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KORCZAKIAN DILEMMAS IN THE PEDAGOGICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

Abstract

This article presents the figure of Janusz Korczak: a writer, essayist, editor but above all a Polish pedagogue of Jewish origin, known worldwide for his devotion to the matter of children's rights and needs. His life and work are discussed here in relation to dilemmas he was forced to face. They involve his origins and social status; professional vocation and work; pedagogical theory and practice; literary work; the relationship between genetics and child's development; his worldview and religious convictions. The paper is based on Korczak's own books, articles, essays.

Key words: dilemma, doctor, teacher, writer

Słowa kluczowe: dylemat, lekarz, nauczyciel, pisarz

Janusz Korczak (Henryk Goldszmit) was, and still is, a figure that is not easy to classify. Taking into consideration his professional training, one would say that he was a paediatrician. He indeed worked as a successful doctor from 1905 to 1912. Then, however, he devoted himself entirely to taking pedagogical care of orphans in Warsaw.

He was also known as an author of books for children and adolescents. Hundreds of his essays and articles, written from the end of the nineteenth century, were published by scientific and popular science magazines. He was the editor of the *Nasz Przegląd* ("Our Review") magazine. Children also had their place in that newspaper as Korczak encouraged them to send in their letters, which were then published in a special attachment called the *Mały Przegląd* ("A Small Review"). It was the first such initiative back then.

Korczak was also a scientist, which is reflected in his academic interests and lectures, e.g., *Zasady wychowania w internatach* ("Principles of Upbringing in Boarding Schools") which he delivered at the National Institute for Special Pedagogy in Warsaw over the years. He is less known as a playwright. His most recognisable play *Senat Szaleńców*

(“A Senate of Madmen”) was staged in the Ateneum Theatre at the beginning of 1930s and starred, among others, by Stefan Jaracz. He may also be considered one of the first Polish radio hosts. For a few years — in the 1930s — he hosted a radio programme called “Gadaninki Starego Doktora” (“An Old Doctor’s Chats”).

This article is an attempt at presenting Janusz Korczak as a man of flesh and blood, familiar with human dilemmas concerning everyday life, his scientific and pedagogical work as well as issues revolving around his personal and professional life, beliefs, religiousness, etc.

THE DILEMMA OF ORIGIN AND SOCIAL STATUS

Janusz Korczak was a Jew. Although he never denied his Jewish origin, he also felt like a Pole. Such duality of social awareness and belonging became his burden for the whole life. He mentioned it in *Pamiętnik* (“Memoirs”), which was a summary of the time he spent the Warsaw ghetto.¹

Members of Henryk Goldszmit’s closest family (father, mother, grandmother and sister) should be perceived as belonging to the Warsaw intelligentsia. Researchers still have some doubts concerning Korczak’s date of birth (1878 or 1879): it is unclear why his father, a lawyer, waited with completing his son’s birth certificate. Maybe he was not sure which path of life to choose for his son, but it appears — *post factum* — not to have been very different from the practice of either Poles or assimilated Jews at the time. This is confirmed in the fact that after the initial years of home schooling the young Henryk was not sent to the *chedar*. He attended August Szmurła public school in Warsaw in Freta Street and then the classical gymnasium in Brukowa and Namiestnikowska Street — in the Praga district (today’s King Władysław IV Gymnasium).

Yet another event proving that Henryk Goldszmit wanted to be considered part of the Polish community was his change of name to Janusz Korczak. This happened relatively late — in 1899 — when Henryk was at least 20 years old and became a student at the University of Warsaw. His new name was accidentally borrowed from *O Janaszu Korczaku i pięknej Miecznikównie* (“Janasz Korczak and the Pretty Swordsweeperlady”) by J. Kraszewski. He needed the name for a literary contest he participated in. Due to a misprint the name Janasz was replaced by Janusz and publicly announced in the latter form, which stayed there for good. His play (titled *Którędy?*) (“Which Way?”) was recognised by the organiser of the contest, the newspaper *Kurier Warszawski*.²

Korczak’s family was wealthy as his father was a well-known and respectable lawyer. The financial situation of the family gradually deteriorated once Józef Goldszmit ended his professional activities due to a progressing mental illness³. When he died (1896)

¹ J. Korczak, *Pamiętnik*, in: *Pisma zebrane*, vol. IV, Warszawa 1986, p. 324. (Korczak frequently recalled his childhood. For instance, he wrote about how he wanted to prepare a funeral for his canary bird. The caretaker’s son told him: “the canary was a Jew. Me, too. I was a Jew, and he — a Pole, a Catholic. Paradise for him. As for me, if I did not swear [...] I would end up, when I died, in a place which, though not hell, was dark [...]. Certainly something to consider”).

² W. Okoń, *Wizerunki sławnych pedagogów polskich*, PWN, Warszawa 1993, p. 221 (Henryk Goldszmit had already made his literary debut in 1896 in a satirical magazine the “Kolce” by publishing his humorous “Węzeł gordyjski”). He used pen names: “Hen”; “Hen-Ryk”; “Ryk”).

³ Korczak’s father suffered from mental disease from around 1890.

the family was forced to pay back his outstanding liabilities. The Goldszmits sold some family treasures and moved to a smaller apartment. Father's mental illness had left a mark on the whole family, especially Korczak who wrote in *Pamiętnik* ("Memoirs"): "I used to be desperately afraid of the lunatic asylum" and "More than two score years have gone by [...]"⁴. To pay for his studies, Korczak worked as a tutor and helped his mother with day-to-day chores as far as he could. Later he described his experiences in *Prawidła życia* ("The Rules of Life"), where he wrote: "I was rich when I was a child, and then poor so I know both. I know that one can be kind and decent either way, and that it is possible to be rich and very miserable".⁵ Problems at home triggered those at school: Korczak repeated one year of gymnasium.

During the last years of gymnasium Janusz Korczak's personality was shaped. As he was engaged in patriotic and educational activities, he took part in a students' strike when he became arrested. This forced him to repeat the first year of university studies (1899). From 1900 he attended the underground Flying University and took part in lectures delivered, among others, by: Ludwik Krzywicki, Stefania Sempołowska and even Jan Władysław Dawid — a pioneer of experimental research (psychological) in pedagogy in Poland at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

Although Korczak was never engaged in a political activity, he identified himself with progressive community activists working on solutions for improving the global situation. Taking a walk through the streets of Warsaw he would enter districts of poverty. Those tours expressed the young, sensitive man's protest against poverty and dejection that he saw in dilapidating houses and districts. Such observations greatly influenced Korczak's social views. He became a defender of the underprivileged, especially children. He emphasises it in his books: *Dziecko ulicy* ("The Children of the Streets") and *Dziecko salonu* ("A Child of the Drawing Room") and in numerous talks, short stories and essays included in the magazine *Czytelnia dla Wszystkich*.⁶ The books mentioned above were well received and reviewed by the critics.⁷ The novel *Dziecko salonu* ("A Child of the Drawing Room") included numerous autobiographical elements. Korczak spoke harshly about corrupt, authoritative upbringing leading to the imprisonment of the soul. He would soon write: "I dreamed I was a poodle [...] knowing my master was pleased with me, I wagged my tail merrily and gazed devotedly into his eyes [...] I had to be obedient and faithful," and further on: "I lost my soul [...]. Gentleman! I beg you all: leave my soul. All of you — the big and the small, the wise and the 'wise', the good and the bad [...] the cynical and the passionate, the honest and the fake, the corrupted and the ascetic [...]. Because this will not do. Because I cannot find myself in this chaos — I cannot find anything — I cannot bare it any more, I do not want to".⁸

⁴ J. Korczak, *Pamiętnik...*, p. 71.

⁵ K. Stachowicz, *Wielkie biografie. Korczak*, Buchmann, Warszawa 2012, pp. 22–23.

⁶ Korczak asked by Stanisław Liciński, who accompanied him in his tours around the poverty districts of Warsaw, if he is not afraid of this different world, said: "If I were to choose, I prefer hungry wolves in the unknown than fat bores in a drawing room" (K. Stachowicz, *Wielkie biografie...*, p. 28).

⁷ See K. Stachowicz, *Wielkie biografie...*, p. 31 (from one of the reviews published in the *Błuszcz*: "The young author is obviously familiar with the life of the poorest in Warsaw, because in his novel [...] he successfully presented such characters [...]. A lot of subtle irony, humour, life expressed by clear language — these are all advantages of Janusz Korczak's work").

⁸ J. Korczak, *Dziecko salonu*, in: *Dziela*, vol. I, Latona, Warszawa 1992, p. 231 and 276.

Korczak's sensitivity to social inequality was also influenced by his extraordinary sense of observation, the wide knowledge he gained by reading and self-study as well as his orientation in the socio-political and economic changes taking place at the time. He actively participated in the Russian-Japanese War (1904–1905) and witnessed the working class revolution in the Kingdom of Poland (1905–1907).

THE DILEMMA OF THE PATH OF LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL VOCATION

Korczak's vocation to work as a pedagogue was not very clear. He chose this profession in 1912 when he was over thirty and it shaped his further life. It seems, though, that he harboured the idea even when he was younger — a child, a pupil, a student.

In *Pamiętnik* ("Memoirs") one can find an annotation which proves that a plan of changing the world appeared in Korczak's mind as early as the age of five. The person who might have known about it was his grandmother, Emilia, for she always appreciated her grandson's intelligence and sensitivity.⁹

The time he spent in gymnasium was also important. Negative and vivid memories including humiliation and physical violence on the part of teachers towards their students were later reflected in his pedagogical beliefs.¹⁰ The first indicators of Korczak's pedagogical instinct appeared at that time. Leon Rygier, his schoolmate, remembered that Korczak showed interest whenever someone talked about children and enjoyed talking about them himself. Sometimes he stopped to watch them play and seemed to search for an answer to one of his questions.¹¹

As it was mentioned above, at that time Korczak had already made a debut as an author. In the reviews of his plays and short stories critics admired his original language, perceptiveness and gift of observation. He was thought to become a journalist or a writer. It seemed obvious that after graduating from gymnasium he would choose to study Polish. Korczak, to everyone's surprise, signed up for medicine. It is worth noting, though, that by specialising in paediatrics he was becoming closer to the children's world. Korczak's literary talent was positively influenced by his medical and pedagogical knowledge, which is visible in his articles published in the *Czytelnia dla Wszystkich*, starting from 1898.¹²

The whole series of Korczak's essays published at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in various forms and of various lengths prove his knowledge concerning man and his needs. He managed to cope with complicated issues of everyday

⁹ J. Korczak, *Pamiętnik...*, p. 323 (In *Pamiętnik* Korczak wrote that his relationship with his grandmother was kind. She willingly praised the little Henryk, gave him treats, etc. The father, on the other hand, was impulsive and called his son: "a fool," "an idiot", etc. (see E. Dauzenroth, *Janusz Korczak życie dla dzieci*, WAM, Kraków 2012, p. 111).

¹⁰ Korczak described his school experiences in a short story "Feralny tydzień".

¹¹ K. Stachowicz, *Wielkie biografie...*, p. 20. (Rygier recalled Korczak's interesting words on this matter: "Each child plays differently. I would like to find out why. I know it may take me a couple of years. Who knows?... Maybe the whole life... Maybe I will not find it out at all. But the more I observe, the closer I am to the truth. The truth about man is still unknown").

¹² See J. Korczak, *Na mównicy. Publicystyka społeczna (1898–1912)*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Latona, Warszawa 1994 (in 1898 he publishes: "Przy kołysce"; "Dzieci"; "Miłość, szacunek, zaufanie"; "Umysł"; "Wola"; "Wyobraźnia"; "Bajka"; "Swoboda"; "Kary i nagrody"; "Rozrywki"; "Sztuki piękne"; "Zdrowie"; "Malarstwo". In 1899 he wrote articles: "Ułomni"; "Wykolejony"; "Pogadanki"; "Zabawy letnie"; "Tanie książki"; "Szkie przyrodnice").

life. He read and reviewed the novels by Henryk Sienkiewicz and Wiktor Hugo. Korczak was interested in a wide range of matters, from theatrical plays to the newest technological inventions (e.g., x-ray). These texts express his deep humanism. While writing about multiple subjects Korczak always highlighted the pedagogical aspect in relation to children: “Children already are, and not will be some time in the future, human beings, yes, they are human beings and not dolls: you can appeal to their mind, they will respond to your arguments, you can appeal to their heart, they will feel what you are saying”.¹³

In one of his essays from 1898 Korczak wrote: “Whenever life puts on me a heavy burden, when it hurts me more than ever, whenever I suffer from human anger or my fate becomes more miserable — I seek children. This is among children where the suffering is declining and is transformed into contemplation, thoughts become soothing and the heartbeat seems more lively — the soul is embraced by a dream. Their fair and dark heads full of little stresses, their lively moves, genuine laughter, bright eyes, smiling faces...Without children the world would be nothing but a cold, dark grave”.¹⁴

Korczak was fascinated by medical and pedagogical novelties. That is why in 1899 he visited Switzerland, the place of birth of Jan Henryk Pestalozzi (1746–1827) known among teachers as an inventor of the idea of elementary education, called the “Father of the Folk School” and “Friend of Mankind”.¹⁵

Pestalozzi became Korczak’s inspiration. He expressed it by claiming that: “The names of Pestalozzi, Froebel and Spencer shine with no less brilliance than the names of the greatest inventors of the twentieth century. For they discovered more than the unknown forces of nature; they discovered the unknown half of humanity: children”.¹⁶ Pestalozzi’s educational work and his sensitivity towards children’s needs can be compared to Janusz

¹³ M. Fałkowska, *Kalendarz życia, działalności i twórczości Janusza Korczaka*, Nasza Księgarnia, Warszawa 1989, p. 57.

¹⁴ J. Korczak, *Na mównicy. Publicystyka społeczna (1898–1912)*, Warszawa 1994, p. 13 (a fragment of the article titled “Dzieci”). Korczak wrote: “A well developed child will not be defined by the fact that he knows impressive stories or speaks German. A developed child will ask about an unknown word, will ask for an explanation of some phenomena and will carefully listen to the answer. [...] A student who gains knowledge from a faulty memory and not from thought or heart will never speak with a confident voice. He will always hesitate once his teacher asks him [...]. Let him see the world, the country he lives in, people he is surrounded by, let him learn many aspects of life, duties it requires. Let him understand with his heart and he will become a human being”. (pp. 20–21 from art. “Umysł”); Moreover in *Rozrywki* he wrote: “The child should never be bored as boredom is a bad advisor; once the child is free from other activities, let him spend time on joyful play — not loud but nice and bright. Idle daydreaming or so-called roaming around spoil the young soul and kill the will which may be harmful to his future active life. How often do we see poor children who do not know how to spend their time? They seem sleepy, grumpy towards people and the world. They are bored” (pp. 41–42).

¹⁵ Compare to J. Kulbaka, *Szlakiem myśli pedagogicznych Jana Jakuba Rousseau, Jana Henryka Pestalozzkiego i Janusza Korczaka*. Wybór, Wydawnictwo Polianna, Krasnystaw 2012. (quotation from the introduction: Pestalozzi set an appropriate tone to education. He based his assumptions on child’s natural predispositions, he respected child’s intellectual capabilities, limits, interests etc. He wrote: “Our cognition becomes transformed from undefined disorder into a defined order, from determinacy into brightness, and from brightness to clarity. By moving forward in the process of development, nature follows the great principle according to which clarity of cognition depends on the distance between a person and items affecting one’s senses. Everything that surrounds you reaches your senses *caeteris paribus* as much complicated as far away it is from your senses; on the other hand, everything that is close to the five main senses seems to be clear”).

¹⁶ M. Fałkowska, *Kalendarz życia...*, p. 57.

Korczak's character and work to a great extent.¹⁷ Pestalozzi advocated: "You can always tell when a child is overwhelmed. It becomes less lively, anxious, frightened" [...]. He also claimed: "Learning is worth nothing if it kills livelihood and happiness [...]. Brief moments of work, immediately supplemented by joy will not break the spirit".¹⁸

It is not accidentally that after the journey Korczak concluded: "Working for others and not working for oneself can be a purpose of life, thinking about another's happiness, never about one's own. If one shuts oneself in one's thoughts, feelings, and comfort, bitterness taking his soul for the whole world [...] — one deserves pity, because one will never experience moving moments of joy".¹⁹

Between 1899 and 1905 Janusz Korczak studied medicine. In *Pamiętnik* ("Memoirs") he writes with respect about his masters — professors who provided him with insight into the ropes of the profession. In the meantime he was preparing materials for his books. In 1901 he published *Dzieci ulicy* ("The Children of the Streets"). Simultaneously, he was writing for the *Czytelnia dla Wszystkich*, the *Kurier Teatralny* and the *Głos*. The magazines print his short stories: *Dziecko salonu* ("A Child of the Drawing Room") and "Feralny tydzień" ("An Unlucky Week") (1906 and 1907, respectively). Korczak received his diploma in medicine in March 1905 and began working as a doctor at Bersohns and Baumans Children's Hospital in Warsaw.²⁰

Between 1907 and 1908 Korczak lived in Berlin, where he learned about paediatrics in Germany. The management of hospitals and the level of medical aid offered there impressed him greatly. After some time he would recall that in Berlin he came to know: "the technique of simplifying, inventiveness and order of details"²¹. For the same reason he visited Paris (1909, 1911) and London (1911). It should be noted that in 1909 Korczak was a member of the Jewish organisation Orphan's Society created in 1907 in Warsaw. He eagerly supported the idea of transforming a building at 92 Krochmalna Street into an orphanage. Similar institutions which he saw in Germany, France and England served for him as models. Forest Hill orphanage in London was the most appealing. It appears to be a breakthrough in Korczak's professional life. He claimed: "For a son I chose the idea of serving the child and his affairs".²²

In addition, as an active doctor still raising his qualifications (1905–1912), from 1910 he took part in summer camps organised for Polish orphans (Wilhelmówka) and Jewish ones (Michałówka).²³

¹⁷ See J. Kulbaka, *Szlakiem...* (it is proven by the respect, love and devotion towards children. Pestalozzi, similarly to Korczak, was a careful observer who accompanied children, taught them, took care of them and sought the best ways to establish rapport with his wards (mainly orphans). Compare J.H. Pestalozzi, *Pisma pedagogiczne*. Introduction and critique by R. Wroczyński, Ossolineum 1972).

¹⁸ J.H. Pestalozzi, *Pisma pedagogiczne...*, p. 8 and 9.

¹⁹ E. Dauzentroth, *Janusz Korczak...*, p. 28–29.

²⁰ In June 1905 he was drafted to military service in the tsarist army and sent to the front of the Russian-Japanese War in Manchuria; he did not participate in the fight though. He spent time in lazaret, where he provided wounded soldiers with medical help. He returned to Warsaw in March 1906 and took up a job in the same hospital.

²¹ K. Stachowicz, *Wielkie biografie...*, p. 52. This quotation is taken from Korczak's book *Jak kochać dziecko*.

²² J. Olczak-Ronikier, *Korczak. Próba biografii*, W.A.B., Warszawa 2011, p. 143.

²³ Inspired by those summer camps Korczak wrote two more books: *Moski, Joski i Srule* (1910) and *Józki, Jaśki i Franki* (1911).

In 1912 the renovation of the orphanage at 92 Krochmalna Street (today Jaktorowska Street) was completed. Korczak was offered a position of the head of the institution. He agreed. Simultaneously he gave up working at the hospital, which was not an easy decision for him. In *Pamiętnik* ("Memoirs") he wrote: "But for the rest of my years I was bothered by the unpleasant feeling that I had deserted. I had betrayed the sick child, medicine and the hospital. I was carried away by false ambition: to become a doctor and a sculptor of the child's soul. The soul. No more, no less. Is this why I struggled, often hungry, through the clinics of three European capitals?"²⁴

Korczak's words from 1913 concerning his resignation from family life may seem a bit pretentious: "Loneliness is not painful [...]. I do not look for a friend as I know I will not find one [...]. I made a pact with life: we will not disturb each other..."²⁵ Approximately at the same time in "Spowiedź motyla" ("Confessions of a Butterfly"), Korczak wrote emphatically: "I feel I am inspired by the Providence to do something great, immortal [...]. I think a lot about the future. I am gathering materials for Child study"²⁶

In his notes written on the front of World War I (1914–1918), Korczak emphasised his motivation in leaving the hospital: "Never before had I understood the prayer of work and the beauty of real activity. A square on the blueprint today, tomorrow becomes a hall, a room, a passage. Accustomed to heated discussions over views, principles [...] here I watched something being created"²⁷ As an experienced pedagogue, in 1937 in the letter to M. Zylbertal, Korczak wrote: "I remember the moment when I decided not to set up a family of my own. [...]. A slave has no right to have children(...). And suddenly it felt like a suicide. I led my life with force and power, though it seemed disorganised, lonely, unfamiliar. For a son I chose the idea of serving the child and his affairs. It may seem that I have lost"²⁸

THE DILEMMA OF PEDAGOGICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

Janusz Korczak — as mentioned above — was fascinated by some pedagogical issues. He was well read and familiar with European literature. He was able to evaluate and appreciate the literary talents of Victor Hugo, Lev Tolstoy, Anton Czechov, Bolesław Prus, Henryk Sienkiewicz and others. Korczak shows some kind of eclecticism in his views concerning upbringing. He was not a keen supporter of any of the particular models of education and upbringing that started to gain popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century (trends in new education). He was fascinated by Rousseau's idea of natural pedagogy, which was developed theoretically and practically by Pestalozzi and other scientists, pedagogues and writers. After he read "The Pedagogical Poem" by A. Makarenko he concluded: "it is not pedagogical literature but true pedagogy".

²⁴ J. Korczak, *Pamiętnik...*, p. 34.

²⁵ J. Olczak-Ronikier, *Korczak...*, p. 155.

²⁶ E. Dauzenroth, *Janusz Korczak...*, p. 94.; compare to J. Korczak, "Spowiedź motyla", in: J. Korczak, *Sława. Opowiadania* (1898–1914), Warszawa 1996, p. 120 (Korczak wrote: "How miserable the prodigies' lives must have been, the lives of those never understood, the lives of those who were ahead of their times. [...] Unless death puts an end to my days, I will be famous. Will I!?!").

²⁷ E. Dauzenroth, *Janusz Korczak...*, p. 31, qtd. in *Jak kochać dziecko*. When Korczak spoke about building he meant the orphanage in Krochmalna Street.

²⁸ S. Wołoszyn, *Korczak*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1978, p. 30.

Korczak was above all a practitioner. He was always faithful to the idea of child's autonomy and to the view that pedagogy is a study of a child and not of a human being. Hence, in his books, essays and pedagogical works he was determined to tread his own path marked by his personal relationships with children. On this matter he wrote: "The road I have chosen toward my goal is neither the shortest nor the most convenient, but it is the best for me because it is my own. I found it not without effort or pain — and only when I came to understand that all the books I had read, and all the experiences and opinions of others, were misleading."²⁹ The scientific approach and pedagogical theories, although helpful, were frequently brushed aside by the complicated everyday, reality.

Korczak made a stand of historical dimension in education on the matter He claimed: "The academic Europe wrote numerous volumes about school overburdening, but this complicated issue can be solved easily and quickly, once we accept the rule that the aim of secondary schools is not education but children's development, not to fill their heads with useless content but to prepare them to live their future, adult lives"³⁰. He addressed teachers by saying: "Be true to yourself, seek your own road. Learn to know yourself before you attempt to learn to know the children. You should realise what you are capable of [...]. Of them all, you yourself are the child, whom you must learn to know, bring up and, above all, enlighten"³¹.

In his book *Jak kochać dziecko*³² ("How to Love a Child"), which was well received, we may find a number of guidelines summarising korczakian views concerning education. He wrote: "If you can assess the child's rejoicing and its intensity, you will readily notice that the supreme joy is that of a difficulty surmounted, a goal attained and a mystery uncovered. The exaltation of triumph and the happiness of independence, proficiency and power"³³. He also points at the child's position in its relationships with an adult, a teacher, a guardian, a parent: "The child wants to be treated seriously. He demands confidence, instruction and advice. But instead we treat him as a joke, we constantly suspect him, repel by want of understanding, refuse to help"³⁴.

In a simple way Korczak solves the dilemma concerning the choice of teaching methods by the supporters of the traditional school (herbartian) and the so-called new school hotly debated throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. He wrote: "The child wants to know whether you have seen it yourself or if you got it from others. How do you know? He wants answers to be short and definite, comprehensible, unequivocal, serious and honest"³⁵.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 118–119.

³⁰ J. Korczak, *Myśli*, PIW, Warszawa 1987, p. 25.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

³² J. Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko*, Jacek Santorski, Warszawa 1998; compare: E. Dauzenroth, *Janusz Korczak...*, p. 37 (Janusz Aaron wrote: „Everyone knows that ‘Gertrude’, written by the great Swiss Pestalozzi, is an extraordinary work of the nineteenth century, likewise the book ‘Jak kochać dziecko’, written by Korczak, is a pedagogical masterpiece of the twentieth century); compare J. Korczak, M. Falkowska, *Kalendarz życia, działalności i twórczości Janusza Korczaka*, Nasza Księgarnia, Warszawa 1989 (Korczak wrote: “The names of Pestalozzi [...] Spencer shine with no less brilliance than the names of the greatest inventors of the nineteenth century. For they discovered more than the unknown forces of nature; they discovered the unknown half of humanity: children”, p. 57).

³³ J. Korczak, *Jak kochać...*, p. 45.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 104.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 99.

In relation to the theoretical principles of education he claimed: “We forget to insert in the theory of education that the child should be taught not only to appreciate the truth but also to spot a lie, not only to love but to hate, not only to respect but to spurn, not only to condone but to be indignant, not only to submit but to rebel”.³⁶

Inscribing himself into issues concerning educational and developmental psychology he observed: “There are no frontier posts between the ages of man. We erect them, just as we have painted the map of the world in different colors, having set up artificial national boundaries only to change them every few years”.³⁷

In *Prawo dziecka do szacunku* (“A Child’s Right to Respect”), published in 1928, Korczak warns adults against not treating children in a serious way: “The child is not dumb; there are as many fools among children as there are among adults. Dressed in the clothing of age, how often do we impose thoughtless, uncritical, and impractical regulations. Sometimes a wise child is shocked by malicious, senile, and abusive ignorance. The child has a future and a past as well, full of memorable events, memories, and many hours of the most significant solitary reflections. No less than we, he remembers and forgets, appreciates and rejects, reasons logically — and errs when he doesn’t know. Thoughtfully he trusts and doubts”.³⁸

In *Momenty wychowawcze* (“Pedagogical Moments”) he reveals the specificity of children’s sensitivity: “The child observes himself and his actions. We just cannot notice the work as we do not know how to read between the lines of what he says. We want him to confide all his thoughts and feelings [...] the child is too shy, sensitive, perceptive to stalk his internal needs”.³⁹

Korczak’s intellectual curiosity and medical knowledge had an impact on his pedagogical views. He wrote: “Not like in medicine, where even the smallest detail is the subject of research for many institutions for many years [...] in pedagogy what is the most striking is how easy it is to make judgements. As if mental life was less complex and more accessible than the processes of somatic life”.⁴⁰ On the basis of his personal experience he also wrote: “As a physician, I check the symptoms. I see the rash on the skin, hear the cough, feel raised temperature. By the sense of smell I discover the odour of acetone in the child’s mouth [...]. As an educator, I deal with symptoms too: the smile, laughter, the blush, weeping, yawning, the scream, the sigh. As a cough can be dry, moist and suffocating, so weeping can be accompanied by tears and sobs or be almost tearless. I ascertain the symptoms without anger”.⁴¹

Korczak addresses the relationship between practical knowledge and educational theory (according to the principle of co-dependency of the three educational measures: teaching, nurture, education). In one of his articles published in *Szkola Specjalna*

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

³⁸ J. Korczak, *Prawo dziecka do szacunku*, Biuro Rzecznika Praw Dziecka, Warszawa 2012, p. 28. (For instance, Korczak wrote: “we underestimate the child, because he has many hours ahead of him”, p. 13).

³⁹ J. Korczak, *Wybór pism pedagogicznych, Momenty wychowawcze*, PZWS, Warszawa 1957, vol. 1., p. 358.

⁴⁰ E. Dauzenroth, *Janusz Korczak...*, p. 86. (in *Momenty wychowawcze* Korczak states: “If in medicine there is a branch of science responsible for diagnosis, there should also be educational diagnostics based on a recognition of symptoms; observe, explain, connect, draw conclusions”, p. 89).

⁴¹ J. Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Internat*, [in:] I. Neverly, *Wybór pism*, vol. 3, Nasza Księgarnia, Warszawa 1957/1958, p. 268.

(“The Special School”) in 1924 he wrote: “Thanks to theory I know, thanks to practice, I feel. Theory enriches intellect, practice deepens feelings, trains the will [...]. Whoever finds a clash between theory and practice has not developed emotionally to the level of current theory; let him not learn any more from books and prints but from life; he does not lack ready prescriptions but the moral strength, won by sweat, to feel the truth, to make a blood brother of the truth of theory”.⁴²

Korczak’s personal experiences from gymnasium shaped his attitude towards compulsory education and corporal punishment. His attitude did not mean lack of rules, but required careful and planned actions taken by pedagogues.

In *Pedagogika żartobliwa* (“Playful Pedagogy”), a collection of “The Old Doctor’s Chats” Korczak gives a straightforward guideline: “I am a strong and absolute opponent of corporal punishment. Beating, even for adults, will become a drug, merely an educational measure. Whoever beats a child is his torturer. Never without warning if necessary — once! to the hand, with no anger (when there is no other way)”.⁴³ Taking into consideration a situation in which an educator uses violence, Korczak advised: “You are hot-headed [...]. Beat but never too hard, get angry, but only once a day. If you like, in this sentence I summarised the educational method I use”.⁴⁴

Asked about the borders of children’s freedom Korczak would answer: “Should you let children do whatever they like? Never: a bored slave grows up to be a bored tyrant. By forbidding we temper the will so that children are able to hold themselves and let go of some things, we develop their inventiveness, the ability to get out of control, we awake their criticism. [...]. By letting them do whatever they like be careful not to make them wish more by fulfilling their wishes. In the first case we weaken the will in the second case we poison it” and “Those who will not think through the issue of prohibitions and orders might not hold them if there is not enough of them and get lost if there is too many”.⁴⁵

Knowing how difficult everyday work with children may be, Korczak admired those pedagogues who sought their own way. He was well aware that pedagogical ideals are sometimes inapplicable in reality. He warned: “An educator led by a sweet illusion that he enters a world of pure and sincere souls [...] will soon be disappointed. Instead of accusing those who convinced him or accusing himself — he will be angry at children for ruining his expectations. They are not responsible for your idealistic visions”.⁴⁶ Korczak warned against too strong self-confidence as well. He stated: “People who get angry, sulk, blame the child for being as he is cannot be educators. The child was born this

⁴² J. Korczak, “Teoria a praktyka,” *Szkola Specjalna*, no. 2, 1924/25, p. 69. (Jan Fryderyk Herbart supplemented the idea of educational measures by introducing two terms: *Regierung*, *Unterricht und Zucht* — education including reprehension and punishment in case of younger children, educational teaching and morality for older children (cf. S. Kunowski, *Podstawy współczesnej pedagogiki*, Wyd. Salezjańskie, Warszawa 2001, p. 25). The concept of “education” was scientifically described by Georg Kerschensteiner.

⁴³ J. Korczak, *Pedagogika żartobliwa. Moje wakacje. Gadaninki radiowe Starego Doktora*, Warszawa 1939.

⁴⁴ J. Korczak, *Myśli...*, p. 23.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 43 and 44. (cf. J. Korczak, *Prawo dziecka do szacunku*, p. 24: “Are we so uncritical as to take caresses, which we use to harass children, for kindness? Is it not obvious that embracing a child we are the ones who seek shelter and escape from our helplessness and [...] pain, we put our burdens on their shoulders. Every other caress, not to find a source of hope, is unacceptable and directed to sensual reactions. I hold, because I am upset. I will give you if you kiss me. It is not kindness, it is egoism”).

⁴⁶ E. Dauzenroth, *Janusz Korczak...*, p. 47.

way and shaped in particular conditions... May God protect us from pedagogues and pedants. They spoil the young".⁴⁷

Many people contemporary to Korczak wondered what the purpose of his pedagogical work at the Children's home in Krochmalna Street in Warsaw was. He was accused of creating an idyllic, extra-territorial society of children protected by his authority. He defended himself saying: "I am responsible for my charge's present [...]. And that present must be cheerful, full of pleasurable effort, childish, no worries, no burdens beyond his age and strength [...]. I am no quack, no witch doctor — merely a hygienist. I provide conditions conducive to recovery [...]. I trust that in his own way he will edge toward improvement. He will struggle, suffer disappointments and shocks [...]. Let him seek his own ways and means. Let him experience the joy of small and isolate victories. I help him with the sweet atmosphere of my boarding school".⁴⁸ The fact that Korczak avoided being trite and that the accusations mentioned above are not valid is proved by his experiment based on creating a self-governing society of children in Krochmalna Street. It should be emphasised that parts of that system, The Governing Council, Children's Parliament and Children's Court, were being created according to the rule: "The child has a right to be taken seriously, to just consideration of his matters". According to Korczak, "So far everything depended on the pedagogue's good will and his good or bad mood".⁴⁹ The system was real as all pupils as well as their guardians were to obey laws. Korczak himself had to appear before the court he invented. Accused by children (sic!) he would always prepare detailed reports. Of course, he was aware that no act of law could protect the child from violence of the adult; however, he believed in initiatives shaping autonomous individuals and their sense of responsibility for their actions.⁵⁰ The aims of the Court of Peers included forgiveness and giving a chance of improving one's behaviour. The Preamble to the Code stated: "If anyone has done something bad, it is best to forgive. But the court must defend the timid that they may not be bothered by the strong. The court must defend the conscientious and the hard working that they should not be annoyed by the careless and idle. The court must see that there is order because disorder does the most harm to the good, the quiet and the conscientious. The court is not justice but it should try for justice. The court is not the truth but it wants the truth. Judges may make mistakes. Judges may punish for things that they themselves

⁴⁷ J. Korczak, *Sam na sam z Bogiem. Modlitwy tych, którzy się nie modlą*, Wydawnictwo Księży Sercanów, Kraków 2005, p. 105.

⁴⁸ K. Stachowicz, *Wielkie biografie...*, p. 106. (the korczakian system was highly approved by Jean Piaget and the role of a school newspaper was emphasised by Célestin Freinet — the father of such school self-governing. Some pedagogues accused Korczak of being "naive" and improving children who, after leaving the orphanage, had to face the complex socio-political and economic reality of the country haunted by unemployment and nationality-based conflicts. Maryna Falska, Korczak's co-worker, who administered "Nasz Dom" in Bielany, indicated that the korczakian system was failing and became stiff form-wise. She also thought it to be schematic).

⁴⁹ J. Olczak-Ronikier, *Korczak...*, p. 220. (The Governing Council gathered every week. Its members were chosen through plebiscites of "kindness" and "resentment" organised annually. The Children's Parliament discussed, accepted and declined postulates prepared by the Governing Council. The last element of the system was the Court of Peers acting according to the rule that everyone can improve, hence, everyone should be given such a chance and receive support).

⁵⁰ K. Stachowicz, *Wielkie biografie...*, p. 84.

do. They may say that even though they do it, it is still wrong. But it is shameful if a judge consciously hands down a false judgement”.⁵¹

Korczak appears to be always prepared to act, experiment, look for the best solution in particular moments in his pedagogical work. Addressing his co-workers he wrote: “This system or view originated from my experience in working in such conditions, in such areas, with such children”. At the same time he advises: “Do not let any belief last for ever. Each matter should be considered separately from the general view and each fact should be considered independently. For facts are contradictory, and general rules may be recognised only by a number of facts on each side”.⁵²

THE DILEMMA OF LITERARY WORK

Janusz Korczak was, without doubt, a very successful author. For all his life Korczak was making notes, collecting data about children — concerning their physical development, health, behaviour — to use them in a separate book — “The Child” study. He did not have a chance to finish this project though. The material is also unknown, as it was lost during the war. Korczak wrote: “He who collects facts, collects documents, acquires material for objective discussion. Do not ignore but examine small phenomena. In ‘Nasz Dom’ (Our Home) there are: 195 issues of the newspaper and announcements; 41 issues of reports from 227 Governing Council meetings; 27 500 testimonies (children’s conflicts and misdeeds); 14 100 notes of gratitude (for favours, help, mutual kindness); a couple of hundred of descriptions, short stories, memories wrote by children; a couple of hundred of graphs. Numbers, reports and transcripts do not show views but facts which took place during the seven years of the war of the boarding school”.⁵³

A collection of more than ten books and nearly 1.5 thousand of his articles is surely impressive. Korczak must have been aware of his popularity. He became a public figure respected by literary, academic and pedagogical circles. Before it happened, however, political, social, economic and civilisational reality he had created had undergone some changes. It is reflected in his scientific and popular science articles written over a couple of years. Many of them were created in the attic of Children’s Home he lived in between 1912 and 1940. Many of us can wonder what Korczak’s room looked like. Was it a well-arranged office full of books or rather a modest room with a desk by which the Old Doctor would work at night when children were asleep? Obviously writing down ones thoughts requires skills, consistency, determination and strong will. Korczak had all those qualities, although he lacked spare time. He expresses his doubts and awareness of his linguistic imperfections in 1930: “I enjoy writing. But once I take my pen and intend to start, it turns out differently than planned. It becomes tedious and difficult. As a chapter is complete, one recalls what is missing, where he wrote too little and not

⁵¹ S. Wołoszyn, *Korczak*, p. 112.

⁵² S. Wołoszyn, *Korczak*, p. 57. (On the matter of his professional vocation Korczak wrote: “The road I have chosen toward my goal is neither the shortest nor the most convenient, but it is the best for me because it is my own. I found it not without effort or pain — and only when I had come to understand that all the books I read, and all the experiences and opinions of others, were misleading”, pp. 118–119).

⁵³ S. Wołoszyn, *Korczak*, pp. 55–56 (“Nasz Dom” — a facility for Polish children. At first it was established in Pruszków, but at the end of 1920s it was moved to a new building in Bielany, Warsaw. Maryna Falska took the position of its manager).

clearly enough and that less important matters were described with too many details. Corrections and rewriting do not help. As if one person had an idea and another wrote it down. Thoughts and words on paper differ from one another [...]. Is it really how I think it is? Perhaps instead of simplifying I complicate the meaning”.⁵⁴

THE DILEMMA OF HEREDITY

In the middle of the nineteenth century eugenics, or the issue of purity of race, started to be discussed. Francis Galton (1822–1911), a British anthropologist and geographer and a cousin of Carl Darwin, is thought to have been the progenitor of eugenics. He believed that we inherit skills, physical and mental features. The view was popularised in Europe (Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland), in the United States and Canada. The idea was not spread in Poland, though supporters of “the purity of race” published magazines on the matter and conducted scientific research in the framework of the Polish Eugenic Society created in 1922.⁵⁵

Korczak was not a eugenicist. However, as a doctor and a pedagogue, he obviously understood what such movement can bring about, especially after the Nazis, who identified themselves with eugenicists and strove to eliminate “sub-humans” (Untermenschen), came into power in 1933.⁵⁶ Undoubtedly Korczak was always haunted by one idea connected to heredity — as it was mentioned before — he was afraid that he would suffer from mental illness as his father did.

Korczak would frequently give the subject of heredity some thought. He was not a gullible educator surrounded by, as he said, “pure, tender and honest souls”. He advocated: “Among children there are as many bad people as there are among adults, lacking only the need or the means to display this. In the world of the child everything occurs that happens in the world of adults. One will find examples of every type of person and expressions of all kinds of faults. Because children imitate the life they grow up in, because they already carry seeds of their passions”.⁵⁷ In the article being a part of the *Szkola Specjalna* (“The Special School”) (1924), he chose a psychological approach in analysing the behaviour of a kindergarten child, asking rhetorically: “I wonder how cruel and nervous would be the response of adults once they were forced to live with

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 49–50.

⁵⁵ See: M. Gawin, *Rasa i nowoczesność. Historia polskiego ruchu eugenicznego 1880–1953*, Neriton, Warszawa 2002. (the leading eugenic magazines included: “Psychopatologia Sądowa” and “Higiena Psychiczna”, “Zagadnienia Rasy”, changed to “Eugenika Polska”). In 1917 the II Convention of Polish Hygienists took place in Warsaw, they were in favour of establishing an institute for research in the field of racial development. Eugenicists claimed, for instance, that children born in pathological environment (alcohol, crimes, prostitution) are genetically more prone to breaking the law. In order to stop the process of degeneration, some measures were taken to eliminate the disabled and the ill, for example by sending them to war or hiring them in factories. Tomasz Janiszewski, the Minister of Health, was among the supporters of such ideas. Leon Wernic conducted an inventory of people suffering from venereal diseases in 1918 and 1919. It was estimated that 1.1 out of 25 million of Polish people constituted the group of the ill. During the First National Conference of the Eugenic Society the members discussed the need for introducing legal regulations concerning births of “the sick or suffering from genetic diseases”. They were familiar with the issue of sterilisation, which was opposed by the Church, the “Sanacja” group and the society).

⁵⁶ J. Kulbaka, *Niepełnosprawni. Z dziejów kształcenia specjalnego*, Wydawnictwo APS, Warszawa 2012 (eighth chapter).

⁵⁷ S. Wołoszyn, *Korczak*, p. 61.

a brutal and violent criminal. The proportion of inherited cruelty and gained viciousness is not important here. The result is violent behaviour of little pests. How to treat them, how long should it last — there is yet another issue. One thing is clear: such children should be separated. They spoil the atmosphere and spread the disease. Such mental fever requires professional care, different conditions, careful and professional examination. Such children cannot coexist with the healthy ones”.⁵⁸

In a different sentence, on the other hand, he would point at hereditary features: “I can create a tradition of truth, order, diligence, honesty, sincerity; however, I am not able to change a child from what he is. A willow remains a willow, an oak remains an oak and a burdock remains a burdock. I can bring out what hides inside a soul but I cannot create anything new”.⁵⁹

In the last sentences of *Prawo dziecka do szacunku* (“A Child’s Right to Respect”) he wrote: “A new generation is growing up, a new wave is gathering. They appear with their vices and virtues. Give them conditions for better development. We shall not win a suit against a casket containing diseased heredity; we cannot tell a cornflower to be grain. We are no performers of miracles — we do not want to be quacks. We renounce the deceptive longing for perfect children. We demand: do away with hunger, cold, dampness, stench, overcrowding, overpopulation. It is you who begot the sick and the crippled, you who create the conditions for rebellion and contagion”.⁶⁰

Korczak expressed his ideas in a similar manner in the *Szkola Specjalna* (“The Special School”) in an article “Złodziejaszek” (“A Little Brigand”), writing: “One needs to travel a long road of observing and solitary musing, laboriously exploring many fields of study, grow honestly conscious of the imperfection of human nature and written laws, assess the meagre forces and means at the teacher’s disposal — to be able to look without resentment or fear on that last link in the chain of experience. Not my fault. Not for me to remedy. Beyond my strength. My responsibility is to rear, save, shield, defend against the wrong, preserve until they grow up. When they do — let the courts, police, and jails have their way. Too bad. I am responsible for my charge’s present, and have no authority to influence and interfere in his future fortunes.” Korczak claimed: “I will not litigate with the coffins of unidentified heredity, with its unknown instincts and urges. I cannot undertake to remove the scars and wounds of earliest childhood. I am no quack, no witch doctor — merely a hygienist. I provide conditions conducive to recovery [...]. Let him experience the joy of small and isolate victories. I help him with the sweet atmosphere of my boarding school”.⁶¹

⁵⁸ J. Korczak, „Dzieci występne w wieku przedszkolnym”, *Szkola specjalna*, no. 1–4, 1924/1925, p. 242.

⁵⁹ S. Wołoszyn, *Korczak*, pp. 61–62.

⁶⁰ J. Korczak, *Prawo dziecka do szacunku*, Biuro Rzecznika Praw Dziecka, Warszawa 2012, p. 43.

⁶¹ J. Korczak, “Złodziejaszek”, in *Szkola Specjalna*, no. 3, 1925, p. 156 i 157; see also *Szkola Specjalna*, no. 3, 1931/1932, p. 112 (In the article “Niepoprawni” Korczak pointed at the issue of heredity: “And those innate ‘evil tendencies’. From the same soil the raspberry draws sweetness and the nettle poison. Ethical dyscrasia, sick heredity. But do our forecasts work out? Does not reform appear precisely at that point where we have given up, just when we have thought it to be the least possible? Is it not the outcome of undiscerned stimuli, frequently imperceptible? Why did one whom we thought doomed recover, and one on whom we had pinned our hopes fail? For over and above the noxious secretions acquired — from the drunkard-father and harlot-mother — there are also the anonymous forces inherited from the grandfathers and great-grandfathers”).

THE DILEMMA OF RELIGIOUSNESS

The subject of Korczak's social origin has already been discussed above. Although the issue might have been of importance during his school years (*numerus clausus*), it lost its relevance in his adult life. In his contemporary times Polish society used to be multicultural as Poles constituted only 65% of the community (note the borders of the Republic of Poland at the turn of nineteenth and twentieth centuries). Even a close reading of Korczak's literary legacy does not provide us with any clear proof of his following of any particular religion. People close to Korczak, such as Stanisław Rogalski, frequently claimed that he neither showed his religiousness nor forced his pupils to religious practices⁶². Józef Aaron stated: "I think that Korczak as a physician and a thinker had faith close to this of Uriel Acosta, who had enough courage to stand against the spiritual dogma and to announce that human soul is made up of spirit and (living) blood..., that death ends it all and human existence is taken by soul..."⁶³.

Korczak was aware that religiousness constitutes a vital element of human life and the factor shaping human personality. While talking to Maryna Falska — popular due to her left-wing views — once he heard that she had no intention of raising her children in a religious spirit, he asked her: "So what do you intend to offer to them instead?"⁶⁴

I tend to think that he explained the matter in "Spowiedź motyla" ("Confessions of a Butterfly"): "I am not a believer as such, I reject (religious) services. But I have faith in God and prayer. I defend these, because one cannot live without them. Man cannot be but a blind chance [...]. Oh Lord! I believe; I am not strong enough to think. I believe. I do not wish to analyse the heart of faith. I believe... I want to be Your servant and slave, to be ash. I believe"⁶⁵.

In another, very personal and poetic book *Sam na sam z Bogiem. Modlitwy tych, którzy się nie modlą* ("Face to Face with God. Prayers of Those Who Do Not Pray") one can find words of longing, perhaps even of worship: "I have found you God, I am full of joy like a lost child [...] like a child given away to wrong people finally finding the embrace of a beloved, caressed by the sound of their heartbeat. Who is there to blame that because of a joyful play I drifted away from you God? [...]. Through many of your helpers, subordinates... who were pushing away, separating, wouldn't let me — I strove to reach you God [...]. Through earthly temptations, sensual storms, false prophets — to You"⁶⁶.

In *Senat szaleńców* ("A Senate of Madmen") he claimed, quite pessimistically: "only the lonely and the sad need faith — there are many of them in the wide square"⁶⁷. In the same play the Old man says: "They do not feel faith any more, they study it. [...]. The prayer is interrupted by a phone call [...]. A fortune teller replaces God's voice,

⁶² E. Dauzenroth, *Janusz Korczak...*, p. 120 (according to Rogalski, Korczak was of the opinion that a child should not be introduced to religious practices along with the whole group. In "Nasz Dom" (for Polish children) only 10% of children took part in religious services, and only those who expressed their will to do so).

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 131.

⁶⁴ H. Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, *Janusz Korczak*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1978, p. 126.

⁶⁵ E. Dauzenroth, *Janusz Korczak...*, pp. 111–112 (he also wrote: "I cry: oh, bright ideal! [the world: nothing but cravings]... pure friendship... brotherly love... comforting hope! [and the world: mother of fools]...").

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 121–122.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

a toothbrush is more important than a holy medal [...]. No worship, no humility [...]. Once it came to a sickness, they sought shelter but now they have vaccinations [...]. The true God vanished bit by bit from human thought [...]. Seeing He is no longer needed, grew sick of people, drifted away, stepped aside, is lost".⁶⁸

The most emphatic, personal expression of Korczak's faith may be found in *Pamiętnik* ("Memoirs"): "Good Lord! Thank you, Good Lord, for a meadow, colourful sunsets, for a cool western breeze after a hot day of work. Thank you, Good Lord, for having ordered all so wisely, that the flowers are fragrant, the glow-worms glow upon the earth, the stars sparkle in the sky. How joyous is old age. What a delectable silence. Delectable repose"⁶⁹.

In 1934 and 1936 Korczak visited Israel. He was impressed by nature and cultural discrepancies. He wrote in *Notatki palestyńskie* ("Palestinian Notes"): "A different approach to God and morality. Different flora... Different food. Everything is so miserably foreign. I tried to talk to the Palestinian forest as I was taking a walk in the morning, but we could not understand each other..."⁷⁰

His fascination with the Bible was visible in the books he gave to his friends, namely: *Nowy Testament Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa* (Warsaw 1933), *Psalterz Dawidów* by Jan Kochanowski (Warsaw 1924), *Melodie biblijne* by Kornel Ujejski (Warsaw 1924). Korczak was also familiar with books by W. Szczepański, *Palestyna za czasów Chrystusa* (Vienna 1929), P. Sédir, *Wykłady Ewangelii* (translation, Warsaw 1922).⁷¹

In Palestine Korczak did sightseeing, talked to Christian monks, wandered the streets of Jerusalem. At the same time he was making detailed notes.

AFTERWORD

In the motto to *Kajtuś czarodziej* ("Kaytek the Wizard") Korczak claimed: "Life is strange. Life is like a strange dream. Whoever has a strong will and determination to serve others, his life will be a beautiful dream. No matter how difficult the road, no matter how anxious his thoughts".⁷²

In *Pamiętnik* ("Memoirs") — created behind the walls of the Warsaw ghetto — he wrote: "I never wish ill to anyone. I cannot. I don't know how it's done".⁷³

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

⁶⁹ J. Korczak, *Pamiętnik, Pisma zebrane*, vol. 4, Warszawa 1986, p. 13.

⁷⁰ E. Dauzenroth, *Janusz Korczak...*, p. 126.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 126–127.

⁷² J. Korczak, *Kajtuś czarodziej*, Siedmioróg, Warszawa 1997 (he also wrote: "So strange and mysterious is every human thought. So strange and mysterious is the world. So strange and mysterious is life: often miserable, but sometimes beautiful and joyful" (s. 128)).

⁷³ J. Korczak, *Myśli*, PIW, Warszawa 1987, s. 36.

Jacek Kulbaka

KORCZAKOWSKIE DYLEMATY.
W KRĘGU TEORII I PRAKTYKI PEDAGOGICZNEJ

Streszczenie

Artykuł zawiera liczne informacje związane z dzieciństwem, młodością, czasem nauki, praktyki lekarskiej, pracy wychowawczej i działalności pedagogicznej Janusza Korczaka (Henryka Goldszmita). Zamysłem autora było przedstawienie postaci Starego Doktora w kontekście wyborów życiowych przed którymi wielokrotnie stawał w swoim bogatym w liczne zdarzenia i ostatecznie tragicznie zakończonym życiu. Ukazano to w podrozdziałach, obejmujących dylematy związane z: pochodzeniem i statusem społecznym, powołaniem zawodowym i drogą życiową Korczaka, teorią i praktyką w zakresie jego pracy pedagogicznej, twórczością pisarską, wreszcie rolą wiary i znaczeniem uwarunkowań genetycznych w aspekcie rozwoju jednostki i ich wpływu na kształcenie i wychowanie dzieci.