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Weaving the Web of Knowledge and Empowerment

With Special Reference to Jan Amos Comenius

I. Introduction

This paper focuses on the way computer technology spreads information in the modern world. Those who are able to control the information are able to manipulate the world. The issue is not only the successful transmission of information but also grounding that information and technology in ethics and in the spirit of empowering others.

At the beginning of the industrial age, already in the 17th Century, Jan Amos Comenius indicated that knowledge and information should not be monopolized. He promoted the idea of universal and equal access to an interdisciplinary, high-quality education for all people. For him interdependence, interconnectedness, and relationship are more important than thought for our coexistence. In this respect, connecting thought with justice is an issue for theology in a knowledge-based society.

Communication is the creator's gift to the creature. Communication conveys information and possibly power. Information may be divided but not possessed. Information may not reach everybody, but information exchange can empower people. Information is not the monopoly of human beings. All creatures communicate with their own methods and receive information from each other, so that interconnectedness is an important part of communication.

Interconnectedness is currently one of the most used terms for matters of life style and economics. Being connected is crucial in the world today. But with this interconnectedness there are huge problems of just distribution of material goods and information. Information contributes to the development of economic growth. Manipulation and the monopolization of information and technology make the gap between the rich and the poor even bigger. Interconnectedness would be better used to promote justice, not used as a method of exploitation.

Sharing not only material goods but also intellectual goods like information and knowledge, is not easy. Computer technology makes sharing the world's knowledge possible. That is the original meaning of «world brain.» This harmonious weaving is what we need in the age of information. But information and technology are usually the monopoly of the so-called first world. People in the so-called third world do not have as much access to the technology or the information. In the southern hemisphere women especially

live in a drought of information and technology, while people in the northern hemisphere live in a flood of information.

Building on the important ideas and strengths of Jan Amos Comenius, this article considers interconnectedness, weaving and the sharing of knowledge among all people.

II.

1. Jan Amos Comenius and Rene Descartes: Two Types of Modern Thought¹

Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670), a contemporary of Descartes, was a Reformed theologian, who lived most of his life in exile and focused his theology on the harmony of the world. Comenius developed peaceful ideas out of, basically, Trinitarian thinking. God—the Spirit committed to creation, the God of the covenant, and ultimately the God incarnate²—is committed to peace among the nations. Comenius pointed out the reality of nations and the bitterness of the world situation. He criticized the greed, imperialism, and expansionism of seventeenth century European nations warring on the high seas. In his book *Angelus Pacis* (Angel of Peace) he quoted the words of Isaiah, «Behold, their brave men cry in the streets, the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly» (Is. 33:7).

Since the Enlightenment, the thought of Rene Descartes (1596-1650), has had a major influence on modern scientific developments. The Cartesian separation³ of «subject-object relationships», stressing the dichotomy between «res cogitans» and «res extensa», has caused many problems in our world. According to Susan R. Bordo, «For Descartes and Galileo, what one smells, sees, hears, tastes, and touches can no longer be taken as a bridge to the world. That naive connection has snapped, decisively.»⁴ She also writes that, «The Cartesian «masculinization of thought» ... is one intellectual «moment» of an acute historical flight from the feminine, from the memory of union with the maternal world, and a rejection of all values associated with it.»⁵

In 1667 in Breda, at the meeting between Great Britain and Holland with the purpose of ending the war, Comenius presented this message strongly in

¹ Cf. M. Chung: «Gender und Entwicklungspolitik», in: H. Walz, D. Plüss (ed.): *Theologie und Geschlecht* (Dialoge querbeet), Münster 2008, 261–275.

² Cf. J.M. Lochman: *Theology and Cultural Contexts*, Reflections 2 (1999) 31.

³ Cf. A.M. Jaggar, S.R. Bordo (ed.): *Gender/Body/Knowledge. Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, London 1989, 3.

⁴ Cf. S.R. Bordo: *The Flight to Objectivity. Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*, New York 1987, 45.

⁵ Bordo: *The Flight to Objectivity* (fn. 4), 9.

Angelus Pacis.⁶ In his *Lexicon, Reale Pansophicum*, he defines peace as follows:

«Peace is the blessing of the Rules a quiet state of things, so that everything is safe. Who speaks of peace, says three things: 1. a peaceful state without turmoil, 2. the basis of the order, 3. its fruit and security.»⁷

For Comenius peace is not only a condition, but also a process of responsibility to develop and to keep it with perseverance and struggle.⁸ Basic to his concept of peace is Jesus' sermon on the mount (Mt. 5) and Isaiah's call to turn the sword into plowshares (Is. 2:4).

Comenius was one of the few theologians in church history to raise a critical voice against imperialism. He opposed in particular the conjunction of Christian mission's policy with the imperialistic, expansion interests of Europeans toward other nations. To strive for power upon the sea should be sin, he says, because the sea belongs to God.

«Everyone who considers the subject essentially will have no doubt whether these excursions of the Europeans into other parts of the world brought more gain or more harm ... For what gain is it, that Europe has stuffed itself with gold from Africa, silver from America, pearls and jewels from Asia, if with the immeasurable increase of the metals the market price so climbs into the immeasurable, so that today owning a ton of gold hardly has value more than the pocket change of a few gold pieces at the time of our grandfathers. So, to what end does the rise of quantity serve, if it accomplishes nothing? What have the jewels, pearls, pure silks, and similar Asian luxuries introduced? ... In short, we have become not better by a hair, but rather in that hindsight worse.»⁹

To hold justice and peace together is important for Comenius. Peace is based on justice and righteousness. Peace and justice are combined through love.

⁶ J.A. Comenius: *Angelus Pacis/Friedensengel*, ed. by W. Eykmann, Würzburg 1993.

⁷ Cf. J.A. Comenius: *Lexicon reale Pansophicum*, Sp. 1128, quoted from: W. Eykmann: *Die Idee des Friedens und der Friedenserziehung bei Comenius*, in: *Comenius: Angelus Pacis/Friedensengel* (fn. 6), 78.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹ English translations of Comenius quotations by M. Johnson. «Jeder, der die Sache gründlicher erwägt, wird den Zweifel nicht los, ob diese Fahrten der Europäer in andere Weltteile Europa mehr Nutzen oder Schaden brachten ... Denn was nützt es, dass sich Europa mit Gold aus Afrika, Silber aus Amerika, Perlen und Edelsteinen aus Asien vollgestopft hat, wenn mit der unermesslichen Vermehrung des Metalls die Warenpreise so ins Unermessliche stiegen, dass heute der Besitz einer Tonne Goldes kaum mehr bedeutet als zur Zeit unserer Grossväter die Barschaft von einigen Goldstücken? Wozu also dient die Erhöhung der Quantität, die ... nichts bewirkt? Was brachten uns die Edelsteine, Perlen, reinen Seidenstoffe und ähnlicher asiatischer Luxus ein? ... Kurz, wir sind um kein Haar besser, sondern eher in jeder Hinsicht schlechter geworden.» (*Ibid.*, 41).

The new dynamic is generated on the earth for a new society and a new humankind. «Loving-kindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth springs from the earth, And righteousness looks down from heaven.» (Ps. 85:10f.).

Comenius mentions the skill of seafaring as an important talent that shouldn't be misused. The gap is large between rich countries where people have all their material needs met and poor countries where their needs are not met. Using biblical words, he makes a plea to stop greed and imperial interests from ruling the seas in the 17th century. Instead of exploiting nations in the southern hemisphere, he said, people should spread good news and real Christianity.

«... in that in the future not a few private persons might hoard treasures for their own gain, but that all those before God on his hallowed earth who might want to live, eat, drink, clothe themselves, and joyfully praise him as the God of the whole earth ... Each one who has winnings from the seafaring should even more give to the poor, the orphan, the sick, etc., and further, pursue «a higher and more spiritual form of business» and for the people's outer treasures bring them inner, spiritual treasures. The unification of Christ's kingdom is necessary for the sake of the whole world; only so can we expand the true Christianity.»¹⁰

Comenius was keenly aware of the problem of expansionary imperialism combined with Christian mission and western Christianity.

«Christians seem more forgivable who pursue wars for faith and religion; they yearn indeed, so it appears, for God's honor and the salvation of souls. Since, however, in our case the believers do not call upon this end, but attach themselves to rumors of war purely for the goods of this world, and inflict unrest, destruction, and damage not only on themselves but also on neighboring kingdoms, indeed the whole world—how can that be forgiven? Indeed, even those Christians who pursue war allegedly for God and religion, cannot justify their action, because they undertake a fruitless task not commanded by God and by Christ forbidden. Is it really beautiful when Christians want to be wiser than Christ and against his prohibition root out the weeds with force?»¹¹

¹⁰ «... auf dass nicht in Zukunft einige Privatpersonen zu eigenem Nutzen Schätze anhäufen, sondern dass alle, die vor Gott auf der ihm geheiligten Erde leben, essen, trinken, sich kleiden und freudig ihn als Gott der ganzen Erde loben mögen ... Ein jeder, der an der Seefahrt Gewinn hat, sollte um so mehr den Armen, Waisen, Kranken usw. schenken, ferner «eine höhere und geistigere Art von Kaufmannschaft» betreiben und den Völkern für ihre äusseren Schätze innere, geistige Schätze bringen. Um der übrigen Welt willen ist die Vereinigung der Christenheit notwendig; nur so kann man das wahre Christentum ausbreiten.», cf. M. Blekastad: Comenius. Versuch eines Umrisses von Leben, Werk und Schicksal des Jan Amos Komensky, Oslo 1969, 651f.

¹¹ «Eher entschuldbar scheinen die Christen, die für Glaube und Religion Kriege füh-

Comenius met Descartes in 1642 for four hours. While Descartes sought to confine pure thought, Comenius tried to combine pansophical ideas of thought, faith and action. Even though he looked like an idealist, the interconnectedness of science and universal language was important for Comenius.¹²

Käte Meyer-Drawe describes Descartes as following,

«There is no doubt of the importance of Rene Descartes, philosopher, physicist, physiologists, and mathematician, for our contemporary philosophical and mathematical thought. The only point which has been and still remains at issue is the question whether his thought brought blessing or curse. Descartes organized newly science by his new method, which was to lead to the certain knowledge. Unlike the previous tradition his methodical knowledge was technically structuralized. This means not only that Descartes gave a guaranty for a certain knowledge but as well he brought man to the way of managing and governing his nature by means of knowledge. Descartes was standing at the beginning of a rationalist dream which we are probably nowadays slowly and unwillingly waking up from.»¹³

Several differences between the two thinkers stand out. Descartes considers that animals, including human beings, are biological machines. He emphasizes a mechanical dualism between subject and object. Comenius considers all creatures as our co-creatures, and as a community of fate and hope. Comenius emphasizes their organic relatedness.¹⁴ Descartes describes the world as a machine, while Comenius sees the world as an organism. Descartes regards the human being as a subject and nature as an object. For Descartes, every relationship is impersonal («I—it»), while for Comenius relationships are always personal («I—thou»). In Sallie McFague's conceptual language, the «I—thou» relationship looks at our nature with a loving eye instead of having

ren, eifern sie doch, wie es scheint, für Gottes Ehre und das Heil der Seelen. Da sich aber in unserem Fall die Glaubensgenossen nicht auf dieses Ziel berufen, sondern rein für Güter dieser Welt solchen Kriegslärm entfesseln und nicht nur sich selbst, sondern auch benachbarte Reiche, ja die ganze Welt mit solcher Unruhe, Schädigung und Einbusse heimsuchen, wie kann man das entschuldigen? Doch können auch jene Christen, die angeblich für Gott und Religion Krieg führen, ihr Tun nicht rechtfertigen, weil sie ein von Gott nicht befohlenes, von Christus verbotenes erfolgloses Werk unternehmen. Ist es nämlich schön, wenn Christen weiser sein wollen als Christus und gegen dessen Verbot das Unkraut mit Gewalt ausjäten wollen?», Comenius: *Angelus Pacis/Friedensengel* (fn. 6), 33.

¹² Cf. Blekastad: Comenius (fn. 10), 338f.

¹³ K. Meyer-Drawe: *Mit der Präzision eines Uhrwerkes denken: Rene Descartes*, *Acta Comeniana* 11 (1995) 59.

¹⁴ Cf. J.M. Lochman: *Der Mensch im Ganzen der Schöpfung. Zur ökumenischen und ökologischen Aktualität von Johann Amos Comenius*, in: V.J. Dvorak, J.B. Lasek (ed.): *Comenius als Theologe*, Prag 1998, 27.

an arrogant eye.¹⁵ For Comenius God is not lonely (*Deus non est solitarius*), but God is supremely communicative (*Deus est summe communicativus*).¹⁶ Comenius was skeptical regarding the centrism of pure thought for Descartes, reflected in the phrase *cogito ergo sum*.¹⁷ A thinker should understand what nature means. For Comenius faith has priority over rationality. The two aspects are connected to, not excluded from, each other.

Major modern thinkers like Descartes, Galileo, and Hobbes disregard the relatedness theme. Comenius, however, emphasizes our relatedness to the rest of creation, but his voice has not been heard within the mainstream history of theology.¹⁸ All webs of life and creatures are important in his thought. Because we are finally aware of the problem with Cartesian modern thought, we must consider Comenius' ideas in today's world. Encountering peacelessness, an imperialistic world system, the availability of everything to everyone, plus the ecological, economical, and technological crisis of today, we are forced to change our attitudes towards our fellow creatures.¹⁹ To develop our world with a human face, we have to consider Comenius' comprehensive struggle against Cartesian mechanical philosophical ideas.

For Comenius science, research, and exploration without connection to the social, political, and moral aspects of humanity are meaningless. Knowledge and human action belong together. That Cartesianism separates these is one of Comenius' most significant points.²⁰ In contrast to Descartes Comenius captured the dialectical dynamics among world, nature and human beings.²¹

The human recognition of truth is central in Descartes' philosophy. As a result recognition itself is more important than action or praxis, which divides action and knowledge. For Comenius, on the other hand, combining faith and rationality is central. Theory is important for Comenius, as long as it is combined with action and oriented to praxis.

Cartesianism reduces all methods to a quantitative measurement, whether in terms of analytical calculations, efficiency of result, or statistical comparisons. Comenius stresses qualitative process, ontological heterogeneity, content oriented to action, and humanization of *res humanae*. The Cartesian pur-

¹⁵ Cf. S. McFague: *Super, Natural Christians. How We Should Love Nature*, Minneapolis 1997, 32ff.

¹⁶ Cf. Lochman: *Theology and Cultural Contexts* (fn. 2), 31.

¹⁷ Cf. Blekastad: *Comenius* (fn. 10), 640f.

¹⁸ Cf. Lochman: *Der Mensch im Ganzen der Schöpfung* (fn. 14), 34.

¹⁹ Cf. K. Schaller: *Komenskys Auseinandersetzung mit dem Cartesianismus*, in: K. Schaller (ed.): *Zwanzig Jahre Comeniusforschung in Bochum*, St. Augustin 1990, 361.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 364f.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 359.

suit of particular instead of universal goals fosters monopolistic ideas and imperialistic dominance. From these come technological development without a human face, alienation of the human being and disconnectedness among people.²²

To the Cartesian concept of science belong self-imposed, mathematically oriented measurements and technical rationality.²³ This kind of concept forms the modern world negatively as well as positively. Comenius feared a loss of humanity from such modern thinking. So he suggests the reformation of science, politics, and religion generally.

Against the mechanical and quantitative worldview of Descartes, Comenius suggests a dynamic worldview.²⁴ In *Clamores Eliae*²⁵ Comenius seeks to connect academic and cognitive dimensions to action and operation. The aspect of otherness should be considered in regard to misery and worries in daily life beyond the boundary of self. Knowledge is not merely power or an increase of capacity. Education and instruction can be and are a medium for self- and world-empowerment.

Self-centredness can be corrected through education. Education can show how the world is perceived by others, and provide a range of different perspectives. Comenius emphasizes this, although he wrote as a theologian, not as an educator. What frees us from self-centredness is not simply education per se, but recognition of the interconnectedness of all things God gives us with others, namely, God, other people, and our «co-creatures» of the world around us. Note that Comenius does not reduce education to a passive moment of information transfer in the mind, but insists on the relation of education to action. This stands in stark contrast to Descartes who personifies the then emerging dominant pattern of scientific thinking in the Modern Era (the subject-object dichotomy).²⁶

²² Ibid., 366.

²³ «Die Vernunft ist Universalinstrument ... Die mechanische Uhr lieferte die Fassung eines solchen Rationalitätsbegriffs. Sie ist das Muster eines streng rationalen Systems, das mathematisch geordnet ist. Ihr jüngster Nachfolger, der Computer, ist dabei, unmerklich unser Welt- und Selbstbild zu verändern. Er liefert eine Universalsprache des rationalistischen Traums, aus dem zu erwachen immer schwieriger wird.» Cf. Meyer-Drawe: *Mit der Präzision eines Uhrwerkes denken* (fn. 13), 59.

²⁴ Cf. K. Schaller: *Comenius und die Berliner Böhmen-Themen der gegenwärtigen Deutschen Comeniusforschung*, in: Schaller (ed.): *Zwanzig Jahre Comeniusforschung* (fn. 19), 78.

²⁵ Cf. J.A. Comenius: *Clamores Eliae*, ed. by J. Novakova, Kastellaun/Hunsrück 1977.

²⁶ J.A. Comenius, *ODO IV*, 27, quoted from: Schaller: *Comenius und die Berliner Böhmen-Themen* (fn. 24), 71.

In reference to Luke 10:38–42 Comenius wrote a book entitled *Unum Necessarium*, in which he criticized Cartesianism. The one-sided dimensionality and superiority of Cartesius, he said, might be dangerous.

«Descartes appears to have found a comfortable exit from the eternal labyrinth of errors. He sets up the claim that we must let go of bias (as if we possessed the truth already), must prove everything anew, and may let stand only the irrefutable and experience-based truth. Thereby he found much applause. But it appears dangerous to draw into doubt everything of God and humanity, and it is a huge task to want to prove everything. Therefore most voices also complain only over a new labyrinth which he has built. And so confused is this labyrinth, that even a Daedalus would not find his way out and also a ball of twine would gain him nothing.»²⁷

Comenius couldn't agree with the Cartesian worldview, because it sounds and looks not realistic, but ostensive.

«Descartes constructed his system of the physical world out of the (pre-supposed) specific whirlwind movements at hand; but the beginning and end, power, number, and aim of these movements he cannot prove. In the end he supposes an existence [Sein] no longer real but only apparent. The world matter is supposed to exist in greater or lesser thickness; but in reality it is not so, and the natural createdness of the elements which we have researched in different experiments protest against it. Also, crafted instruments of manifold kind demonstrate that his new theory of life is a mirage.»²⁸

²⁷ «Cartesius schien aus dem ewigen Labyrinth der Irrtümer einen bequemen Ausgang gefunden zu haben. Er stellte die Forderung auf, dass man das Vorurteil, als besässe man schon die Wahrheit, fallen lassen, alles von neuem prüfen müsse und nur das unumstösslich und erfahrungsgemäss Wahre gelten lassen dürfe. Damit fand er vielen Beifall. Aber es scheint gefährlich, alles, Göttliches und Menschliches, in Zweifel zu ziehen, und es ist eine ungeheure Arbeit, alles prüfen zu wollen. Darum klagen die meisten auch nur über ein neues Labyrinth, das er aufgebaut hat. Und so verworren ist dieses Labyrinth, dass selbst ein Dädalus sich nicht hinauswinden und auch ein Ariadneknäuel ihm nichts nutzen würde.» (J.A. Comenius: *Das einzig Notwendige*. *Unum necessarium*, ed. by L. Keller, Jena 1904, 34f.).

²⁸ «Sein System der körperlichen Welt konstruiert Cartesius aus dem (angenommenen) Vorhandensein von bestimmten Wirbelbewegungen; aber Anfang und Ende, Gestalt, Zahl und Zweck derselben kann er nicht nachweisen. Endlich behauptet er gar nicht mehr ein wirkliches, sondern nur ein scheinbares Sein. Die Weltmaterie soll in grösserer oder geringerer Dichtigkeit bestehen (darin folgt er einer bestimmten metaphysischen Spekulation); aber in Wirklichkeit ist es nicht so, und auch die natürliche Beschaffenheit der Elemente, die man in verschiedenen Experimenten untersucht hat, protestiert dagegen. Auch künstliche Instrumente mannigfacher Art beweisen, dass sein neues Weltbild ein Trugbild ist.» (Comenius: *Das einzig Notwendige* [fn. 27] 35f.).

To be interdisciplinary and interdiverse may cause overdiversification instead of having a particular content and goal. So interconnectedness doesn't imply just making a melting pot. Each element has to keep the specific meaning and identity, but to be unified in balance and harmony.

«God's goodness gives birth to thanksgiving when he conveys us through the errant ways of our own labyrinths into the secret threads of his wisdom indeed finally to himself, to the source and to the sea of all goodness. So has he also done to me, and I rejoice over it, so that now I know how he has led me to the purpose of all yearning, after so many uncounted wishes and hopes for better. If I look over my action, it has been the striving of a preoccupied Martha (admittedly in the service of the Lord and out of the love of his followers to him) or a constant exchange between wandering and rest. Now, however, I sit ... with Mary at the feet of the Lord and cry with rejoicing heart: «That is my joy, that I hold myself to God.» (Ps. 73:28)²⁹

Social, religious, political peace is an important aspect of Comenius' thought. He was critical of the human-centric idea of Descartes. Its subjectism has caused many problems nowadays, such as the disaster of the environment, imperialism, and peacelessness in the world.³⁰

2. Weaving the World Wide Web

The «world brain» idea is a special theme in Comenius' thought. The English novelist, journalist, sociologist and historian Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) promoted this idea.³¹ Comenius views the world as a communicable wholeness. He emphasizes the idea of «all» in Greek, namely, «pan» (wholeness). His main works from *Consultatio Catholica* show clearly this focus in his use of terms like *Panegersia*, *Panaugia*, *Pansophia*, *Panpaedia*, *Panglottia*, *Panorthosia* and *Pannuthesia*. He warns about the tendency of a merely self-

²⁹ «Gottes Güte gebührt der Dank, wenn er uns durch die Irrgänge unserer eigenen Labyrinth an dem geheimen Ariadnefaden seiner Weisheit doch endlich zu sich hinführt, der Quelle und dem Meer alles Guten. So hat er auch an mir getan, und ich jubele darüber, dass ich es jetzt weiss, wie er mich nach soviel unzähligem Wünschen und Hoffen auf Besseres doch zu dem Ziel aller Sehnsucht hingeletet hat. Wenn ich mein Tun überschau, so ist es das Treiben einer geschäftigen Martha gewesen (freilich in dem Dienste des Herrn und seiner Jünger aus Liebe zu ihm) oder ein steter Wechsel von Wandern und Ruhe. Jetzt aber sitze ich...mit Maria zu des Herrn Füßen und rufe jubelnden Herzens: Das ist meine Freude, dass ich mich zu Gott halte. (Ps. 73,28)» (Comenius: *Das einzig Notwendige* [fn. 27], 182).

³⁰ Cf. K. Schaller: *E Labyrinthis exitus in planum*, in: Schaller: *Zwanzig Jahre Comeniusforschung* (fn. 19), 169.

³¹ Cf. P. Rossman, R. Kirby: *Christians and the World of Computers-Professional and Social Excellence in the Computer World*, London 1990, 12.

centered attitude to *universitas literarum*.³² For a being to develop wholeness takes multiple communications. In Comenius' thought, the human being is a microcosm, comparable to the universe as a macrocosm. Every component of the human being is reflected in the universe.

Comenius' idea of an interwoven world encyclopedia is particularly important for using information globally with an ethical component. All kinds of knowledge and information in the world should be organized and well distributed. Separate knowledge is valueless. «Nothing can be stable unless all its parts are connected...everything depends on the harmonious working of the parts.»³³ Therefore he developed the idea of communal education and a system for organizing it. His «world brain» idea is very important for using the computer and technology in today's world.

The human being is a «language-using» animal. Human beings need to communicate with each other in words and language. The internet and cyberspace are also good places for the people at the grassroots, for marginalized people, and for non-governmental organizations to communicate. They give those who do not have power or money an opportunity to speak and use the world wide web, making the internet an effective tool for general communication. Through this method people can organize many things globally. The voices of the marginalized can be heard through this medium, where they have a greater chance to speak out and are empowered to express themselves.

The problem is that to communicate and speak out effectively in cyberspace globally, one must be able to use English. Being in command of a language is in itself a way of exerting power. But for communication in cyberspace, English is the most powerful language. Unfortunately, lacking knowledge of English and the necessary technology, the powerless and voiceless majority of the world's peoples still have difficulty accessing the internet.

Comenius' emphasis on wholeness, and on the interdependence, interrelatedness, and interconnectedness of everything with everything else, is a basic characteristic of process and feminist thought as well.

«The first and foremost insight of process thought is that to exist is to be in relation, and that relationships are internal, not external, to existence. Because of this, existence is a process of becoming, and not a steady-state reality. Also because of this, all existence is interdependent. Finally because of this, thought emerges from feeling. To begin to describe the «why and how» of these statements is to begin the weaving process with feminist theology.»³⁴

³² Cf. J.A. Comenius: *Prodromus pansophiae*. Vorläufer der Pansophie, ed. by H. Hornstein, Düsseldorf 1963, 51, quoted from: Lochman: *Der Mensch im Ganzen der Schöpfung* (fn. 14), 28.

³³ J.A. Comenius: *Didactica Magna*, XVIII:12, cf. XX:20, quoted from: M.W. Keatinge: *The Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius*, New York 1967.

³⁴ M. Suchocki: *Weaving the World*, *Process Studies* 14 (1985) 79.

In that sense, feminist and process thought are valuable for weaving the world wide web.³⁵ As Comenius stresses, peace in the world is rooted in interconnectedness. Since in a relational world everything is in relation, and since everything eventually affects everything else, awareness of interrelatedness is very important also in the information era. We are related to each other throughout time and space. All of us are called to be part of the web of life and love: «to praise God by helping all God's creatures flourish.»³⁶

Process thought understands the mystery of God as a relational reality. It is important to underline that Comenius doesn't ground his theory of interconnectedness within creation and the already existing natural world, but within Christology and the transformation through redemption which it offers. This is a foundational difference between the interconnectedness of Comenius and the relational networks proposed by many process-oriented and feminist thinkers of today, although there are many similarities. Comenius' emphasis on relations and relationships is not meant to become an intellectual concept found within a natural theology divorced from action, thus necessitating the same kind of criticism which Comenius offered Descartes.

Jesus Christ shares his body and blood in the communion service in order to lead us to fuller life. This is surely the model for sharing information and empowering rather than monopolizing the spread of information. We are living as the one body of the universal Christ, as Paul said: «Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.» (Rom. 12:4-5 NIV)

«... To exist is to be in relation; relations are internal to existence; they are dynamic and hence push the creation of temporality and history. Relational existence embraces the universe in interdependence and therefore mutual responsibility. Relational existence is mediated by feelings, which give rise, within the supporting context of the body, to thought.»³⁷

If we lose the relational orientation, the net of the cyber-world could become a labyrinth. An American author, Nicholas Carr, summarizes his point in the US journal *Atlantic* with the question, «Does Google make us foolish?»³⁸ Using computers causes unusual phenomena like communications delusion and

³⁵ Cf. R.N. Brock: *The Greening of the Soul. A Feminist Theological Paradigm of the Web of Life*, in: R.N. Brock, C. Camp, S. Jones (ed.): *Setting the Table. Women in Theological Conversation*, Missouri 1995, 140.

³⁶ S. McFague: *Life Abundant. Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*, Minneapolis 2001, 137.

³⁷ Suchocki: *Weaving the World* (fn. 34), 82.

³⁸ Cf. F. Hornig, M. Müller, S. Weingarten: *Die Daten-Sucht*, in: *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 33, 2008, 83.

high nervousness of the individual. Moreover, it is problematic for know-how and knowledge to help only power-makers and materially rich people in the hegemony. Comenius stressed already in his time the importance of cooperation and a mindset of solidarity regarding knowledge in holistic structures.³⁹ Just enforcing the status quo would make the powerful more powerful and disregard marginalized people. The prerequisite for expanding and accumulating knowledge is the aim to serve the public good and the majority of human beings. Constitutive and integrative thoughts like Comenius' Pansophic idea would help. Otherwise, information and knowledge remain distorted by individual greed in a labyrinth where people have lost the thread of Ariadne that would take them into the «Paradise of the Heart.»⁴⁰

For Comenius education is not merely a tool or resource for a successful future. Language education is an instrument of harmony.⁴¹ The goal of educating the individual is for improving human relations, not merely for private purposes. If we adapt Comenius' idea for today's world, gaining proficiency in English would contribute to better communication, not gain dominant power.

All things should be taught inclusively to all people (omnes, omnia).⁴² New communication technology is most useful for this purpose, even though it may have negative side effects. «All» by Comenius means not just all kinds or a mixture. It means rather to unify all into an interconnected unity of wholeness. A human action is important for wholeness. Our current «knowledge-based society» concerns itself very little, if at all, with the cultural integrity necessary for peace. However, the goal of universal education Comenius sought refers specifically to the integrity of various fields of education as a precondition to the unity of the greater body.

All nations build up Babel and don't understand each other well. But it happens among people of the same language as well, because the definition of things is not carefully considered. «For without due consideration to the nature of things, they will lose their names.»⁴³

³⁹ U. Voigt: Comenius and the Experiences of the 20th Century, in: W. Korthaase, S. Hauff (ed.): Comenius und der Weltfriede. Einblicke in das friedensfördernde Werk eines europäischen Weltbürgers, Berlin 2001, 52ff.

⁴⁰ Cf. Comenius: Das einzig Notwendige (fn. 27), 67f.

⁴¹ D. Smith: Comenius and Peace Between Cultures (Korean Journal of Comenian Studies), Seoul 2008, 20.

⁴² Cf. K. Schaller: Die Allgemeine Beratung des J.A. Comenius. Die Pädagogik der Kommunikation und die neue Informationstechnologie, in: G. Michel (ed.): Comenius Jahrbuch, vol. 4, St. Augustin 1996, 31.

⁴³ «Denn den Dingen werden ihre Namen ohne Rücksicht auf die Natur der Dinge verliehen.» (J.A. Comenius: Der Weg des Lichtes. Via lucis, trans. by U. Voigt, Hamburg 1997, 157).

«Next in this fulfilling sense we wish not only for some humans, few or many, to be formed to true humanity, but all humans, indeed every individual, young and old, poor and rich, noble and not noble, men and women, in short everyone who is born as human. So should for the future the whole of humanity be delivered to this fulfilling expectation, all ages, all estates, gender, and peoples.»⁴⁴

For Comenius no barrier to education exists from social status, racial, or national difference. Indeed the pioneer thought of Comenius is to consider all these aspects and integrate all people.

III.

1. The Sharing of Knowledge in an Information Society and Empowerment

We cannot overlook⁴⁵ the worldwide revivalism of the new Charismatic movement.⁴⁶ This is not just to distinguish between different tendencies, but to perceive the important work of the Holy Spirit related to weaving and sharing for harmony in various forms. The same perception emerges from Comenius' christology, when he says:

«So we do not doubt that a good clock which is only poorly assembled or rusted, whose chains are perhaps torn, can work properly again if it is given over to a good master for repair. So it is also with the human, who is created for harmony. We do

⁴⁴ «Zunächst wünschen wir, dass in dieser vollkommenen Weise nicht nur irgendein Mensch, wenige oder viele zum wahren Menschentum geformt werden, sondern alle Menschen, und zwar jeder einzelne, jung und alt, arm und reich, adelig und nichtadelig, Männer und Frauen, kurz jeder, der als Mensch geboren ist. So soll künftig die ganze Menschheit dieser vervollkommenden Wartung zugeführt werden, alle Altersstufen, alle Stände, Geschlechter und Völker.» (J.A. Comenius: Pampaedia, 1. Kap. 1,6, quoted from: Korthaase, Hauff: Comenius und der Weltfriede [fn. 39], 30.

⁴⁵ The biggest parish of Moravian Church in the world is located in Tanzania. The Moravians have developed particularly in the southern and southwestern parts of Tanzania. The situation of Tanzania is not much different from many other parts of the world. The Charismatic movement has grown very fast among them and has significant meaning for the development of congregations as well. There are close similarities between the the Moravian community in its early years and the contemporary Charismatic phenomena. The special event of 13th August 13, 1727 is comparable to contemporary charismatic events as a work of the Holy Spirit. Although some leaders of the Charismatic movement like to quote the early Moravian community in Herrnhut, there is no continuity between the origin of the Moravian tradition and contemporary Charismatics.

⁴⁶ Cf. M. Theile: The Moravian Church and the Charismatic Movement. An Orientation from the Ideas of Count N.L. von Zinzendorf, Herrnhut 2000.

not mean that human harmony can not be again established (he might also be damaged through the fall into sin), if only that which is damaged or broken is sensibly again improved and fixed, and if that which remains wholly is strengthened for durability... It is a disgrace that we only want to know something about the fall into sin and the corruption (of humans) and nothing about the re-erection and justification! A disgrace that we try to forgive our unfitness always more with respect to the old Adam, instead that we concern ourselves, to turn ourselves around, what we of course can do only in the new Adam, in Christ... We, we who cling to Christ and have been given a new family, we purposefully without exception to our seed declare indeed as not impossible to operate in a matter which is that of the kingdom of God... Because Christian children are not offspring of the old Adam, but seeds of the new Adam, sons and daughters of God, because we thus accept brotherhood and sisterhood with Christ towards formation, say we, so that they are capable to take up the seeds of eternity in themselves, and no one should hold this for impossible.»⁴⁷

Comenius doesn't dwell on the sinfulness of the human being. He distinguishes between an old and a new Adam typology⁴⁸ which the event of reconci-

⁴⁷ «Wie wir nicht daran zweifeln, dass eine gute Uhr, die nur schlecht zusammen gesetzt oder verrostet ist, deren Seile vielleicht gerissen sind, wieder richtig gehen kann, wenn sie einem guten Meister zur Reparatur übergeben wird, so ist es auch beim Menschen, der zur Harmonie geschaffen ist. Wir meinen nicht, dass seine Harmonie nicht wieder hergestellt werden kann (mag er auch durch den Sündenfall beschädigt sein), wenn nur das, was beschädigt oder zerbrochen ist, verständig wieder ausbessert und eingesetzt wird und wenn das, was ganz geblieben ist, zum Fortbestand verstärkt wird ... Es ist eine Schande, dass wir nur vom Sündenfall und von der Verdorbenheit (des Menschen) etwas wissen wollen und nichts von der Wiederaufrichtung und Rechtfertigung! Eine Schande, dass wir unsere Untauglichkeit immer lieber mit dem Hinweis auf den alten Adam zu entschuldigen versuchen, statt dass wir uns bemühen, uns umzukehren, was man freilich nur im neuen Adam, in Christus, kann ... Wir, die wir Christus anhängen und mit einem neuen Geschlecht beschenkt worden sind, wir wollen uns samt unserem Samen doch nicht für unfähig erklären, an einer Sache zu wirken, welche die des Königreiches Gottes ist... Weil die christlichen Kinder nicht Nachkommen des alten Adam, sondern des neuen Adam Same, Söhne und Töchter Gottes sind, weil wir also die Brüderlein und Schwesterlein Christi zur Formung annehmen, sagen wir, dass sie fähig sind, den Samen der Ewigkeit in sich aufzunehmen, und keiner sollte dies für unmöglich halten.» (J.A. Comenius: *Böhmische Didaktik*, trans. by K. Schaller, Paderborn 1970, 42–44, quoted from: R. Kalivoda: *Komenskys Emendationsbegriff und Reformatorisches Denken*, in: Schaller: *Zwanzig Jahre Comeniusforschung* [fn. 19], 218f.).

⁴⁸ «Wie jeder einzelne Mensch eine Welt für sich ist, seinen Himmel und seine Erde hat, Wasser und Feuer, Materie und Geist, Licht und Finsternis, Bewegung und Ruhe in sich trägt, so spiegelt sich auch die ganze von Gott beschriebene Menschheitsgeschichte in jedem einzelnen Individuum wieder. Ein jeder hat seinen Gott

liation through Jesus Christ makes possible. Therefore we become a new person. Comenius refers to the re-creation and justification of human beings. «The human being who is created in God's image is in his being not *homo solitarius*. The human being is called for the communicative life with God and with co-creature. This is most prevailing accent.»⁴⁹ The Holy Spirit, which is based on the Jesus events, is the loving energy for the connection between God, the human being and the co-creatures of humanity.

We cannot deny the difference between masculinity and femininity. But a problem arises if the difference becomes a matter of discrimination. For instance, such category pairs as male/female, culture/nature, reason/intuition, public/private, humanity/nature-animality, production/reproduction, subject/object, self/other, mind/body, etc., set up a hierarchy in which the second is subjugated to the first. Masculinity is considered as a principle of activity, agency, self-interest, rationality, reason, etc., while femininity as a principle of passivity, receptivity, determined, other-relatedness, irrationality, emotion (non-reason), etc. This kind of prejudice and stereotyping happens frequently throughout the world, albeit with some cultural differences. Such dualistic ideas justify dualistic structures between the rich and the poor as if they were the blessed and the damned, while the structural sin of the global economic system is ignored. «... it also eclipses the role that the feminine plays in the construction of this masculine ideal; gender seems to play no role in its construction whatsoever. Values typically associated with the feminine—care, receptivity, self-giving, and emotionality are thereby undervalued by liberalism without any recognition of its own gender subtext.»⁵⁰

Subjugation happens not only in the relations of sex and gender, but also between culture and social class. Iris Marion Young describes «Five Faces of Oppression» as exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.⁵¹

In order to restore Comenius' idea of wholeness, we need to get rid of mechanical dualistic perceptions. The Holy Spirit is the energy of the combination, so there is neither subjugation nor discrimination among people or between people and their co-creatures. The Pentecostal stream could lead to

und seinen Teufel, sein Paradies und seine Hölle, seinen Baum des Lebens und des Todes, seine Versuchungen und Kämpfe, seine Siege und seine Niederlagen, seinen Kain und seinen Abel, kurz Weibessamen und Schlangensamen in der Weise, dass der eine über den andern die Herrschaft zu gewinnen trachtet.» (Comenius: Das einzig Notwendige [fn. 27], 124f.).

⁴⁹ J.M. Lochman: Diskussionsbericht, in: K. Schaller (ed.): Comenius. Erkennen – Glauben – Handeln, St. Augustin 1985, 238, quoted from: Schaller: Comenius und die Berliner Böhmen-Themen (fn. 24), 80.

⁵⁰ S. Jones: *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology*, Minneapolis 2000, 138ff.

⁵¹ Jones: *Feminist Theory* (fn. 50), 79–93.

sharing knowledge and empowerment in a knowledge society, and reduce the gap between rich and poor in a material sense.

The Pentecostal stream is always attractive to poor people who often have to sacrifice ethics to survival. Evangelism for the soul, healing for the body, material blessings in the job and business, the miracle of prayer, family stability, etc., are some keywords which attract ordinary people easily. Social ethical values and a community-oriented mind are not strengths of this stream. The stream is oriented instead to the relationship between God and the individual person with some collective form of certain enthusiasm.

«The Comenian synthesis is today irreproducible. We are not able to go back to Comenius. However at the same time we are very aware of endangered and jeopardized development of modern thinkers and academics and inaugurated reductionist process. In this sense has communicative ideal will of Comenius for our pedagogy and politic path breaking meaning.»⁵²

The «communicative rationality» has ground in the substantial commonality with all marginalized people who are suffering on behalf of our private security and prosperity.⁵³

2. Interconnectedness

Pliability is an attribute of a living being. Water is a significant metaphor for pliability related to virtue in the Asian philosophy of Taoism. Water is the most pliable element of the universe. Water can adapt endlessly to different forms. Water flows relentlessly from above to below. It overcomes barriers, and sometimes sifts through the strongest things. Pliable water is actually stronger than the firmest things. In Northern Asia water is used to describe the tendencies of culture, society, and world, etc.

Water is not only a term for pliability, but also a term for interconnectedness. In the strongest sense the Western philosophical dualism of subject and object doesn't exist in the Eastern way of thinking. The Chinese character for subject (主體) means literally a main body or the body of a host, while the character for object (客體) means a body or person away from home or the body of a guest. From this terminology emerge the characters for the host's viewpoint (主觀) and the guest's viewpoint (客觀). The ontological difference between subject and object in Northern Asia is not serious compared to the European philosophical trend during modernity.

Comenius' idea of interconnectedness is closer to the Eastern view. «Omnia sponte fluant, absit violentia rebus (All things flow from themselves; force/violence stands apart from things.)»⁵⁴ Technical knowledge itself

⁵² Lochman: Diskussionsbericht (fn. 49), 81.

⁵³ Cf. Schaller: Comenius und die Berliner Böhmen-Themen (fn. 24), 81.

doesn't enable a human being, but at best it will contribute improvement and empowerment of the whole including the co-creatures.

The Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) rightly draws attention to a memorandum of 2007,⁵⁵ that peace and education should be based on Comenius' concept of peace and his holistic way of thinking about God, fellow human beings, and co-creatures. With Comenius the mutual connection of all things is very important, and this way of acting deserves emphasis nowadays more than ever.

«For nothing is without purpose and sometimes the special strength of the greater depends upon a quite small part. In a clock a single broken, distorted, switched little pin can bring the whole clockwork to a standstill; in the living body the separation of a single member can destroy the life; and in connection with a speech often the smallest little word (a preposition or conjunction) changes and turns upside down the whole sense; and so overall. Complete awareness of a thing will only be reached through acquaintance with the «what» and «wherefore» of all parts.»⁵⁶

Comenius wrote with symbolic words about the interconnected functioning of a watch:

«Has a person not also regarded something as impossible before he had it in front of his eyes, as if he had excluded the thought that trees fly or stones speak? It happens, however, nonetheless, as we all indeed see. What is that now, however, which gives to a dead thing such a lively and wondrous movement? It is nothing other than the order: that, namely, everything is ordered according to a definite form, ordered according to mass, weight, and number, so that a purpose is attached to everything, so that everything stands in definite relationships with everything else, one is bound to the other and one helps the other. So does everything thus go more smoothly, and runs better than a living thing. If, however, something therein becomes warped, torn, broken, slack, or crooked, and if it were also only the smallest wheel, tooth, or nail, then everything stands still or at least a part, then it doesn't go

⁵⁴ «Alles fliesse von selbst, Gewalt sei ferne den Dingen» (J.A. Comenius: *Opera didactica omnia*, quoted from: K. Schaller: *Die Maschine als Demonstration des lebendigen Gottes. Johann Amos Comenius im Umgang mit der Technik*, Hohengehren 1997, 26).

⁵⁵ *Aus Gottes Frieden leben – für gerechten Frieden sorgen. Eine Denkschrift des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, Gütersloh 2007, 36f.

⁵⁶ «Denn nichts ist zwecklos, und zuweilen beruht sogar auf einem ganz kleinen Teilchen die besondere Stärke der grösseren. In einer Uhr kann ein einziges zerbrochenes, verbogenes oder verschobenes Stiftchen das ganze Werk zum Stehen bringen; im lebendigen Körper die Entfernung eines einzigen Gliedes das Leben zerstören; und im Zusammenhang einer Rede oft das kleinste Wörtchen (eine Präposition oder Konjunktion) den ganzen Sinn ändern und verkehren; und so überall. Vollkommene Kenntnis eines Dinges wird nur erreicht durch die Kenntnis des «Was» und «Wozu» aller Teile.» (J.A. Comenius: *Didactica Magna. Grosse Didaktik*, XVIII:12; XX:20, ed. by A. Flitner, Stuttgart 1920, 141).

true any more, turns out in confusion, and is useless. So is here overwhelmingly visible, that all things exist through the order.»⁵⁷

In order to consolidate the strength and durability of the whole, the interconnection and harmonious functioning of the parts must be considered.⁵⁸ «For nothing can be durable that doesn't overall, in itself, hang together.» (Denn nichts kann dauerhaft sein, das nicht überall in sich zusammenhängt.)⁵⁹ Unfortunately Comenius' thinking disappeared from the field of vision in Europe during the age of colonialism and imperialism.⁶⁰

Like Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) or Paracelsus (1493–1541) Comenius regards the human being as a «microcosm» in connection to the universe as a «macrocosm.» Everything about humanity can be grounded in correspondence with the universe. «It is not necessary to introduce anything into the human being from the outside. What needs to be done on the contrary, is to uncover what the human being possesses already, to develop it and to demonstrate the significance of every detail.»⁶¹

Robert Kalivoda considers the relationship between Paracelsus and Comenius, particularly the ideas of microcosm and macrocosm. Paracelsus reanimated the idea of microcosm. According to Robert Kalivoda, Paracelsus tried to heal the human body, while Comenius tried to explain humanity comprehensively using an anthropological approach to culture and society. As a reformer Comenius was considered an accomplisher of Paracelsus' idea. General components of both are rooted in the left wing of the Reformation.⁶²

⁵⁷ «Hat man das nicht auch, bevor man es vor Augen hatte, für unmöglich gehalten, wie man es für ausgeschlossen hält, dass Bäume fliegen oder Steine sprechen? Es geschieht aber doch, wie wir ja alle sehen. Was ist das nun aber, was einem toten Ding eine so lebendige und wundersame Bewegung verleiht? Nichts anderes ist es als die Ordnung: dass nämlich alles nach einer bestimmten Form, nach Mass, Gewicht und Zahl geordnet, dass allem ein Ziel gesteckt wird, ihm Mittel verliehen werden, um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, dass alles untereinander in bestimmten Verhältnissen (proportio) steht, eins durch das andere gebunden wird und eins dem anderen hilft. So geht also alles ruhiger, und es läuft besser als ein lebendiges Ding. Wenn aber etwas daran sich verzieht, zerreisst, zerbricht, erschläfft oder krumm wird, und wäre es auch nur das kleinste Rädchen, Zähnchen oder Nägelchen, dann steht sogleich alles oder zumindest ein Teil still, dann geht es nicht mehr genau, gerät in Verwirrung und ist nutzlos. So wird hier überzeugend sichtbar, dass alle Dinge durch die Ordnung bestehen.» (Comenius: *Böhmische Didaktik* [fn. 47], 84f.).

⁵⁸ Cf. Comenius: *Didactica Magna* (fn. 56), XX:20, 141.

⁵⁹ Comenius: *Didactica Magna* (fn. 56), XVIII:12, 109.

⁶⁰ Cf. Comenius: *Didactica Magna* (fn. 56), XX:20, 141.

⁶¹ J.A. Comenius: *Didactica Magna* (DJAK 15/I), Praha 1986, 61, quoted from: J.M. Lochman: *Comenius as Theologian*, *Acta Comeniana* 10 (1993) 38.

⁶² Kalivoda: *Komenskys Emendationsbegriff* (fn. 47), 224.

Humanity is a concentration of the macrocosm. Important here are not only the interconnected relationships between the universe and humanity, but also between human development and cosmic power.⁶³ The action-oriented aim is what connects Comenius to Paracelsus.⁶⁴ Comenius succeeds in viewing the universe as one coherent organism pervaded by a uniting life-giving spirit. Yet throughout he maintains a distinction between the Creator and the creature.

For the peace of the world Comenius stresses forgiveness and reconciliation instead of competition and retribution. Peace Nobel Prize winner Albert Schweitzer says of Comenius: «He was a man of great knowledge and tried hard to remain a man of hope... He is the first philosopher who time and again found himself required to tackle the problem of peace.»⁶⁵

IV. Afterword

Comenius underlines harmony and balance between physical needs and the needs of the soul, for a healthy human life. Both dimensions of humanity are related to awe for God and respect for people. «What health contains is right ways of living and reverence before God and humans... The reverence before God and humans is the striving to mislead no one, that is, to lead no one to evil.»⁶⁶

Above all, he says, we cannot lose the most essential element, as Mary did, in the Biblical story.

«Before the wrath of God there is only a curse, which is his reconciled heart; before the sin you can only flee to repentance, from the whirlwind of the periphery to the quiet of the center, out of the whirlpool of the world only to Christ. Mary chose the

⁶³ Cf. Kalivoda: Komenskys Emendationsbegriff (fn. 47), 215.

⁶⁴ Paracelsus captured human being from macrocosms, not separated from it. The world could be considered under «right of nature (*Opus Paramirum*).» His idea is based on Greek philosophy and refused gnostic thought. The harmony of man, the microcosm, and nature, the macrocosm, is important to keep health. The human body relies on this harmony and balance. Paracelsus used chemicals and minerals for healing and curing people. He was a pioneer for the idea that the universe's macrocosm was represented in every person as a microcosm. According to his insights and ideas the seven planets in the sky, seven metals on Earth, and seven centers (or major organs) in man are all closely interrelated components.

⁶⁵ Korthaase, Hauff: Comenius und der Weltfriede (fn. 39), 17.

⁶⁶ «Was die Gesundheit erhält, ist richtige Lebensweise und -Ehrfurcht vor Gott und Menschen ... Die Ehrfurcht vor Gott und Menschen ist das Bestreben, niemand zu verführen, d.h. zum Bösen zu verleiten.» (Comenius: Das einzig Notwendige [fn. 27], 88).

good part, as she put herself at Jesus' feet. From Bethany she followed the Lord to Jerusalem, to the cross, to the grave, and forsook him not until the joyful resurrection.»⁶⁷

Comenius also underscores the equality and incompleteness of all human beings. Compared to his contemporaries, he notices and emphasizes quite early the problems of racism, sexism, and classism.

«We are all citizens of one world, indeed all one blood. To hate one human, because he was born somewhere else, because he speaks another language, because he thinks otherwise about things, because he understands more or less than you—what thoughtlessness! Let us away from that! For we are all humans, thus all incomplete, all of us must be helped, and we are all for that debtors.»⁶⁸

The Czech-Swiss Reformed theologian Jan Milic Lochman describes Comenius this way:

«Like his fathers and brethren in the faith, Comenius also lived in the wide horizon of the eschatological promise. This explains both his patience and his impatience: i.e. the «staying power» which, despite the many hard knocks he had to endure, kept him from despair and resignation; but also his energetic pressure for world-transforming effort. «The condition of the world is being renewed.» (Status mundi renovabitur); this programme-slogan of the Hussite Reformation is also important for Komensky in whom it is developed with a rare depth and breadth.»⁶⁹

In a world where competition and the greed of individuals dominate and destroy the community for all people, Comenius' voice should be heard. Then knowledge and information sharing are no longer the monopoly of a small, powerful minority, but contribute to human life in all its fullness.

⁶⁷ «Vor dem Zorn Gottes gibt es nur eine Zuflucht, das ist sein versöhntes Herz; vor der Sünde kannst du nur fliehen zur Busse, von dem Wirbel der Peripherie zur Ruhe des Zentrums, aus dem Strudel der Welt nur zu Christus. Maria erwählte das gute Teil, als sie sich zu Jesu Füßen setzte. Von Bethanien folgte sie dem Herrn nach Jerusalem, ans Kreuz, ans Grab und verliess ihn nicht bis zur fröhlichen Auferstehung.» (Comenius: Das einzig Notwendige [fn. 27], 178f.).

⁶⁸ «Wir sind alle Bürger einer Welt, ja alle ein Blut. Einen Menschen hassen, weil er anderswo geboren ist, weil er eine andere Sprache spricht, weil er anders über die Dinge denkt, weil er mehr oder weniger als du verstehst, welche Gedankenlosigkeit! Lassen wir ab davon! Denn wir sind alle Menschen, also alle unvollkommen, uns allen muss geholfen werden, und wir sind dafür allen Schuldner.» (J.A. Comenius: Panegersia, Kap. VI,22, quoted from: Korthaase, Hauff: Comenius und der Weltfriede [fn. 39], 46).

⁶⁹ Lochman: Comenius as Theologian (fn. 61), 42.

Abstract

Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670) vertritt ein ganzheitliches Denkmuster im Gegensatz zu seinem Zeitgenossen Descartes. Er war reformierter Theologe und lebte die meiste Zeit seines Lebens im Exil. In seiner Theologie befasste er sich mit der Harmonie der Welt. So geht es auch in seinem trinitarischen Gedankengut letztlich um den Frieden in der Schöpfung.

Er war einer der ersten Theologen in der Geschichte der Kirche, der den Imperialismus kritisierte. Denn sein Hauptanliegen war der Friede zwischen den Nationen. Er verurteilte darum den Krieg auf den Meeren im siebzehnten Jahrhundert als Imperialismus und Eroberungslust. Comenius betonte die Verwandtschaft aller Lebewesen des gesamten Universums. Darum sind alle Geschöpfe unsere Mitgeschöpfe, mit denen wir verbunden sind.

Kommunikation ist eine Gabe Gottes an die Kreatur. Dass das Wort Gottes Fleisch geworden ist, ist das Prinzip für die Kommunikation aus christlicher Sicht, d.h. bei der Kommunikation geht die sinnliche und materielle Dimension nicht verloren. Comenius ist ein Pionier, der einen Weg weist für eine «Web-Theologie», die konstruktives Wissen nicht als Monopol betrachtet, sondern für alle zur Verfügung stellt.

Eine «Web-Theologie» sollte sich hüten, «gnostisch» (abstrakt) zu werden, so dass sie dabei die materielle, sinnliche Dimension vernachlässigt. Eine «Web-Theologie» könnte uns auch zum Austausch zwischen den sozialen Schichten, Rassen, Religionen, Geschlechtern etc. befähigen. Sie könnte den Ausgegrenzten helfen, sich auszusprechen und könnte Menschen ermutigen, den Stimmen der Leidenden zuzuhören. Eine «Web-Theologie» sollte die problematischen Seiten des Neokolonialismus ernst nehmen.

Die Betonung der Ganzheit, Gegenseitigkeit und Verbundenheit zwischen allen und allem, ist charakteristisch für das Denken von Comenius. Trotz der vielen Gemeinsamkeiten mit der Prozess-Theologie und feministischen Ideen in unserem Zeitalter unterscheidet sich die Theologie von Comenius durch die christologische Konzentration. Leider wurde diese in der christlichen Tradition ausgeklammert. Dieses vernetzende Denken und eine entsprechende Handlungsweise ist notwendiger denn je in unserem globalisierten Zeitalter.

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