

Jan Amos Komenský (John Amos Comenius)

“to all men and from all points of view”

Komenský was an educational revolutionary active in the 17th century, and his approach to pedagogy remains embedded in the modern education system. A household name among European teachers, his legacy extends also into the spheres of philosophy and theology as a result of his pioneering approach to education and its role in society.

Komenský created the concept of **pansophism**, an educational approach dedicated to ‘teaching everyone everything about everything, with all the senses and with the use of natural methods... forever’. An advocate for self-cognition supporting lifelong learning, Komenský was also a devoted Christian and reformist, driven to change society through quality education. His opinions around teaching and learning have found a wide audience worldwide and he was invited to give lectures in multiple countries, including Sweden or Hungary.

[Sitarska, Pansophism as John Amos Comenius' idea of lifelong learning, 10.5604/01.3001.0014.7102]
[<https://www.europeanmission.org/blog/a-biography-of-jan-amos-comenius-by-jan-habl>]

The London chapter of Komenský's life began in 1641, at the invitation of the merchant and radical protestant, Samuel Hartlib. Hartlib and his circle of predominantly displaced Protestant reformers believed a new Christian era of enlightenment was imminent. Amid the British Civil War and other upheavals of the 1640s & 50s, Baconian goals for advancing knowledge merged with reformist and utopian schemes, and Hartlib's circle became a hub for these visionary projects. **Komenský's idea of pansophic, universal learning became central to Hartlib's reform programme**, since they saw educational reform as essential to this transformation.

[Greengrass & Hotson, The Correspondence of Samuel Hartlib, in <https://emlo-portal.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/>]
[Iliffe, Hartlib's world, Institute of Historical Research, University of London Press]
[Turnbull, Hartlib, Dury and Comenius: Gleanings from Hartlib's Papers, Liverpool, 1947]

Komenský's teaching was well received by Hartlib's circle and he was able to make many influential connections. He gave lectures, wrote essays and played a key role in shaping England's early vision of organized scientific research. For example, Komenský was a significant influence on the formation of the 'Invisible College' in 1645, **paving the way for the founding of the Royal Society in 1662**. His universal ideas inspired figures like Theodore Haak and John Wilkins, whose later work on a universal language echoed Komenský's goals. Though Komenský's broad vision differed from the later empirical focus of English science, his influence helped link Bacon's ideals with the intellectual foundations of the Royal Society and early modern scientific thought, manifested, among others, within Sir Isaac Newton.

[<http://www.huradosveta.cz/clanek-jan-amos-komensky>]
[Young, The Visit of Comenius to London in 1641-42 and its bearing on the Origins of the Royal Society, Royal Society]

Alongside his engagement with society, Komenský wrote essays, notably *The Way of Light* in which **he sets out his program for an educational reform**. Parliament, inspired by Komenský's work and philosophy, began to consider building a school for men from all nations. Unfortunately, these plans were scuppered by the ensuing British Civil War, a conflict which forced Komenský to leave for the Netherlands and Sweden.

In conclusion, Komenský's stay in London, albeit a few short years, was highly impactful. His ideas have transcended his time and have become the building blocks of our modern education system and society.