

'Re-Placing' Janusz Korczak: Education as a Socio-Political Struggle

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Abstract

The Jewish-Polish pedagogue, Janusz Korczak is traditionally associated with his orphanage in the Warsaw ghetto and his murder alongside the children during the Holocaust. A doctor and educator, Korczak is also increasingly acknowledged for his unique pedagogical projects such as the self-governing orphanages (democratic children's homes) and his advocacy for child rights. Translations of his writing and the dominance of individualized interpretations for his motives, has resulted in Korczak being displaced from his socio-historical context of Warsaw.

This paper seeks to increase awareness of the inseparable nature of Korczak's Polish language texts to the Polish struggle for independence. The aim is to further investment into understanding the socio-historical context within which Korczak's writing was rooted. When readers acknowledge the limitations of the translated Korczak texts, this encourages a greater appreciation of current Polish scholarship but also deepens the philosophical inquiry into his work. This paper uses Korczak's texts to demonstrate how power and language reinforce each other by conflating the concepts of the oppressed into those of the oppressor. The purpose of highlighting flaws in translated texts is not simply to correct the error but to disrupt notions of identity; oppressed and oppressor, in relation towards the 'not-so-radically' Other. Examinations of Korczak's ideological experiences, either religious, cultural or political, move more of his own account from the periphery into the foreground. To date, the impact of Russian colonization and Poland's struggle for political independence within Korczak's texts has been given little attention and served to keep readers ignorant of this aspect. Whereas other studies have attended to Korczak's Jewish-Polish heritage, the focus here is on his political philosophy. The goal is to RE-place Korczak by historically situating his ideas within his city of Warsaw and the intelligentsia of the time. This demonstrates that Korczak's critical pedagogy and work outside of the authority of the State positions him today as a radical educator. Historically, he can be aligned with the ideas of specific social movements, especially anarchist theories. Rather than uniformity of ideas, the Warsaw intelligentsia at the turn of the twentieth century, both Polish and Jewish, was a democratic mesh with disparate individuals brought together in tactical co-operation for the struggle of nation-building. The reader is introduced to Korczak in 'place' in order to illuminate a new reading of Korczak's texts and ideas as emanating from radical philosophical underpinnings.

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Keywords

Korczak; translation; critical pedagogy; revolution; anarchism; philosophy of education

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Introduction

The Jewish-Polish pedagogue, Janusz Korczak is traditionally associated with his orphanage in the Warsaw ghetto and his murder alongside the children during the Holocaust. A doctor and educator, Korczak's combination of ambition, knowledge and skills, led to the development of a unique pedagogical project in the form of self-governing orphanages (the children's homes). His tragic death and story of sacrifice have simultaneously elevated and obscured him. There have been recent attempts to move beyond Korczak's life story, to recover his pedagogical work and influence within the child rights movement. The primary purpose of this article is to demonstrate the integral relationship of the Polish struggle for independence to the development of Korczak's philosophy and practice. Exploring a small number of Korczak's texts demonstrates how power and language reinforce each other by conflating the concepts of the oppressed into those of the oppressor. Even in his lifetime, Korczak (1929b/1967, p. 486) challenged Eglantyne Jebb's 'save the children' movement for appropriating 'child rights' to mean goodwill or adult duties. Within many published works, Korczak has been 'dis-placed' from his early historical Warsaw context, so that accounts of his life and activities usually highlight his death in the Holocaust or itemize his array of pedagogical practices. Recent contributions have begun to acknowledge Korczak's role within a 'hidden' history of child rights: however, individualized narratives are told through a psychological lens explaining his motives for action as an identity crisis or as an unshakeable sense of duty. As a result, Korczak's philosophy and perspective of child rights under-researched and remains poorly understood (Liebel, 2018; Vucic, 2017).

Although his greater visibility is welcomed, this renewed interest in Korczak has often not included Polish studies; increasingly leaving Polish scholarship and even Korczak's own texts isolated from the discourse. Despite a respectable bedrock of work on Korczak by the likes of Bińczycka, Lewin, Mencwel, Sliwerski and Smolińska-Theiss; this solid local cluster has failed to join the international neural network as such. Economic drivers and desire for mobility go some way in explaining why the younger generation of Polish scholars, including those at the Korczak alma maters in Warsaw, have had no substantial interest in pursuing Korczak-related research. This is certainly not due to a lack of talent, intellect or capacity but one based on the prediction that this Polish line of thinking and any possible professional opportunities ended with the previous academic generation and failed to pay dividends in the West. The socio-historical context of Warsaw before and during Korczak's lifetime is complex, contested and not well known even in Poland thus demands the ongoing engagement with Polish scholars. Non-Polish scholars often fail to recognise or acknowledge that for much of his lifetime, Korczak lived and wrote as a colonized subject or under occupation; and that he initiated his educational experiment in a violent, oppressed city. Under such circumstances, his early work was directly shaped as a criticism of the authority of the State (Russian Empire) and sought independence (politically, culturally and spiritually) for both Poles and Jews on the Polish territory. This article highlights some of Korczak's earlier texts, written in the decade prior to the establishment of the Homes (two Polish and Jewish orphanages) which provide valuable insight into Korczak's political ideals. By encouraging the reader towards an understanding of anarchism as a theoretical framework, the article facilitates a deeper understanding of Korczak's own philosophy rather than portraying him as a political anarchist.

1. Reading Korczak

The Swedish professor of pedagogy, Sven Hartman (1997) pointed towards the lack of a rigorously researched body of work as the impediment to Korczak's ideas being propagated. The solution he offered did not necessarily consider the problems of translations nor indirect secondary sources but highlighted the different ways of 'reading' Korczak. The most common readings, according to Hartman, were biographical-narrative and normative-interactive; both directed at sourcing historical facts or extracting Korczak's pedagogical practices. The main goal of such readings is to formulate a 'Korczak system' which has been the favoured approach in Eastern Europe. The alternative reading recommended by Hartman is somewhat skewed towards enticing researcher interest and has a focus on gathering more data in contemporary settings with Korczak's ideas as a comparative 'counterweight'. Such analysis privileges the existing body of knowledge and the empirical case. Whereas according to Douglas Porpora's (2015, p. 20) argument, what is more important and must be undertaken first, is the conceptual and philosophical work. However, the sheer volume of Korczak texts has resulted in editors and academics selecting what they consider as the most important pieces for publication and review. Aware of Korczak's wide range of topics and often satirical style, statements or articles that do not seem to fit are often dismissed or excluded all together. The example considered here is the account of Korczak's visit to Forest Hill orphanages which often exclude his concluding remark that following the visit he committed an 'act of revenge'.² If this remark was included it might raise doubts for the reader of Korczak's positive impressions in London as explored in the following section.

Much of the literature on Korczak in English, although reproducing quotes, relies heavily on secondary translated sources (c.f. Odrowaz-Coates 2018). These citations often do not draw from the original Korczak texts but trade quotes between indirect sources and even more prominently from the popular biography written by Betty Jean Lifton (1988). It is acknowledged that Lifton's biography has made a great contribution to worldwide awareness of Korczak's work and legacy. Written as a psycho-historical account, however, has stripped Korczak of any political motivations. Leaving his educational work to be rebranded under a 'pedagogy of sympathy', there is an overemphasis on Korczak's duty for 'saving the children'. Whatever small concessions have been achieved away from this position, sympathy and sacrifice remain the dominant narrative and any 'revolutionary' political concepts are kept outside the scope of subsequent scholarly work. Despite protest that Lifton is not influencing academia, there is an entrenched tendency for any contradictions to Lifton's individualist account to be 'explained away' or ignored. Lifton's biography is cited more than 180 times, far more often than Korczak's own works translated into English.³ Thus, the biography has become conflated with Korczak himself, with a tendency towards the reductive understanding of his work as synonymous with (Lifton) biographical details of his life resulting in a convoluted pragmatic philosophical stance. The intention here is not to delve into the content of the biography as such but provide a better understanding of how

² The only account Korczak wrote specifically of his time in London, consisted of a couple of pages on the orphanages in Forest Hill. The concluding statement refers to his vengeful acting of giving money to a beggar which is rarely included in scholarship or discussions. The Forest Hill Historical Society seminar "In the Footsteps of Janusz Korczak" provided the explanation that it was incompatible with the rest of the Korczak narrative.

³ Google scholar (10.03.2019)

such seminal works have shaped the prevalent psycho-historical understanding of Korczak, especially in English speaking circles. The language and power of psychology as an academic discipline presents not only a certain individualist image of the child, but also of education and human nature in general. It is understandable that Lifton undertook minimal exploration of the ideological underpinnings of this era, thus rather than focus on content the intention is to critically examine certain dogmatic assumptions being perpetuated.

This chapter refers to the many subsequent academic works which have tended to adopt uncritical readings of Lifton, incorporating and perpetuating this dominant account. Lifton presents Korczak's motivation for working with children as mainly psychological and philanthropic. Firstly, in terms of family influence drawn from a difficult relationship with his father, an overbearing mother and secondly, peer influenced in terms of doing his duty popular within the Young Poland movement. Within this narrative, Korczak had a sudden 'identity crisis' in London. Inspired by what he saw at the Forest Hill orphanages, he throws away his career in medicine in order to build and direct a similar institution for Jewish children in Warsaw (Lifton, 1988, pp. 65-66). This account demonstrates how readily a dominant psychological narrative based on identity and sympathy, due to popularity and distribution, can become the new story. This narrative reappears in almost every English account including well-respected work on child rights, such as Veerman's (2014) chapter on Korczak. Veerman (1992, Pp. 93; 105) describes his London investigation into the Forest Hill orphanages as thorough and wide-ranging but still substantiated Lifton's account. Even a quick physical visit to the girls' orphanage (Louise House) and local-archives reveal that this institution was much like other English 'industrial schools'.

Although contemporary sources have refashioned the industrial schools and workhouses into 'homes', the Forest Hill orphanages were strict and punitive, tasking themselves with the reform of poor children, whose families were labelled as degenerate and immoral. Although not strictly juvenile detention, there was little difference between reform and industrial schools by the end of the nineteenth century. The courts could send children to industrial schools for discipline and training if they had been deemed likely candidates for future criminal activity due to their circumstances. The Forest Hill institutions were primarily residential homes which were established to house vagrant, destitute and disorderly children as per the Industrial Schools Act of 1857. Many of the children were 'social orphans' so labelled for being raised by single or poor parents unable to earn a sufficient income to care for their children. The Lewisham Local History and Archive Centre holds a file entitled 'The Forest Hill Industrial School for Boys and Girls' which contains the committee reports, local maps, photos and parent letters. The archival records and the architecture of Louise House provide ready evidence that it operated as a residential industrial school/workhouse. The children received board and were taught vocational skills such as boot-making, wood chopping, animal husbandry (for the boys) and housekeeping and laundry skills (for the girls). This instruction was not intended only for life skills or educational purposes, but the children were required to earn an income for the institution in return for their keep. This work was in addition to attending local schools and geared towards future employment in domestic or military service. According to census documents and letters to parents, the homes referred to the children as 'inmates' and granted limited freedom, opportunities or possibility of returning to families. Both Forest Hill houses were operated by a charity and were subject to licencing and inspection by authorities. Under the patronage of local philanthropists, the children received annual 'treats' such as small gifts and outings to the local museum. Meanwhile, the

cohort of children was inducted into the social service of the British upper class or for return to work in the sweat trades (shoemaking, tailoring) of the East End of London. Most of the children placed in Forest Hill had been removed from their family environs of the polluted and crowded East End. The disparity between the two populations, Forest Hill and the East End, is an important element which was not lost on Korczak during his visit.

At the time of Korczak's visit around 1910, the girls attended public school locally and in return for their board worked in the large commercial laundry, where the entire 'garden' was used for hanging washing. The older children were better earners, thus less likely to be released back into family care, even if requested, unless sickly or injured. Korczak detailed the visit, describing the tram from Victoria (central London) to Forest Hill, where he alighted at the Horniman Gardens tram stop. Korczak provided a description of the expensive facilities in the Forest Hill neighbourhood, namely schools, parks, the orchestral bandstand, public baths and museum. There was brief speculation on the cost of building and maintaining such facilities, to which Korczak received the reply that it was made possible by parish patronage and wealthy philanthropists i.e. the Church, aristocracy and capitalists. The poor children of the town, and those of the orphanages were unlikely to access community facilities often. Their only joys were received gratefully a few times a year and bestowed by philanthropists rather than via their rights as citizens. Veerman (1992, p. 105) includes in his footnotes that he was aware of some inconsistencies within the Forest Hill account, such as the school and orphanages being unrelated institutions, yet fails to expand upon these within his own work. Influenced by a dominant lens of sympathy, psychology and philanthropy, Veerman remained certain in substantiating Lifton's account of Korczak's 'inspiration' despite documenting his own empirical evidence to the contrary. Through reciprocity, the Forest Hill Historical Society has somewhat refashioned its own narrative due to the popular account of the outcomes of Korczak's visit.⁴ Hampered by translation, it was unlikely that Veerman had access to earlier Korczak texts, which would question Korczak's supposed admiration for London. Instead, he might have considered whether the visit had served to confirm first-hand Korczak's negative expectations, having read such criticisms in the books of Kropotkin and Ruskin. Therefore, it is asserted here that Korczak's visit to Forest Hill had the opposite effect and that he produced a sardonic account of London's care for a specific group of children, so much so, that Korczak 'took revenge' on the city after the visit. It is important to note that this last statement is puzzling for many readers and thus often omitted from Korczak quotes. If taken into consideration, a different picture emerges of that month in London, one which strengthened Korczak's resolve into action for socio-political change to produce a more equitable and fairer society.

Examining Korczak's London account must also be socially and historically situated within the era. The 1905 Aliens Act was the beginnings of modern-day immigration control, emanating from the political debates on the numbers of Eastern European Jews coming to the UK. Moral panics had been generated around the rising number of foreign national activists (terrorists) and criminals allowed onto British soil. Politicians and newspapers had increased focus on the large numbers of Russian and Polish Jews who fleeing persecution in the Russian Empire had settled in

⁴ One reason given for the Grade II heritage listing of the Louise House building was based on the visit by the notable Polish paediatrician Janusz Korczak, who was 'inspired' by Forest Hill.

the East End of London. The new arrivals put further pressure on housing, sanitary and welfare services and fuelled resentment amongst locals. This poor migrant population strained the capacity of charities and raised concerns that an outbreak of epidemics, both in terms of health and criminal degeneracy, may spread to English citizens. Whilst the British Empire and London enjoyed unprecedented prosperity as trade and factories brought immense wealth, the child mortality rates in London’s East End climbed exponentially. With limited English language skills, it is not hard to imagine that Korczak would have gravitated towards the communities of Russian- and Polish-speaking émigrés, predominantly Jewish. Leaving the riverside docks, the adjacent area of the East End is a natural starting point for Korczak’s orientation to London. The contrast of children’s starvation and disease in the East End within a stone’s throw must have been shocking for the young doctor. Here, Korczak may have learnt about the ragged schools and the child emigration schemes operating in Britain at the time. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1850 allowed institutional boards to arrange for a child’s migration overseas if unable to find an orphanage or work placement. The peak of this practice between 1870 and 1914, coincided with the strain that immigration had put on poor law authorities. Members of the East End community could have provided information on the circumstances of local children, many of whom were placed in orphanages outside of the city limits, namely Forest Hill. At the time, approximately 150 such institutions were operating within Greater London and there were certainly better institutions, in terms of facilities and conditions, further afield. The Forest Hill orphanages only differentiated themselves by counting royal patronage amongst their donors. This valuable piece in the puzzle may go some way to explain why Korczak made the effort to travel more than one hour to visit this relatively unremarkable industrial school on the outskirts of London. Embedded in class division and social inequity, Korczak witnessed first-hand the failure of philanthropy and the charity model despite the wealth of the British nation. Understanding this historical background further illuminates Korczak’s motives for taking charge of the Warsaw orphanage as a form of social engineering rather than philanthropic duty. This distinction is important in understanding Korczak’s role within a hidden history of child rights. Researching Korczak for a number of decades, Veerman can be credited for introducing Korczak to many in the English-speaking world and Veerman’s (2014) text on the future of child rights was reviewed as ‘forceful and convincing’ (Gillett-Swan & Coppock, 2016). However, looking beyond the ‘Lifton effect’, Veerman has gained little traction for Korczak’s ideas, rather than his life story, gaining entry into the field of educational research or child rights discourse. Therefore, in order to tease out the issue of Korczak’s absence within contemporary academia and the child rights discourse, the positive and negative impacts of Lifton’s biography on Korczak scholarship as a causal mechanism must be considered. The body of contradictions presented here, create sufficient doubt around the usual account of Korczak’s positive experience of London and the desire to replicate English education or its treatment of children. The following section delves deeper into Korczak’s earlier writing [1905–1912] in a historically situated manner to explore the influence of the revolutionary atmosphere of Warsaw at the time.

2. Historical Context

2.1. 'Displacing' Korczak in Translations

The point of this paper is not simply to enumerate and counter-factual errors in the work of others, but to show how power and language intertwine in the acts of writing, translation and reading using Korczak texts as the example. The purpose of translation appears simple, to convert one language into another, but the act of translation can also serve as a tool of further subjugation and oppression. As each party claims to hold the 'true' version over another, there is the tendency for either complacency or division with the dismissal of a previous work as holding poor scholarship. Instead, such conflict and debate should lead to an exploration of what sustains the errors within value-laden perspectives. The aim should be to harness any cross-cultural conflict by tying both parties together through the exposure of the flaws of translation. Gathering and analyzing these different points of view in terms of the social structures is done in order to challenge the false belief systems as a critique of ideology (meta-critique). As Winks (2009) explained, exploring the mechanisms causing such misunderstandings 'can rupture insular notions of identity that may be held by both oppressed and oppressor, and which are anchored in their binary opposition towards the Other'. The purpose of highlighting these flaws made by both experienced linguists and non-Polish speakers creates uncertainty in one's own ways of knowing whilst demonstrating that languages are not static nor geographically or historically disconnected. Specifically, in the case of the Polish language, this has evolved through resistance to the oppression of its political neighbours and as such it issues a statement of independent national identity inseparable from its historical-political struggles.

Semiotician, Umberto Eco (2015, p. 23) advises to researchers working on foreign authors, by saying it is essential to read in the original language. However, even when working within the Polish language, care must be taken not to produce accounts which 'displace' or 'replace' Korczak while working from different geographic, cultural or ideological perspectives. Despite shortcomings and fragmentation that plague everyone's work, the key is an awareness of the bias issue, especially when the translator/reader is working from the cultural-historical position of the oppressor. Restoration of Polish language scholars within the discourse is vital to Korczak scholarship expanding on its home territory, but also for gaining depth and a foothold within international academia. Similarly, Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo (2017, p. 112), advocates for a return to 'place' as being essential for Korczak's work, as she cites the cultural landscape as reciprocal in the forming and being formed;

Henryk Goldszmit grew into the famous Janusz Korczak on the rich soil of Polish culture and, at the same time, he himself made the Polish culture grow bigger. He was an inseparable part of the assimilated Jewish Warsaw – the city that filled up his heart and that was filled up with his presence.

The language a child acquires during the early years is not simply bound by the rules chosen by the adults in their home. The 'mother tongue' Korczak (1942/1992, p. 135) pronounced as the 'air' which the collective soul of the nation breathes;

Truth and doubt, faith and custom, love's quarrels, frivolity and seriousness, integrity and falsity, riches and poverty - all are the creation of the poet's inspiration, dribbled out by a drunken killer, centuries of degrading toil and dark years of slavery.

The fragments and aphorisms are stripped of their philosophical heritage and meaning when text is treated as a poetic turn of phrase, a-historically or by failing to recognise an import. Conversely, scholars have transferred philosophical meaning between different phrases during translation. The argument against conferring imported meanings are often taken up in a similar fashion to Marc Silverman (2017) and Bozena Shallcross (2011, p. 31) who state their unwillingness to use decidedly Christian words such as 'martyr', in relation to Korczak and the Holocaust. However, without much deliberation, Shallcross decides upon the German word, *Bildung* to describe Korczak's personal self-development and the process he undertook eventually leading to his death and ultimate 'sacrifice'. It is a term also adopted readily by Silverman and found in the foreword to Korczak's 'King Matt', where the American psychologist, Bruno Bettelheim described the book as a *bildungsroman* (tr. a novel dealing with one person's formative years). As a philosophical term, *Bildung* has entered the English vocabulary to refer to a German tradition of education or upbringing; specifically, it refers to the self-development of both mind and spirit. Although fluent in German, Korczak refrained from using the term in his pedagogical articles. As a useful definition, Hegel regarded *Bildung* as life-long development for personal transformation but embedded within social and historical processes. A defence against professionalism and material pursuits, the growth of the individual was regarded as essential to the betterment of German society. The general contemporary meaning of the *Bildung* concept is taken as a process of self-cultivation and a mediation between the individual and the world. In some ways, it can be considered a 'secular theology' driven by the Enlightenment. Disturbed by the terror following the French Revolution, *Bildung* emerged from a specifically German view, which elevated logic and meaningfulness whilst the individual engaged in a critique of one's society to actualize higher ideals (Reichenbach, 2014, Pp. 86-88). Yet for Hegel, this constant improvement process for the individual and society was part of a German historical tradition. Despite its neo-Kantian rejection of universal narratives, Hegel's *Bildung* promoted cultural maturation as a universal quality, whereby differentiating the primitive or 'a-historical' from the civilized. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Hegel considered Oriental and Slavic agrarian societies as undesirable or lacking in cultural maturation (*ibid*). In light of the circumstances under which Korczak formulated his ideas, there should be strong resistance to *Bildung* being applied to Korczak's philosophy, or even more generally to the Polish context at the risk of perpetuating this historical concept of domination.

Along with the application of *Bildung* from German, the terms 'education' or 'pedagogy' have been popular in English translations of the Polish word *wychowanie*. The inadequacy of these terms has rarely been considered, although both have Polish equivalents; *edukacja* and *pedagogika* respectively. Similarly, *wychowawca* is often translated as teacher, for which there is the Polish word *nauczyciel*, as related to the school setting. There is limited scope here for an explanation of the Polish grammar involved beyond raising awareness of the issue and is an exercise best revisited by a philologist. In most basic terms, the noun, *wychowanie* is related to 'education, raising, upbringing' and the verb *wychowywać*, is an equivalent for the concepts 'to educate, to raise, to bring up'. There are instances where late in life, Korczak (1942/1992, p. 135) attempted to guide the reader in the development of this 'coda' with a diachronic analysis,

discussing the complexity and cultural significance of certain words. One such example is found in a little-known fragment, only available in Polish. Fluent in several languages, Korczak claimed languages such as Italian, French and Russian simply do not have the expression *wychowywać*; and English can be added to this assessment. Examining the etiology of the word *wychowywać*, Korczak wrote that it drew its meaning from the words 'to hide, protect, screen from harm and damage, secure' (provide security). According to Korczak's explanation, *wychowywać* was a 'beautiful expression' born out of the need to hide Polish children from countless foreign invaders, with an explicit cultural and political meaning (*ibid*). Therefore, instead of applying *Bildung* or English words, it is recommended that further definition of Korczak's use of the original Polish word *wychowywać* (vi-ho-vi-vutch) in relation to his pedagogical practice be undertaken.

To explore a historical figure such as Korczak, Daniel Little (2014) advocates methodological localism as the study of the development of self by exploring how the individual was formed and constituted. This seeks to understand the individual as the 'historically situated self' and requires accounts which provide insight into the possible determinants of individual agency. In this sense, this requires an exploration of which social institutions and influences culminated in the individual's worldview, moral framework and way of thinking and acting. Going beyond generalisations of the historical period such as the label of Positivism or Young Poland, the aim is to discover micro-foundations and the local variants which were key to identity construction. Little (*ibid*) is congruent in emphasizing that any historical account must also encompass the reality of social institutions. The constraints and opportunities presented through the local social environment influence the agent's choices, actions and goals. The access to the knowledge required for reflexivity must be framed by the context; the legal and political frameworks, educational and personal networks and so forth.

2.2. The Warsaw Intelligentsia

The politically turbulent era of Korczak's youth occurred under the maxim that there would never be a Poland under any guise or name. Therefore, writing in Poland with the aim of cultural and political freedom was a dangerous endeavour and choosing pseudonyms displayed the need to protect oneself. Reserving his real name, Dr Henryk Goldszmit for his work as a doctor, Korczak adopted aliases early in his writing career for publishing outside of the medical profession in a bid to avoid censorship and the Tsarist authorities. Publishing anonymously or under pseudonyms reflected the wider Polish and Jewish use of alias names in clandestine activities but also for creating an intimate sense of community and purpose in revolutionary circles (Ury, 2012, p. 103). Korczak's encouragement for teachers and children to write and publish was one of the few avenues for ensuring active citizenship despite State oppression. Such use of print originated in the 18th century in Poland, which saw a flood of free gazettes, pamphlets and magazines publishing commentary on political and diplomatic events. Seized upon as a propaganda tool, the forum was characterised as 'every writer, grasping a pen, [...] felt he was a citizen fulfilling his patriotic duty, benefiting from his citizen rights' (Tarnowska, 2016, p. 222). It was the expectation of the literate, free citizen to publish their political reflections and opinions, not only as an expression of rights, but as a duty to Poland and the forum of public debate (*ibid*). Embedded within this long history, Korczak's decision to write political commentary alongside

his medical career had many Polish and Jewish precedents and hardly presented any conflict of identity issues.

By historically situating ‘Korczak the writer’ as a colonized subject within the Russian Empire, the scene can be set for the activities of ‘Korczak the educator’ to be understood as a continuum of his socio-political agenda. Specifically, within Korczak's circles, the lack of freedom accompanied by a collectivist ideology drove a social epistemological model which argued against the dominant individualistic ways of knowing. Unable to participate in academia at the turn of the twentieth century, the Warsaw intelligentsia were painfully aware of their own low status within Western Europe and mainstream schools of thought. The notion of academic hierarchy can be explained using Miranda Fricker's (2007) concept of 'epistemic injustice' that not only strives for awareness but, in the case of Warsaw, in some ways the thinkers were fuelled by this injustice to remain active and engaged even if rarely visible. Nearing the end of his life, Korczak (1942/1967, p. 582) still loudly declared the ethnic prejudice against the contribution of many 'great Poles'. That Korczak's ideological debate could have even occurred under conditions of war and occupation, speaks to the intellectual climate that existed in his lifetime.

Using Daniel Little's (2009) definition of a *mentalité* as a shared way of looking at the world and reacting to happenings and actions by others, provides us with a platform to characterize Korczak's developing philosophy and practice. The *mentalité* provides the intellectual frame for understanding the world, coupled with values and norms for acting and responding to the events encountered in life. The *mentalité* theory postulates that Korczak's activities were not just his unique set of eccentric traits but reveal a specific group basis for his choices and actions taken. Any references to the Polish schools of thought or the Warsaw intelligentsia in this article are an attempt to narrow down on the characteristics of Korczak's *mentalité* as a young man. Teasing out these threads do not suggest any were homogenously accepted in Warsaw or exclusive of other influences on Korczak such as Judaism. A *mentalité* comprises a cognitive framework, a value system, and a set of expectations about behaviour within the same group; although it would be expected that these could vary between members of the group. Generally, institutions for children and young people, formally and informally provide these elements. To persist, however, there must be consistency in the delivery, shared across schooling, religious practices, local culture and family life. One such institution was the underground *Latająca Uniwersytet* (Flying University), an illegal society educating predominantly women; so, named as it moved constantly to new locations to avoid the Russian authorities. The seedbed or *mentalité* created by students and academics at the Flying University is often overlooked in favour of stressing Korczak's positivist medical training at the legal Tsarist University in Warsaw. Demonstrating the *mentalité* is fundamental to the argument that young Korczak was at the vanguard of a social movement promoting a specific ideology at the turn of the century.

Polish history and culture are little known or appreciated outside of Poland and its diaspora, and that is with good reasons. As a poor Eastern cousin on the outskirts of Europe, with a notoriously difficult language; as a nation it was unable to influence widespread or lasting schools of thought. Polish literature is inextricably linked to its cultural and historical context. This refers not only to its artistic elements but also to the course of its development. In terms of function and strategy, these elements of literature have differed significantly from those of other European countries

(Woźniak, 2014). When Poland was dismembered by its neighbours in the 18th Century, the Poles resisted the increasing repression on 'Polish-ness' in public spaces. Polish literature followed suit, becoming an instrument of resistance by maintaining cultural and linguistic identity (*ibid*). Many motifs, phrases and themes within Korczak's texts was drawn from such literature. At the turn of the twentieth century in Warsaw, writers, poets, publishers and journalists were at the heart of the revolutionary movement; able to speak directly to, and mobilize, the people. The decade in which Korczak began his professional career as a doctor was a period of unexpectedly quick social changes accompanied by intense transformation of the Polish landscape. In the early 1900s, it became routine for thousands to gather in the streets of Warsaw and elsewhere, to protest and demand Polish autonomy. Poets and painters spearheaded the quest for change engaging with men, women and children. Visibly active, children joined men and women in protests and strike actions which ground the city to a halt. At this time, Polish youth were not driven by Marxism as popularly assumed in the West, but more often by a form of positivist Romanticism which translated into revolutionary zeal seeking to achieve justice. The Polish nationalist movement, in striving for independence meshed to create unlikely bedfellows with the feminists and clergy joining both left and right political sides. However, the protests were not restricted to syndicate action, as chaos and violence reigned in Warsaw streets. Between 1903 and 1906, at least ten bombs had exploded in the city centre and 83 policemen had been killed. Postcards appeared publicising the various events of the time; the bomb blast at a cafe on Miodowa Street in the Old Town, was near to Korczak's primary school and university. A Russian troop convoy publicly escorted those arrested to the Citadel (fortress-prison) but Korczak was not in Warsaw at the time of the failed revolution of 1905. Drafted into the Russian army (the enemy), Korczak found himself at a great distance from his colleagues who were in the thick of the action. Although known for his pacifist views, especially in relation to the effect of war on children, his absence elicits a different question - what effect did missing out on such home events have on Korczak?

The violent deeds of hot-blooded activists had achieved nothing more than notoriety, and the label of 'terrorist' became synonymous with 'anarchist' in the public eye. Across Europe, ideologues who favoured abolishing private property turned to armed robbery to fund their revolutionary activities. One such crime in London was a jewellery theft which made international headlines, now famously connected to 'Peter the Painter'. This London heist was infamous due to the media sensationalism of anarchist terror, but it was the chaotic aftermath which resulted in police deaths and burning buildings which propelled it to international notoriety. Warsaw newspapers fuelled the public's fascination with these events, with many affording the story front page status complete with photos and headlines of 'Anarchists in London!'. In targeting private property and citizens rather than State authority, these anarchists blurred the lines of criminal versus revolutionary activity. English politicians and the press used the opportunity to build upon existing anti-immigrant sentiment which was predominantly directed at the flood of Jews from Eastern Europe. There are some clues to Korczak's allegiances within his socio-political writing around the events of this decade. Korczak (1911/1994, Pp. 242-3) himself entered the discussion by publishing a short response titled 'Scandal in the Salon' in a politically sympathetic gazette, the 'Free Tribune', affiliated with Roza Luxemburg's SDKPiL party. In this article, Korczak derided England, France and Germany for their colonialist policies and attitudes to foreigners, warning that Poles were yet to understand the cold-hearted nature of the industrialised West. His descriptions of Europe's three great cities were scathing, for example, he labelled Paris as the brothel of bankers, her streets 'rich' with syphilis and disease. Most of all

he singled out the hypocrisy of London for its outrage over the anarchist theft, whilst remaining morally blind to the wealth the nation amassed by stealing across its own vast empire. Warning Slavs and Polish Jews not to emigrate, Korczak's description of London's East End and police brutality are on-target thus suggesting first-hand experience. Korczak described London's schools and its beautiful parks as built from the blood and sweat of millions of 'slaves' – the 'black, yellow and white, indentured in the colonies of Africa, Asia and Australia'. The denouncement of philanthropy echoes the general anti-capitalism sentiments of socialists but is specifically found within the tenets of social anarchism.

3. Employing Anarchism

Jewish anarchism had been imported to London from the Polish ghettos in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century. Both cities were hot-beds of dissatisfaction not just amongst the rebellious literati and failed intelligentsia but also for Jewish immigrants fleeing the Russian pogroms. Finding themselves again under exploitative conditions, often via assimilated Jews, these were ready-made converts flocking to anarchist ideals (Woodcock, 1962, p. 421). In London, as was the case across Europe, the intellectual climate was focused upon the important socio-political debate over Darwin's natural selection theory and had generated great divides between nations and groups. Nineteenth-century anarchists, such as Peter Kropotkin [1842-1921], were especially vocal within the debate on evolution and the individual. With a charming persona and powerful supporters, Kropotkin's orations drew in crowds eager for his brand of anarchism, which was akin to moral philosophy, and his social theory, best summarised in his book 'Mutual Aid' (1902). The impact of Kropotkin's ideas resonated and stayed with Korczak to the end of his days. In his last weeks in the Ghetto Diary, Korczak includes Kropotkin on a list of books he planned to write. This seemingly disparate list of great thinkers that Korczak wrote – Fabre (entomologist), Kropotkin (anarchist) and Ruskin (art critic) all share a common link of having criticised aspects of Darwin's evolutionary theory.

By considering 'Mutual Aid' as the quasi-scientific response to Social Darwinism it structures the family tree of ideas which influence Korczak. In simple terms, Mutual Aid emphasises intra-species cooperation over competition and rejects the concept of individualistic struggle for existence. Standing in contrast to Spencer, Marx and other economic based models, this forms the kernel of the various anarchist schools of thought with this presumption of a natural and pre-human origin of society. Kropotkin argues that society is not governed by 'man-made' laws but 'by a sum of social customs and habits – not petrified by law, routine or superstition', but continually evolving towards higher ideals of freedom, accord and justice (Woodcock, 1963, p. 21). Such a theory does not automatically subscribe to the notion of 'goodness' in each individual simply waiting to be liberated but that political revolution requires also a spiritual transformation. Based on the belief that man is naturally social rather than naturally good, the anarchist vision is no Utopia of rigid perfection but an open system that experiences continual growth and change (*ibid*).

Korczak's references to Fabre (and even Maeterlinck) can be brought into this picture with his supporting evidence that challenged the individual nature of struggle through the examples of the

social world of bees, wasps and termites. Hence, 'beehive' and 'anthill' appear as Korczak's nicknames for the orphanage. That society evolved out of the animal world and existed before humans provided the basis for Kropotkin's argument that such a society is natural (*ibid*). Put simply; anarchism makes the "ontological claim that society preceded the State". (Goodwin, 2010, p. 107).

The label 'anarchism' is itself misunderstood, often used in a derogatory sense and vilified. Surrounded by the 'repressive myths' of chaos and violence on the one hand, or naivety and utopianism on the other; both of which serve to exclude anarchist ideas from general and academic discourse (Ward, 2005). Anarchism provides a description of how human life is already organized in different hierarchical levels; the authoritarian level is burdened with bureaucracy, privilege and injustice whilst another exists in parallel but hidden just below the surface. Without the pressures of higher authority and tension between the conservative and radical elements, this grassroots layer allows for creativity, democracy and the emergence of the new. Both upper and lower layers have positive and negative impacts but are both crucial for continuity and change to occur in society (*ibid*). It is not possible here to detail the history and principles of anarchism, only to encourage the reader to take the anarchist perspective as seriously as did such proponents as Tolstoy, Gandhi and Ferrer in their social and political propositions for education in the early twentieth century. Within their conception of social revolution and education, the anarchist model of school was presented as a microcosm of an alternative society embodying non-hierarchical relationships and mutual aid, whilst preserving individual freedom. The anarchist objection to the State was that it was oppressive and conserved the existing hierarchy. Contrary to popular belief, this form of anarchism did not seek to destroy all institutions chaotically to start anew as a utopia. Instead it sought to harness existing structures in new ways for organic growth of a decentralised, self-governing society appearing from below. Although there are many similarities, Korczak's pedagogical model is not simply a replication of the anarchist or libertarian school. If this was his intention, Korczak could have guided the reader to the book "Francisco Ferrer: Life and Work", which appeared translated into Polish in 1911 and was actively promoted by the Polish Social Democrats. Alternatively, Korczak could have co-operated with the Ferrer school which opened in Warsaw around the same time as his Homes. Instead, awareness of these socio-political debates and anarchist theories within the historical Warsaw context, allows for a more complex base to understand Korczak's own philosophical framework.

The book 'Anarchism and Education' by Institute of Education (London) researcher, Judith Suissa (2010) is a welcome addition to the literature, addressing an 'anarchist' gap in education. For example, Suissa finds great sympathy for the anarchist perspective and many references to Kropotkin in Martin Buber's work on social transformation. There has been a proliferation of articles, demonstrating overlap between Korczak and Buber particularly in terms of their Jewishness, spirituality and educational ideas but to date none have explored the link with anarchist thinking [(Kurzweil (1968); Efron (2005); Boschki, (2005); Smolińska-Theiss (2013b); Silverman (2017))]. This paper recasts Korczak as a revolutionary educator involved in the early Polish independence movement, with a subsequent role in nation building. Whilst readers may point to a clear hierarchy and order in Korczak's Homes as evidence against anarchism, this only serves to highlight that there is limited understanding to anarchist theory. Contrary to popular perception, the anarchist can operate in parallel with the State and borrow or infiltrate its institutions without seeking to overthrow it. Social anarchists differentiated themselves from

Marxists by the concept of prefigurative practice, as with Kropotkin’s spontaneous order and Proudhon’s worker-intellectual (Suissa, 2010, pp. 30; 33; 105). A few Korczak’s revered thinkers such as Kropotkin, Fabre and Maeterlinck held the theory that society precedes the state, that mutual aid already exists within the animal kingdom and by constantly evolving does not need an authority to impose it. This view forms the expectation that co-operation already exists or becomes spontaneously ordered amongst groups in society including children, but perhaps not necessarily in the forms recognised or appreciated by adults; within the invisible anarchist entity.

The hierarchy in the Home was in line with the Warsaw philosophy of ‘mankind creating itself’ and Brzozowski ‘philosophy of labour’ thus the work of the children and adults also encompassed the principle of creation-destruction and was inseparable from concepts of respect, suffering and its effects on the collective soul in general (Vucic, 2017, p. 172). This aspect of Korczak’s approach is focussed on the moral order and finds similarity within Jan Dawid’s ‘souls of teachers’ theory but has also appeared in the works of Bergson, Buber, Biesta and Levinas (*ibid*). The degree of socialisation preserves the existing order and sense of belonging but is balanced with subjectivity and creativity, which each new individual does not simply replicate or assimilate. It is this subjectivity that facilitates creativity and an ‘emergentist epistemology’⁵ which allows not only the introduction of new ideas from elsewhere but serves to imagine solutions that were considered impossible. Every child, each day, possibly brought to Korczak (1929/1967, p. 21) a greater understanding of his own conception of collective knowledge and cultural evolution, as he defined, ‘the Child – immensity; the child and eternity, the child – a speck of dust in space, the child – a moment in time’. The Child is an evolving mystery, a mere instant in a nation’s history, both being and becoming (Korczak, 1919/1967, pp. 86-88). Such a ‘knowledge event’, as explained by Osberg and Biesta (2007, pp. 33-40) is not simply the idea that knowledge (or knowing) was revealed in that moment but itself was an unrepeatable radical way of knowing. The concept of simultaneous preservation of the existing whilst supporting the emergence of new and creative forms is also found in Smolińska-Theiss’ *Korczakowskie Narracje Pedagogiczne* (tr. Korczak’s Pedagogical Narratives, 2013b) although the link to anarchist theory is not extrapolated.

The key component to Korczak’s initial formulation of his model was the questioning of the State, and that is what makes his critical pedagogy strikingly different to other philosophers and thinkers. That praxeology remained central to his work rather than a short-lived periphery is related to his standing in solidarity with the oppressed, whether Polish or Jewish, that was demanded by Freire (1996, p.155). In contrast to Dewey who advocated the democratic school, Korczak envisaged mass schooling as insufficiently political or critical of the State and its institutional structures. In his assessment, the English, German and Russian schools were far too intertwined within the complex issues of class, race and gender to be able to challenge the State, and simply served as a tool of replication of oppression. Each education system reflected the distinctive elements of their own State, as Korczak (1905) elucidated;

⁵ The ‘emergentist epistemology’ of the child is one of the elements of Korczak philosophy which is the subject of the author’s doctoral research and will be expanded upon within a future publication.

For anyone today, it is no secret that the modern school is an institution thoroughly nationalist-capitalist, that first and foremost responsibility is of the education of central bureaucrats and patriotic-chauvinists.

His stance mirrors that of Kropotkin, who criticized the State for colonial oppression, capitalism and intervention in social and educational life for its own gain (Morris, 2014, p.176). In his prospectus for the ‘modern school’, the anarchist, Ferrer, also challenged any school that claimed to be neutral as hypocritical and instead should ‘awaken’ in children the desire for a free and equal society without violence, hierarchy or privilege (Avrich, 2014, p. 30). It was a view shared by Korczak (1905) who ridiculed the concept of a politically neutral school as ‘a school on the moon’. The school as an institution could not be “independent of time and space, a school that would serve pure knowledge without any political colouring’ was impossible’. Being closely linked to complex issues, the school influences directly, faithfully reflects and is enslaved by those issues, thus the case of school reform was related directly with the general reforms of the State. Kropotkin’s radical humanism was formulated within the sphere of crime and punishment, proposing that human essence was repressed by institutions. Although later, Foucault would argue against humanism, that the human nature which wills to power is also what dominates and exploits us. Exploring Kropotkin’s humanism, Korczak (1905) had already extrapolated more than a century ago and came to similar conclusions as Foucault, as he wrote;

Schools serve the same social functions as prisons and mental institutions - to define, classify, control, and regulate people.

Korczak (1905) branded each State’s education system with its own distinctive trademark designed to replicate the existing social order which would perpetuate injustice;

So English school educate the brave, clever and nimble plantation owner-colonists and industrialists, whose goal is to operate more and more territories, to exploit more and more new territories, to harness more and more new markets, squeeze the benefit of English power through more and more tribes and nations. And throughout these immoral purposes, through exemplary schools, the English government achieves successfully.

By reserving his particularly harsh criticism for England, Korczak laid the groundwork of his expectations for his London visit a few years later. Mistakenly, Korczak’s Homes are too often aligned with English models which superficially interpret these ideas within the individualist paradigm into protecting children’s needs or preparing children for life by providing an alternative education. The confusion arises that social anarchists were not generally libertarians in terms of education and believed that moral or political neutrality in education was neither possible nor desirable. The school, as defined by anarchism, can serve as a microcosm of alternative society and be at the vanguard of the social revolution, embodying non-hierarchical relationships, mutual aid and individual autonomy. The Homes, often called ‘Children’s Republics’ draw quick parallel with this definition, although Korczak’s pedagogical model is not simply a replication of the anarchist or libertarian school. The argument here is that if this was his intention, Korczak could have guided the reader to the book "Francisco Ferrer: Life and Work", which appeared translated into Polish in 1911 and was actively promoted by the Polish Social

Democrats. Alternatively, the Homes could have co-operated with the Ferrer school which opened in Warsaw around the same time. Thus, it should be clarified that this article advocates for anarchism as a historically and ontologically appropriate framework for the reader to better understand Korczak’s ideas, rather than strictly labelling Korczak as an anarchist. Those who remain uncomfortable with an anarchist interpretation of Korczak’s writing is usually due to the label ‘anarchist’ conjuring images either of violence or utopia rather than conflict, creativity and change. Perhaps they may find solace in the sentiments echoed many decades later by the ‘gentle anarchist’, Colin Ward who provided not a vision of the future, but a description of how human life is already organized in two levels along anarchist principles (Ward, 2005, p. 11). The authoritarian level is burdened with bureaucracy, privilege and injustice whilst the other exists in parallel but hidden just below the surface as an anarchist society without the burden of the dominant authority. Resonating deeply with Korczak’s own image of the Child, Ward evoked anarchist imagery as he urged deeper examination of the everyday spaces of children’s lives. Ward describes children as ‘anarchists in action’, who creatively negotiated their environment and able to re-interpret adult based intentions through play and appropriation (Mills, 2010). Korczak similarly clarified his efforts in *How to Love A Child* (1919/1967, p. 197);

So many of us, so many young faces, clenched fists, so many sharp tusks, we won’t give in. [...] Death to the old world, to the new world - Viva!

The image of the ‘Innocent Child’ is often depicted as a universal one across Western society. However, this was not always the case, as children’s penchant for overturning authority was embodied in artwork from time to time. Similarly, the image of the child must be reconsidered when examining Korczak’s work. Instead of an interdependent paradigm, much of Korczak’s writing has been viewed by English readers on the level of isolated adult-child relationships. It is commonly interpreted as encouraging the adult’s individual agency and self-reflection to combat the Dickensian model of an authoritarian teacher or parent. This overlooks the greater complexity of how his orphanage practices served to promote explicit moral and political values forming a social agreement at grassroots level, that is, evolving from the institution and more importantly, from the children, to take root within the larger society. Instead of attempting a minimalist State or utopian closed community, Korczak’s model operated alongside, and often despite, the various oppressive forces of the Russian Empire, the short-lived Polish State and lastly, German occupation. His ‘Children’s Republics’ served the role of radically democratic schools to lay like seeds ‘beneath the snow’, an apt description borrowed from contemporary anarchist thought (Ward, 2005, p. 11). This changes the question from ‘how to achieve co-operation?’ but in acknowledging co-operation already exists and new forms are emerging, the question becomes ‘what is the best form of co-operation?’ (*ibid*). One could readily dismiss an emergentist epistemological understanding as utopian and untranslatable into prefigurative practice but Smolińska-Theiss (2013a) articulates Korczak’s defence as, ‘faith in the power of education is not the delusion of a dreamer, but the result of centuries of study and experience.’ The German anarchist, Gustav Landauer explained that the State was a condition of human behaviour, one that could only be destroyed by redefining human relationships to primarily change society (Ward, 2005, p. 8). Rather than a violent revolution or complete disdain for the State, Korczak’s own educational model was to spread moral and social ideals beyond the bounds of the Homes as invisible entities within his books. By organically growing the replacement over time, he envisaged a fairer, more just society for all nations of people living on the territory of unified

States. Anarchism seeks to harness rather than dismantle institutions and this is evident in Korczak's practice as he employs the constitution, the court, public schools and other State affiliated institutions to his own ends of nation-building. In anarchism, the means of societal change had to be aligned with the end goals, thus a society based on mutual aid had to emerge organically shaped by such a process of co-operation. Internationally, the anarchists attempted to prefigure the revolution but creating it in the present moment on a small scale by nurturing what societal structures already existed towards their aims; the schools. This organic process can be seen in Korczak's practice as he re-introduced and experimented with historically important Polish institutional structures such as the Polish Constitution (of 1791), the Sejm (democratic parliament) and local judicial court which had been demolished by the Prussian, Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires when Poland was partitioned. Although, Manfred Liebel (2016, p. 3) includes Korczak within the intellectual current of the time and in a hidden history of child rights, but he simultaneously seems to de-historicize and displace. Drawing attention to scholarship on Korczak having little regard for the political or legal dimension, Liebel also falls into the trap of failing to consider that Poland during much of Korczak's lifetime did not exist. In going beyond the legalistic construction of children's rights, Liebel (2018, Pp. 204-208) appears perplexed by Korczak's distrust of authorities and scepticism towards the State and unable to resolve it with the democratic and citizenship activities within the Homes. Failing to find a philosophical solution, Liebel (*ibid*) calls this Korczak's 'preference' for working with institutional and the "unwritten" laws of life. The answer to this dilemma is historical, with Korczak born subjugated under the Russian Empire, his Polish language and customs were oppressed until the country's formal political independence in 1921, hence the promotion of democracy was a revolutionary act. Any criticism of the Russian Empire or discussion of freedom for the people had to be disguised. It is readily acknowledged that during the Soviet communist era, much of Korczak's work was censored, re-edited and misappropriated (Smolińska-Theiss, 2012, p. 53). However, censorship (including self-censorship) is rarely given consideration as being ingrained within the writing and publishing during his lifetime or as adding any element of difficulty to translating Korczak texts.

Prior to establishing either of his Homes, Korczak must have been thrilled with the outcomes of his early efforts to put theory into practice through the propagation of his ideas in literature. Being hauled before the Polish Teacher's Union in 1910, would have served to reinforce to him that results were possible and fortified his commitment to continue this experiment within a Home for Jewish children. The Union's Pedagogical Section had requested Korczak's presence to defend himself against charges that had surfaced due to the influence of his publications. Singled out was *'Moški, Joski i Srule'* (1908), a children's story about Jewish boys at summer camp (Falkowska, 1989. p. 132). The story outlined some of the issues Korczak had encountered whilst working as a camp counsellor. It detailed how he had implemented a 'children's court' to direct a group of 150 street children, stressing without such institutions of self-governance, he could not have managed within such large groups. Regarding the Union's discussion with Korczak about the children's courts, the following statement was issued (25.10.1910);

Young readers of the novel *'Moški, Joski i Srule'* intrigued by the idea of 'camp-colony court' have spontaneously taken it upon themselves to organize 'school courts'; shown to be an effective defence and they have issued sentences without control or mastery, as was demonstrated in the original management example. [...] it has turned out, that what was a positive remedy for children on summer colonies (camps) collected negative influences on urban children from the intelligentsia sphere (*ibid*).

In less than two years, school children around Poland had spontaneously organized themselves and initiated Korczak’s experiment into building a democratic society. The controversial nature of Korczak’s ideas, and resultant social divisions, are evident as his teaching colleagues present at the meeting did not come to his defence against the charges laid by his former employer, Stefania Sempołowska (*ibid*).

Conclusion

As Polish literature is inextricably linked to its cultural and historical context, the turn of the twentieth century texts of Janusz Korczak must be re-placed as emerging from the revolutionary atmosphere of Warsaw. In order to deepen the inquiry into his philosophical underpinnings, an anarchist framework assists in the analysis of Korczak’s work in terms of political struggle. The use of such an alternative lens also serves to remind the reader that philosophy in education and pedagogical practices do not necessarily start and finish at the school gate. Nor does it necessarily operate at macro-level, within a State-controlled system but instead can tell us something about ourselves, our relationships and different ways of living our lives to create a more just society. An examination of the ideas and actions during socio-political crisis, at a time when the concept of the State was heavily contested, may provide a powerful challenge to contemporary assumptions and dominant ideas, especially about children, education and democracy.

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