essent et quantum à principio vel fine distarent, adstruxit admirabile dies menses, annos et secula accuratissimè dimetiens, horologium, sideram automatam machinam.” (“And because God did not want to create all mankind at once in its full number, as with the angels, but only one stump, a single man, from whom by procreation others would multiply, so as to show God’s many-sided wisdom, and because these things required much time, he allocated several thousand years’ duration to the world. And so that the stay here did not arouse ugliness when people would not be aware of how far they were from the be-

This means that one of the purposes of the celestial body is to serve man as a timekeeper. This is why heavenly bodies are least subject to change – they must remain stable to function over centuries as a long-term timekeeper in the historical sense. “What lasts continuously lasts because it is intended for the maintenance and management of the world. Like the stars.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, one of the basic parameters of human existence, even the sky is de facto only a tool that manifests its temporal extension.

In addition to this, “a self-propelled star machine”<sup>35</sup> is provided, a clue which should – as mentioned – suggest to mankind which phase of history it finds itself in, that is, its total population. However, demographic development as a measure of historical temporality is likewise only indicative, and in other works, Comenius himself questions its reliability. In *Truchlivý II*, he wrote that disease, war, and other disasters are an instrument for regulating demographic development should the pace of procreation speed up too much.<sup>36</sup> That means that achieving a predetermined demographic quota is not the aim of history; there is still another, the qualitative aim which Comenius saw, especially in achieving perfect knowledge and ethics. The world was not only a space where people should multiply but also a school where they should learn.

The question of the age of the world was thus systemic. It was a discursive position, which the systematician Comenius felt was needed to be fed with the appropriate data. He had attempted to do this as early as the *Theatrum universitatis rerum*, where he turned for the answer to the traditional biblical chronology. In agreement with this, he assumed that the entire history of humanity would last six thousand years. According to him, this period of time covered the whole of human history, spanning five thousand years in the past and roughly a thousand years into the future.<sup>37</sup>

ginning and the end, he devised a marvellous astronomical clock measuring exactly the days, months, years and centuries, a self-propelled celestial machine.”)

<sup>34</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, Pansophia, Mundus materialis, cap. IX, p. 384: “Quae perennando durant, ideò durant, quia conservando et regendo mundo destinata sunt. Ut sidera.”

<sup>35</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, Pansophia, Mundus materialis, cap. I, § 11, p. 404.

<sup>36</sup> JOHANNES AMOS COMENIUS, *Truchlivý*, II, DJAK 3, Praha 1978, p. 80.

<sup>37</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Theatrum universitatis rerum*, p. 129: “Nacházíme pak, že svět ani šesti tisíc let stáří ještě není.” (“We then find out that the world is not even six thousand years old.”)

This data is repeated in the *Pansophia*, where Comenius again mentions a parallel between the six days of Creation and the six thousand years of the previous development of human society. He writes that while six days were enough for God to create the world, “our world of human skills could not reach its culmination even in the period of almost six thousand years. It is still gradually emerging and our invention continues, creating something bigger and better.”<sup>38</sup>

Just as the time since the beginning of history could not be determined precisely, nor could the time remaining to humankind until the end of history be determined with certainty. As is well known, Comenius was a representative of the Chiliastic vision which held that the human population had reached the closing phase of its history. This was precisely what motivated him to undertake the whole pansophic project. The concept of *Pansophia* was to help humankind achieve the highest level of knowledge in the upcoming last phase of history.

Time, however, does not only reveal the current position of humankind in the historical plan; that is, what part of history it has already passed and what part is yet to come. It is an instrument God uses to enable humankind to understand the order of things. As Comenius writes in *Pansophia*, the all-powerful Godhead could certainly create everything in one moment. However, He deliberately provided the act of Creation with a time frame to enable humanity to see more clearly how one thing grows from another and develops in stages.<sup>39</sup> The course of actions in time is thus de facto the first and fundamental cognitive and educational instrument invented by God and assigned to human society as early as during Creation itself. That is why, as Comenius writes in *Pansophia*, the Bible begins with “the history of Creation”.<sup>40</sup> History enables mankind to understand things. It is interesting to compare this with *Physicae synopsis*, where Comenius writes that the Bible begins with physics. In

<sup>38</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus artificialis*, cap. II, § 14, p. 430: “Noster verò artificialis mundus ne quidem sex mille annorum spatiis absolvi potuit, adhuc est in fieri, progredientibus inventionibus nostris semper in maius et melius.” (“Our world of human skill could not reach its consummation even in a time period of six thousand years. It is still in a state of gradual creation as our inventions continue to create something bigger and better.”)

<sup>39</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus materialis*, cap. I, §§ 36–39, p. 299.

<sup>40</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus materialis*, cap. I, § 39, p. 299.

*Pansophia*, on the contrary, he emphasises that the Bible starts with history. He thus understands this passage from Scripture on the one hand as a representation of physics, on the other hand, as a representation of history, and de facto he also creates something like “mosaic” history after the pattern of mosaic physics. They bear similar characteristics; for example, physics and history anticipate stage improvement.

According to Comenius, it is precisely for cognitive reasons that God distinguished the past, present and future and gave things a processual nature. God himself, however, can see everything simultaneously:

“When analysing God’s foreknowledge, many people are confused for two reasons. One of them is that they imagine that there is a future for God as there is for us. Secondly, they consider God’s foreknowledge to be the cause of all future events, which it is not. By imagining that there is a future for God as there is for us, they commit a great error, for our future is as present to God as what we call the present. After all, the more the mind can comprehend (as Vives says), the greater the scope of the present time. For God, whose ability to conceive anything is infinite, the present time is infinite, just as all eternity, which is infinite, is present to him. Therefore, from God’s point of view, what we call the past and the future never passes and for Him is always present.”<sup>41</sup>

For a man not endowed with God’s absolute intellectual capacity, it is easier to see things historically, i.e. in temporal stages. Just as “when we read a book,” Comenius writes, “we move from one line and one page to another. But God sees and perceives everything at the same time. Our being continues gradually whereas God’s is permanent; it is the same with knowledge. We know the future only by conjecture but God, dwelling in His eternity, looks upon all things as present.”<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately,

<sup>41</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus materialis*, cap. X, p. 710: “In argumento de praesentia Dei, perplexi haerent multi duas ob causas. Una, quòd imaginantur futura esse Deo sic, quomodo nobis. Altera, quòd putent praesentiam Dei esse causam omnium futurorum eventuum, cum non sit. In eo, quid imaginantur futura esse Deo sicut nobis, multum erratur. Nam futura nobis tam praesentia sunt Deo, quàm quae nos vocamus praesentia. Nam quòd capacior est mens (ait Vives) hoc illi tempus praesens est latius. Deo igitur infinitae capacitatis infinitum est tempus praesens, aequè ut tota aeternitas quae est infinita. Quare quae apud nos praeterita et futura dicuntur, à conspectu Dei nunquam transeunt, semper illi praesentia sunt.”

<sup>42</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus materialis*, cap. X, p. 399: “Nos enim tantum praeterita et praesentia, idque discurrendo et ratiocinando aliud ex alio, et cum librum legimus ab una linea et pagina ad aliam progrediendo, at

people have no other option, for they do not have God's all-pervading form of vision. Similarly, we do not see history in one synoptic image that would contain all historical layers simultaneously. Thus, Comenius presents history as a cognitive principle, an instrument invented by God to make it easier for people to understand the complicated issues of the functioning of the world. By being developed over time, God's intentions take the form of empirical manifestations. People recognise their nature and functions by seeing how the processes take place.

This idea stems from Comenius' anthropocentric belief that everything God created is created to serve people. Analogically, the same applies to history. It, too, was brought into the world to serve humanity. *Pansophia* returns to this idea in other passages, and Comenius considers the existence of time and historicity as evidence of the remarkable foresight of the Creator:

“Truly, how amazing is the wisdom of God! As God Himself did not create His world in one moment, but rather gradually in individual daily portions [...], so He did not give even His image (i.e., man – L.Ř.) every ability all at once but rather in the course of ages and generations.”<sup>43</sup>

According to Comenius, the reason for history is God's belief that spreading human existence over time is more suitable for man and his limited intellect than other, non-historical forms of existence.

The idea of an alternative form of the existence of a human society that would not have a temporal dimension and, therefore, would not create any history, has a theological foundation. It presupposes a perfect God who can see everything at once and does not need history as an auxiliary instrument. It is also a highly abstract idea. How can one imagine such a form of “seeing”? How could it be possible to look at the whole of human existence as present, as it appears through the lens of history? How could it be possible to see all the layers of human history at once and compress them into one? Comenius does not specify this perfect method of seeing. He does not even attempt at it, for such a method of seeing is beyond the capacity of human imagination. However, the

Deus omnia simul adspicit et videt. Ut enim nostra essentia est successiva, dei permanens, sic et cognitio. Futura non cognoscimus nisi conjecturaliter, at Deus aeternitatem suam inhabitans omnia ut praesentia intuetur.”

43 J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus artificialis*, cap. I, p. 426: “Mira verò Dei sapientia! ut ipse non momento uno mundum suum producit, sed per dierum spatia disterminatè [...]. Ita imagini suae non simul omnia invenire dedit, sed per aetatem et gentium successiones.”



very fact that Comenius considers such a method of seeing at all could be linked to the then growing importance of optics in contemporary epistemology, which is very much inclined towards a vivid visual imagination. In the seventeenth century, optical instruments and optical experiments shifted not only the limits of human vision but also – as Erin Webster suggests – the limits of human imagination.<sup>44</sup> Notably, Comenius was deeply interested in optical phenomena and for him, history is closely linked to the theories of visual perception. He articulated this link most explicitly in his *Lexicon reale pansophicum*, where he translated the Greek word “historeo” not only as “I research” but also as “I see”.<sup>45</sup>

The category of change is closely associated with the concept of time. Only God is eternal, unchangeable, and unhistorical. Everything else, however, is subject to influences and therefore, it is changeable. In many places, Comenius emphasises the temporal aspect of being and ranks time among the main accidents (*accidentia primaria*) of every being.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, the things of the material world are subject primarily to cyclic changes and appear and disappear in cycles. By contrast, the changes in the field of thinking, learning, and human culture generally do not occur in circles but rather in linear stages. Simple ideas and discoveries improve over the ages. Whilst the *mundus idealis* (and God too) exists unchanged *in aeternitate* and the material world exists and changes *in tempore*, the world of the intellect (*mundus idealis*) exists and changes *in aevo*, that is, in the historical time of eras.<sup>47</sup> It is obvious that in Comenius' way of thinking, time and the movement of change are loosely connected, and if they relate to every being, they also relate to society.

Change, instability, and a tendency towards damage are the ideas that most articulately describe Comenius' historical thinking. Their significance is already apparent in *Truchlivý II* from the mid-1620s when,

<sup>44</sup> ERIN WEBSTER, *The Curious Eye: Optics and Imaginative Literature in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford 2020.

<sup>45</sup> JAN AMOS COMENIUS, *Liber librorum ceu Bibliotheca portabilis hoc est Lexicon reale pansophicum*, in: COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, II, p. 547.

<sup>46</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, Pansophia, Mundus materialis, cap. VIII, § 2, p. 378: “Tempus est primum mundi accidens, reliquorum principium.” (“Time is the first accident of the world and the beginning of the others.”)

<sup>47</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, II, Pansophia, Mundus artificialis, p. 421: “Triavidimus Theatra, in quibus aeterna Sapientia suos agit ludos: in Aeternitate, Mundum Idealem, in Aevo, Mentalem, in Tempore, Corporum.” (We saw three theatres in which Eternal Wisdom conducts its plays. In eternity, it is the ideal world; in the course of ages, it is the world of thought; in time, it is the material world.)

after the defeat of the Estates Revolt and in a time of increasing persecution, Comenius witnessed fundamental changes in society which were to show that the miseries unfolding in the Bohemian Lands were not an isolated experience but rather the opposite, a part of a continually recurring cycle of appearing and disappearing.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to time and change that create parallels between the material world and the world of human culture, *Pansophia* develops several other concepts. Among others, it is a concept of unity as one of the main principles of being. The idea of unity penetrates the whole of *Pansophia* since, according to Comenius, everything tends towards unity:

“Do you not see why stone, wood, plants, animals, etc. do not want to divide and they protect the unity of their parts? And why are all bodies wrapped in membranes, bark, skin, fur, scales and so on? I observe that they act out of love for their unity and out of a desire to exclude everything that does not belong to them.”<sup>49</sup>

Comenius argues that as in nature, so in human history, the central category is unity, from which humankind emerged and to which it should return. The significance of unity presented in *Pansophia* is deeply connected with his view of history. In the treatise *Ecclesiae Slavonicae brevis historiola*, written in Amsterdam in 1660 as a part of the volume *De bono unitatis* and in *Synopsis historica persecutionum ecclesiae Bohemicae*, published in Leiden in 1647, he interprets history as a series of conflicts that gradually lead to more and more fragmentation of the original unity. A large part of what Comenius describes are moments that led to divisions and schisms, especially in the church. Comenius takes a similar view in the case of the history of knowledge where he regards its lack of unity as the main shortcoming in its present state. He criticises how, in the flood of new information, more and more opinions emerge that are not mutually compatible, but rather contradict each other and, instead of filling in the blank spaces, they obscure many things. On the one hand, mankind is progressing towards knowledge in stages thanks to the constant flow of new information and discoveries; on the other hand, however, this brings in social confusion and conflicts – and this is

<sup>48</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Truchlivý*, pp. 23–101.

<sup>49</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus aeternus*, cap. III, § 49, p. 254: “Vidisnè, unde sit, quòd lapis, lignum, herba, animalia etc. distrahi non vult partium suarum unitatem sibi servans? Et quòd omnia corpora membranas sibi cortices, coria, peles, squamas etc. circumdat? Uniendi sese intra se amore et excludendi à se non sua studio id fieri animadverso.”

what *Pansophia* was supposed to help prevent, thanks to the unification of human thought and wisdom. The importance of the concept of unity for Comenius is evidenced by the very definition of the church to which he belonged, the Unity of Brethren.

Comenius' method of thinking about history is closely related to epistemology. The distinction between the past, present, and future is not based only on their different ontological status but also on three different intellectual skills systematically designated for the respective spheres: perceiving focuses on the present, considering focuses on the future and understanding on the past. However, the connection between history and epistemology is not limited to this distinction. On the contrary, it also blurs it, for Comenius was one of those thinkers who did not consider history only as a discipline dealing with the past but also as research and authorial practice regardless of the subject matter. It was possible to use historical methods to write about natural, physical, mathematical, etc. phenomena.

In this view, history is not defined by its subject matter but by its method. It is not a discipline dealing with the past but an approach to factual analysis based on observation and description, suitable for studying all things in the material world (*mundus materialis*). All things that are in some way empirically available can be described "historically". In this sense, history is not limited to the study of the past. Natural phenomena can also be described historically.

In *Pansophia*, Comenius discusses this fundamental overlap between history and epistemology most clearly in the passage entitled [*Ars*] *Historica*.<sup>50</sup> It is the only passage in this volume that he devotes explicitly to history (or, more precisely, to meta-history). It takes up two and a half columns – and it is symptomatic that it is not a narration of history but rather a reflection on it. *Ars Historica* is defined as "the skill of drawing with words and writing all such things that exist in their own right". The emphasis lies in the formulation: "All things." Thus, we can describe not only the things that happened, that is, what, who, and to whom it happened, but everything, just as Pliny wrote in his *Natural History*.

As Arne Seifert shows in his *Cognition historica*, this understanding of history goes back to the ancient concept – hence the emphasis of Pliny the Elder – and spread in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His

<sup>50</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus artificialis*, cap. VII, pp. 504–505.

thesis about history “Namengeberin der frühneuzeitliche Empirie”<sup>51</sup> was supported by further researchers who pointed out the connection between history and the early modern natural sciences.<sup>52</sup> Francis Bacon was one of the most influential early modern scholars to use this concept of history. On the one hand, he distinguishes *historia naturalis* from *historia civilis*; on the other hand, he continues to frame them under the unifying notion of history. As Silvia Manzo argues, despite the significant differences between *historia naturalis* and *historia civilis*, they still show methodological and philosophical similarities, revealing a substantial convergence of the two fields.<sup>53</sup>

Comenius was aware of Bacon’s classification and referred to it in his *Pansophia*.<sup>54</sup> He uses his authority not to separate history from natural phenomena but, on the contrary, to support this epistemic, not necessarily topical understanding of history. Following Bacon, he emphasises that the determining features that define a historical work are matters of style. According to him, if the author describes precisely, faithfully, and reliably the object of his interest, his work can be considered historical, regardless of whether it is devoted to past events or natural phenomena. However, even when he speaks about history in the narrower sense (history as the study of past events), the crucial role in his epistemology is assigned to the semantics of seeing, derived from the idea that history is the way God visualises His intentions.

The fact that God, in His wisdom, chose the historical form of existence for human society has a number of consequences for mankind, which Comenius discusses in *Pansophia*. But historicity, besides being a compelling cognitive instrument, also means that in each phase of history, mankind experiences only its own specific part:

<sup>51</sup> ARNE SEIFERT, *Cognitio Historica: Die Geschichte als Namengeberin der frühneuzeitlichen Empirie*, Berlin 1976.

<sup>52</sup> ANTHONY GRAFTON, *The Identities of History in Early Modern Europe: Prelude to a Study of the Artes Historicae*, in: *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, (eds.) Gianna Pomata, Nancy G. Siraisi, Cambridge (MA) – London 2005, pp. 41–74; GIANNA POMATA, *Praxis historialis: The Use of Historia in Early Modern Medicine*, in: *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 105–146; NANCY G. SIRAIISI, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning*, University of Michigan Press 2007.

<sup>53</sup> SILVIA MANZO, *Francis Bacon’s Natural History and Civil History: A Comparative Survey*, *Early Science and Medicine* 17/2012, pp. 32–61.

<sup>54</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus artificialis*, cap. VII, p. 504.

“[...] Some can find the first beginnings; others multiply and improve that which was already found [...] others discover a method of expanding that to other nations. [...] Meanwhile, it has not yet come to an end, nor will it do so, until the end of the world.”<sup>55</sup>

An understanding of history is therefore desirable but always inevitably limited.

## Conclusion

Although Comenius does not narrate history in *Pansophia*, this ambitious work is permeated with an awareness of the historicity of the world. It operates with the idea of the historical advances of learning and conceptualises historical variability in general. It is not history that Comenius wants to communicate in this text but principles and ideas which emerge from history and which people can derive from history thanks to the fact that history reveals them. By developing over time, they become intelligible to human perception and cognition, and man can use them universally, not only in the original historical situations. These principles, such as the principle of unity, whose importance Comenius derives not only from nature but also specifically from history, are elements of knowledge as a whole that strives for a higher, supra-historical, universal structure. Comenius intended to make his *Pansophia* resemble the “higher form of seeing” that God ordained. If, according to him, God is capable of seeing everything at once as the present, *Pansophia*, too, should copy this model and comprise everything that has ever happened, been seen or manifested in history into a universal synoptic image.

It would certainly be misleading to overvalue the position of history in the context of Comenius' Pansophic project. However, its essential components are marked by his historical thinking. Although in his pansophical system, which abandons “conventionally disciplined knowledge”,<sup>56</sup> history has no specific place, many principles, connections, and insights

<sup>55</sup> J. A. COMENIUS, *Consultatio*, I, *Pansophia*, *Mundus artificialis*, cap. I, p. 426: “Nec omnibus omnia dedit sed [...] aliis initia invenire, aliis inventa augere et polire, [...] aliis rursus ad alias gentes propagandi modos invenire, [...] necdum finis est nec erit nisi cum fine Mundi.”

<sup>56</sup> DONALD R. KELLEY, *Introduction*, in: *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, (ed.) Donald R. Kelley, Rochester (NY) 1997, p. 2.

derived from history are hidden in its very foundations. Additionally, countless references to the past are spread throughout the text, such as reflections on the necessity to know history, quotations from ancient authors, examples from history, references to the history of philosophy, medicine, etc. In search of the most appropriate organisation of learning, Comenius proposes a system free from the classical and generally accepted notion of disciplines. In this sense, his efforts were part of the early modern intellectual transformations, accompanied by the reclassification of knowledge,<sup>57</sup> the emergence of new sciences, and the reshaping of disciplinary boundaries.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> DONALD R. KELLEY, *The Problem of Knowledge, and the Concept of Discipline*, in: *History and the Disciplines*, (ed.) D. R. Kelley, pp. 13–28.

<sup>58</sup> ANN BLAIR, *Bodin, Montaigne, and the Role of Disciplinary Boundaries*, in: *History and the Disciplines*, (ed.) D. R. Kelley, pp. 29–40.