

## LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY FOR STREET CHILDREN

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**ABSTRACT:** The issue is around Janusz Korczak's life history, and his dedication to street children in Warsaw, where he developed a pedagogical practice of renewing family affections – a philosophy of love – among street children, mainly those without family and homeless. For this research, we visited the old orphanages Dom Sierot and Nasz Dom, which was followed by a bibliographic review. The main topic deals with the philosophical practice started with Rousseau's writings and widespread among educators in the late nineteenth century – when they began to make strong criticism against traditional teaching methods, as well as when new practices began to be developed by writers who sought valuing the child as the main focus in education.

**Keywords:** Affections. Education. Street children. Janusz Korczak. Warsaw.

### UMA FILOSOFIA DO AMOR PELAS CRIANÇAS DE RUA

**RESUMO:** O artigo trata das questões relacionadas à história de vida de Janusz Korczak e sua dedicação às crianças de rua em Varsóvia, onde desenvolveu uma prática pedagógica de renovação dos afetos familiares por meio de uma filosofia de amor entre as crianças de rua, principalmente aquelas sem família e sem-teto. Para esta pesquisa, visitamos os antigos orfanatos Dom Sierot e Nasz Dom, seguindo-se uma revisão bibliográfica do autor. A questão central gira em torno da prática filosófica que começou com os escritos de Rousseau e se espalhou entre os educadores no final do século XIX, quando se iniciaram fortes críticas aos métodos tradicionais de ensino e, por sua vez, escritores começaram a desenvolver novas práticas que buscavam valorizar a criança com o foco principal na educação.

**Palavras-chave:** Afetos. Educação. Crianças da rua. Janusz Korczak. Varsóvia.

### UNA FILOSOFÍA DEL AMOR POR LOS NIÑOS DE LA CALLE

**RESUMEN:** Las cuestiones de este artículo están relacionados con la historia de vida de Janusz Korczak y su dedicación a los niños de las calles en Varsovia, donde desarrolló una práctica pedagógica de renovar los afectos familiares por una filosofía de amor, entre los niños de las calles, principalmente aquellos sin

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\*The article resulted from Postdoctoral studies at the University of Warsaw, financed by Capes/Brazil.

**Section Editor:** Pedro Goergen

familia y sin hogar. Para esta investigación, visitamos los antiguos orfanatos Dom Sierot y Nasz Dom, siguiéndose una revisión bibliográfica a cerca del autor. El tema principal gira en torno a la práctica filosófica que comenzó con los escritos de Rousseau y se extendió entre los educadores a fines del siglo XIX, cuando comenzó a hacer fuertes críticas a los métodos de enseñanza tradicionales, y los escritores comenzaron a desarrollar nuevas prácticas que buscan valorar al niño con el foco principal en la educación.

**Palabras-clave:** Afectos. Educación. Niños de la calle. Janusz Korczak. Varsovia.

## Introduction

Street children are humans in the most vulnerable situation, because there are no adults responsible for them, and they cannot be held responsible for themselves. Raised in the context of irresponsibility, they do not always manage to have an adult person of reference. As a result, we started to write this article based in the first book written by Janusz Korczak, in 1901, *Street Children (Dzieci Ulicy)*, in which he already demonstrates his main study interests: children. In said book, the author describes street children in Warsaw and mentions that the fate of a street child is difficult and unfair, due to hunger, beatings, overwork, alcohol, prostitution, prison, and, because of the social indifference, it is not easy to get out of this vicious circle.

Those children suffer from the lack of adult supervision in human formation, which accounts for the fact that they often grow up without references of affections, support, security, and encouragement. In addition to the lack of material benefits, they also lack the emotional ones. We know that not all children have good adult references, but we cannot oppose that they all need it while passing through the formative time of life.

The main issues of this text relate to the pedagogical practice of one of the most well-known educators of the interwar period – Janusz Korczak –, especially in Warsaw, where he developed a teaching practice with street children. Korczak was an educator who survived World War I by working as Army doctor, and after dedicated his life to care for the children left homeless by the war, even sacrificing his life for them during World War II. His work and life are marked by the presence of Polish children. It appears in his writings, first about his own childhood, and later, when he was already studying medicine, about his intervention in paediatrics. Then, increasingly, he got closer the children's lives, sharing the same roof and, what is more, going to the death camp in Treblinka alongside his pupils.

Although Shner (2018) does not agree with approximating Korczak's philosophy to Rousseau's. The author prefers to say that Korczak's is stoic and is rooted in nature. He situated the Polish-Jewish educator in philosophy as follows:

The apparently missing paradigm of Korczak's legacy left Korczak in the margins of the field of Philosophy of Education. Korczak is rarely taught in academic Philosophy of Education courses. His legacy is marginal at teacher education programs, overshadowed by figures like John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jean Piaget, John Dewey, Martin Buber, Alexander Sutherland Neill and Paulo Freire. More frequent, his name is mentioned in the context of Genocide Studies, as a martyr of the Holocaust of the Jewish people (SHNER, 2018, p. 86).

Our intention is to remove the centrality of the holocaust in Korczak's life and to present the context of his pedagogical acting by highlighting some details of his life aiming to provide understanding of how they influenced his practices with children from an early age. Subsequently, we will also discuss other educators

who were important for the formation of his pedagogical thinking, which consists of a philosophical practice of love for children. Unlike Shner, we believe that the main educators of reference for Korczak are Jean Jacques Rousseau and Johann Pestalozzi.

This paper aims to deal with a philosophical practice that started with the writings of Rousseau and widespread among educators in the late nineteenth century, when they began to make strong criticism against the traditional teaching methods, as well as when new practices began to be developed by those that sought to value the child as the main subject of education. For Rousseau (1995), we are born sensitive and, since our birth, are harassed in various ways by what surrounds us, including school, that which can be, among other institutions, a threaten to our sensibility.

To live is not to breathe but to act. It is to make use of our organs, our senses, our faculties, of all the parts of ourselves which give us the sentiment of our existence. The man who has lived the most is not he who has counted the most years but he who has most felt life (ROUSSEAU, 1995, p. 17).

Rousseau began to perceive the educational action in another way; he considered emotions, feelings, and affections as necessary elements, capable of making education a more meaningful case. Said educator also adds that the period of life begun at birth and lasting to the age of 12 is the most dangerous in human life, because it is the moment that errors and addictions germinate. Therefore, it is up to education to preserve the child's heart from addiction and the spirit of error, and it seems that, when checking Korczak's pedagogical practices, this was his intention. In agreement with Rousseau's writings, Swiss educator Pestalozzi says that love develops children's self-education. Thus, love can be a strong motivating element for children to study. For this reason, the school should be an extension of the family, including affections from home. At school, Rousseau adds that his students always leave him some pleasant image. With this positive opinion on the child, the authors strive to understand the children's universe, mainly from a theoretical point of view. We cannot say that Rousseau developed intense practices with orphaned children, but it should be noted that *Emile of On Education* – the protagonist of one of the most important of all of his writings – was an orphan.

## Korczak's Action in Warsaw

In the direction of pedagogical action, inspired by Rousseau, we can highlight the works of Pestalozzi and Janusz Korczak, the latter having been born in downtown Warsaw. In order to get to know Korczak's practice, we paid a visit to the aforementioned orphanages, where we could collect data through interviews and photographs. We also collected digitized data, as well as tried to appropriately employ the data of other research, already developed, to advance the issues presented here.

The Dom Sierot orphanage was organized for children by Polish-Jewish doctor Janusz Korczak along with Stefania Wilczynska, also an educator from a Polish-Jewish family, at 92 Krochmalna St. (currently 6 Jaktorowska St.). Dom Sierot was founded in 1912, and operated at this address until 1942, when was transferred by the Nazis to 33 Chłodna St. After a year, the children and educators were moved again, to a building situated in 16 Siennej 9/Śliska St. Currently, the Palace of Culture and Science occupies the spot and a memorial plaque has been placed near the entrance to the Lalka Theatre. Also, a statue of Janusz Korczak has been placed in the Świętokrzyski Park, Warsaw.

It is important to stress here that Dom Sierot (Fig. 1) was created to attend children of Jewish-Polish families whose could not always attend the same schools as Polish children. Although Fig. 2 has been taken in

the small exhibition exposed in the current great hall of Dom Sierot, which corresponds to the former refectory of the orphanage, the photo portrays children from another orphanage – who cared for Polish children, mostly orphans, and, therefore, also known as children of war. To care for those children, it was also founded by doctor Korczak, with Maryna Falska – a pedagogue who he met on a mission during WWI in Ukraine –, the Nasz Dom (Our Home), which was based on the same pedagogical model, similar values, and organisational system as Dom Sierot, for Polish children from working-class families, opened in 1919, in Pruszków, and subsequently, in 1928, moved to a new place in Bielany, (figs. 3 and 4) currently Al. Zjednoczenia 34.

It is important to discuss the pedagogy that Korczak developed in Dom Sierot, where the children were educated in the same language spoken by Korczak, the Polish. Although coming from families quite



Source: Photograph taken by the author in December 6th, 2019.

**Figures 1 and 2.** Dom Sierot, in Warsaw



Source: Photograph taken by the author in December 18th, 2019.

**Figures 3 and 4.** Nasz Dom in Warsaw

assimilated to Poland, the children had room for reading the sacred texts of Torah with the guidance of a priest as a moment for the practice of religion. They also had the right to spend spring and summer at Rozyczka Country House (the name of the house was Rose – in honour the deceased daughter of the owners Maksymilian Cohen and his wife, who donated the property to orphan children).

Since there were only a few parks in the interwar period in Warsaw which were not always open to Jews, the Rozyczka Country House was a perfect space for children to have the opportunity to be in touch with nature. Adept of Rousseau's philosophy, contact with nature was also a principle of Korczak's education. It meant that the children could be in direct contact with the land, especially in the act of cultivating vegetables, and harvesting fruits. 'By adding art to nature, we become more ingenious and no less skilful. If, instead of keeping a child at his books, I keep him busy in a workshop, his hands labor to his mind's advantage: while he regards himself only as a workman he is growing into a philosopher' (ROUSSEAU, 1899, p. 140).

As Rousseau, Korczak had a concern with the spirit of the people, reason why he was keen to promote contact with nature, especially on hot days and having direct contact with each child of the orphanage. Over the years, the coordinator of Dom Sierot realized that the children and adolescents who stayed in the house until the age of 14 had little private space, considering that in the house there were only two large bedrooms, one for girls and one for boys. Hence, beyond Rozyczka Country House, he gave the opportunity for each child to have a private space by installing a large wooden cupboard with drawers in the refectory, one for each child, and no one could move the drawers but himself.

Within, children could keep all their belongings, including postcards received for good behaviour in the house (*e. g.*, wake up early and/or comply with house cleaning rules). Shlomo Nadel, one of the orphans of the house who managed to leave Poland before the Jewish orphanage was moved to the Ghetto, wrote in his book years later:

Dr. Korczak believed that a sound education did not overlook any minor details and that the rules and customs of the place should be simple and structured for every child. This approach was evident in the strict daily routine of the Korczak's House. At the orphanage, I learned the meaning of the words 'order' and 'organization' for the first time in my life. Playing and having fun went hand in hand with work, responsibility, and rules (SHLOMO, 2015, p. 10).

Korczak's pupil recognized in his master someone who taught values that were paramount for the rest of his life. As an example, he talks about his routine at the orphanage on 92 Krochmalna Street, in Warsaw: 'I had other responsibilities too, such as distributing food at meals, collecting dishes and cleaning tables. Sometimes I scrubbed the parquet floor in the bedroom, and the floor monitor would check to see if I had done my work properly' (SHLOMO, 2015, p. 10).

Shlomo Nadel was the son of Josef and Gila Nadel, and was born in the year 1920, in Warsaw. His father died when he was the age of 4 and his mother, unable to care for her children, placed Shlomo in the orphanage in 1927, where he stayed until he was 16 years-old. Author of one of Korczak's biographies, Nadel describes, in some passages of the book, how important would be, in his later life, the education he received at the orphanage in the aspect of not to feel the absence of the father he lost so early in life. In another passage, Nadel, who lived then in Tel Aviv, describes the educator's encounters with the children (*e. g.*, dialogues, agreements, daytrips, and other pedagogical actions). The author presents with emotion a narrative about the relationships of affection that were created and maintained for the rest of his life:

Once in a while, on a Thursday, when he returned late from the children's journal 'Maly Przegląd', he would pop into a pastry shop and buy some Turkish bread with raisins. Then he

would quietly slip into our bedroom when we were already in bed, walk around, break off pieces of bread, and leave a piece for each of us. While he was doing this, he signalled to us to eat quietly and not to leave crumbs, so that Stefa would not discover what we had done. He knew, of course, that eating in bed was forbidden, but allowed himself to behave like a child and have some fun. I will never forget that sweet taste of the secret bread and the pleasant feeling of the moment when we chewed it. I felt a powerful closeness and love for Korczak, just like a younger brother feels towards his older sibling. On birthdays, each one of us would find a packet of sweets and cakes waiting at his place in the dining room. Most of the children did not remember their dates of birth because they were so young, and nobody celebrated their birthdays where they came from anyway. But Doctor Korczak was pedantic about checking up the dates in the office records and bought the sweets with his own money at one of the expensive pastry shops in Warsaw (SHLOMO, 2015, p. 23).

Therefore, it is worth to accentuate here that, in the children's opinion, Korczak often behaved himself like a child, breaking the rules of the orphanage, while Mrs. Stefka was a much stricter educator. Also, we cannot forget the role of other educators who worked along Korczak, maintaining the orphanage. Even the attitude of the educator to break the rules of the orphanage are interpreted by the researchers of his work as full of pedagogical intentions towards children, but also towards young people.

La pedagogía de Korczak considera los cambios que se están produciendo en la educación y el discurso social sobre y para los derechos del niño en el mundo. Históricamente, es una figura necesaria tanto para niños como para adultos. Fue un verdadero educador de adultos y cuidador, que llenó la vida diaria de los niños y niñas con la práctica de escuchar, estar presente, co-participar en su desarrollo y apoyar este desarrollo (MARKOWSKA-MANISTA; ZAKRZEWSKA-OLEDZKA, 2019, p. 297).

In relation to children's emotions, Korczak put together an experiment that would later reverberate in some pedagogical action which should benefit marginalized children. About this, Markowska-Manista and Zakrzewska-Oledzka (2019), when exposing Korczak's thoughts, highlight the educator's words that, in education, everything is an experiment, an attempt to encourage and prevent, but also to accelerate and delay the child's development. An attempt that must be careful, prudent, and not dangerous. The educator states that the entire educational system is an attempt to try new pedagogical actions which could benefit the children who, due to their social conditions, live in vulnerable situations.

Recollecting Rousseau's concept, it is clear that said educator strongly defends childhood, calling for humanity, as the period, although short, of the enjoyment of life. He states that, if children do not enjoy this period, certainly will not have other opportunities for enjoyment. For Rousseau (1995), sensitive children would be closer to feeling happiness, or at least would be the ones to suffer less from the selfishness of life, for the serene soul would probably enjoy life better than the one who seeks to excel in front of humanity.

## About Janusz Korczak's Life

Janusz Korczak—or Henryk Goldszmit, as recorded on his birth certificate—always used two dates to prove his birthday, because, in fact, not even his father knew whether he was born on July 22nd, 1878 or 1879, since he was registered only later. Regardless, the boy Henryk had a rather lonely childhood, and the books

were his refuge, where he could find and procreate his philosophy of life, that which is caring for others—the children—with love. Thus, he developed a philosophy of love for children, considering affections, and emotions.

Korczak was not a boy close to his father, but distant because his father was only concerned with securing the supply of material goods and neglecting the intimate relationship with the family, as well as emotional and spiritual comfort. He was eleven when he took his father to a psychiatric hospital for the first time. After years, he would write in his diary, 'I was terrified of the crazy hospital, to which my father was referred to several times. So, I am the son of a madman? So, I have a hereditary genetic burdened to madness? Several decades and so far, this thought bothers me sometimes' (KORCZAK, 1958, p. 82).

On the other hand, he was awfully close to her mother, whose memory extends to her childhood when walked in Saski Park, a garden not far from her home. Son of a progressive mother, Korczak had a great love for her, who, after widowing, opened her home to host students from public and private schools, who she also helped with learning and homework. Korczak lived for many years with his mother, and her death, in 1920, was a great martyrdom for him, because he felt so guilty. Her mother Cylilia took her son's typhus when he cared for her. Korczak was contaminated by typhus during an epidemic in the hospital while working in Ukraine, during World War I.

The father, born in Lublin, eastern Poland, and the mother in Kalisz, west of the capital, went to live in Warsaw aiming to try and consolidate a professional career. The parents of Janusz and his sister, Lili, met in Warsaw, where their children were born, and first lived in a building that no longer exists in Bielańska Street, near Długa Street. Between 1886 and 1897, Henryk studied in his first school, the Gymnasium, in the Prague District. Korczak wrote that Augustyn Szmurło School was located on Freta St.: 'They smashed pupil there.' The humiliation that he experienced turned him into a stark opponent of corporal punishment in schools.

Korczak had been preparing his literary sensibility ever since he was a child, because he considered reading a remedy for his family's problems. He was a reader of Polish novels, such as the ones by Józef Kraszewski, Gabriela Zapolska, and Henryk Sienkiewicz, but also Goethe's *Faust*, and the Victor Hugo's books. One of the fascinations that remained until the end of his life was *Tyrteusz*, by Władysław Ludwik Anczyc. Besides those, he also read the pedagogical books by Rousseau and Pestalozzi, as well as medical works. He was also a reader of Marx's *Capital*, out of which he took the expression 'barefoot proletarians for their children' – those who lost their parents in World War I. Passionate about literature, he tried to bring the same passion to children, by publishing what they themselves wrote in newspapers, journals, and radio shows.

In 1896, when his father died, he lost the material comfort of the house where he lived. Korczak, along his mother and sister, needed to relocate to a simpler home. The young man who liked literature began working as a teaching tutor early on. At the age of 20, he went to the medical school of the Imperial University of Warsaw. In 1901, as a result of his human sensibility, Korczak published his debut novel *Street Children*. During the course of the medicine course, he worked as a paediatrician at Bersonów and Baumanów, a hospital for children where he was extremely empathetic to his students and hospitalized children, demonstrating that human sensitivity was necessary for connecting to other people.

## The Philosophy of Love in Dom Sierot

For Korczak, there are not children, but people, who should be treated with respect, rights and duties the same way as adults, because, in the child's soul, there is the germ of all adults' thoughts and feelings, precisely the ones that should be developed. Korczak included his pedagogical ideas mainly in the tetralogy of *How to*

*Love a Child* (1920), *Almost a Child to Respect*, (1929), *Prawidłach życia* (1930), and *Playful Pedagogy* (1939), works that perhaps can collaborate most with pedagogy. These are works that address the recognition of the child as a subject of law from birth—the child is recognized as a full person, worthy of respect in all stages of life.

Korczak developed along Stefania Wilczyńska, in *Dom Sierot*, and Maria Falska, in *Nasz Dom*, a pedagogical practice that, in Warsaw, became known as 'Korczakian methods', which also inspired practices in other countries in elementary and early childhood education, like Reggio Emilia, in Italy. In its method, the set of children's rights was central. Among them, were included the rights to respect, ownership, secrets, ignorance, failures, and tears, as well as the right to express their own opinions, thoughts, feelings, and the right to live in the present.

This also becomes clear both when we watch the movie produced about Korczak and directed by Andrzej Wajda in 1990 and in his book *Król Maciuś Pierwszy*, in English *King, Matt the First*, published in 1923, where he alerts about dilemmas and difficulties of adult life. The protagonist of the book is a 10-year-old boy who, after his father's death, inherits the throne and tries to organize a country devastated by 'The Big War'. The book presents politics, including the theme of corruption among the children who are getting to know the system, as well as the theme of participation in politics. When reading *King Matt*, we perceive the protagonism of children in issues very much focused on adults, such as politics. It is interesting, in this book, that the reader can get in touch with issues hitherto thought by adults, but from a child's point of view. Again, this reverberates with the compactness of Rousseau's ideas, who said that nothing is better than a lively child and nothing is more pious than an afraid child.

Pestalozzi's reader, Korczak has devoted, since his early writings, an affection for the poorest children, especially those without family. Pestalozzi was a reference for his pedagogical practice, developed in the orphanages through where he passed, but also for his direct relationship with people and children. This appeared in the numerous writings he left, always accompanied by reflections. Moreover, the educator used writing to reflect on the practice he developed in daily life. Writing was Korczak's relaxation. While the children slept, he retreated to his room, which was in the loft of *Dom Sierot*, to rest, and rested by writing.

The affection in Korczak's pedagogy demonstrates the practice of a paternal loving philosophy towards the orphaned children—something that explains his admiration for Pestalozzi, who was heir to the humanist philosophy of Jean Jacques Rousseau and one of the modern educators most concerned with affections, especially maternal ones. For Pestalozzi, it is love that elevates the process of self-education in children. The only natural passion for man is self-love, or self-love taken in a broad sense. This love is good for us, and it is in childhood that we need to make good use of it.

Pestalozzi and Korczak had one point in common: they were responsible for the poor children living on the streets. During the French invasion of Switzerland, at the end of the eighteenth century, many children wandered in the Unterwalden Canton on the shores of Lake Lucerne, orphans and homeless. Pestalozzi gathered many of them into an abandoned convent and began to educate them. Both educators presented a pedagogy of love as something needed, through which children rediscovered affections to regain confidence in themselves. This was a strategy used by both educators, who believed that education could save lives, or more, provide children with a better life. Johann Pestalozzi had a close thought about Jean Jacques Rousseau, who said that man is born good by nature, but society perverts him. Based on this same thought, Pestalozzi recommends that education should follow the course of nature. Thus, the child's growth should follow its own law. Education is indispensable for preparing the individual to society, reason why rulers and kings must understand that it is indispensable for a society fairer and less violent.

For Pestalozzi, affection in the early years was essential for the development of children.

Neither at the first point, nor in the whole series of means of teaching, do I leave to chance what Nature, circumstance, or motherlove may present to the sense of the child before he can speak.

I have done all I could to make it possible, by omitting accidental characteristics, to bring the essentials of knowledge gained by sense-impression to the child's senses before that age, and to make the conscious impressions he receives, unforgettable (PESTALOZZI, 1894, p. 146).

If to Janusz Korczak's pedagogical philosophy was to love the children, the importance of the development of affection in children from the earliest years was also central to his work in the Warsaw orphanages: an education that gives children opportunities to feel life for the most beautiful thing it can offer—love. The love for children was evident in Pestalozzi's practices in old Zurich, as well as Korczak's in Warsaw before World War II. Pelzer (1987) highlights that, for Korczak, every man must act to combat evil and suffering. The daily struggle against them, though tiring and endless, was certainly a good cause. Therefore, despite all the setbacks in his life, he sought to realize the idea of changing the world.

Korczak was deeply convinced that this transformation needed to begin with the things of childhood, *i. e.*, in the battle for equal rights for children, not only social but also psychologically. On this account, he endeavoured under all circumstances, even those of extreme difficulty, acting as journalist, writer, organizer, and educator in order to be a social reformer. He was dubbed good man of Krochmalna Street, father of foreign children, best friend of children, advocate of children's rights, genius educator, Pestalozzi of Warsaw, Polish Pestalozzi, and the pioneer of modern education.

We have no doubt that Korczak was a humanist who loved children. As so far seen, he was a children's doctor, writer, educator, and philosopher. He dedicated his life to showing to adults that kids have the same priorities, interests, and feelings as them, and hence needed also to be lawful. Korczak was an educator whose works on children's rights should be further investigated. Sometimes, one may seek the history of the educators in Holocaust and may forget their pupils, children who inspired life to the pedagogical practice. In a letter written on March 30th, 1937, and addressed to his friend Mieczysław Zylbertal, who lived in Palestine, Korczak wrote: 'Tomé la decisión de no crear mi propia familia, de no tener esposa ni hijos, sino de dedicar toda la fuerza que me queda a los niños que estarán bajo mi cuidado'<sup>1</sup> (KORCZAK apud MARKOWSKA-MANISTA; ZAKRZEWSKA-OLEDZKA, 2019, p. 298).

Knowing his life story facilitates, thus, the understanding of his pedagogical actions towards children, for, through the story of Korczak's life, especially his childhood, children will become his focus of interest. Korczak tried to do a childhood pedagogy based on love and, in that, his pedagogical practice came close to the pedagogical writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Men be human! It is your highest duty; be humane to all conditions of men, to every age, to everything does not alien to mankind. What higher wisdom is there for you than humanity? Love childhood; encourage its sports, its pleasures, its lovable instincts. Who among us has not at times looked back with regret to the age when a smile was continually on our lips, when the soul was always at peace? Why should we rob these little innocent creatures of the enjoyment of a time so brief, so transient, of a boon so precious, which they cannot misuse? Why will you fill with bitterness and sorrow these fleeting years which can no more return to them than to you? Do you know, you fathers, the moment when death awaits your children? Do not store up for yourselves remorse, by taking from them the brief moments nature has given them. As soon as they can appreciate the delights of existence, let them enjoy it. At whatever hour God may call them, let them not die without having tasted life at all (ROUSSEAU, 1889, p. 42).

In spite of emphasizing childhood as most precious phase of our lives, the educators did not disregard the school as a place where children spend a large part of their time. As a result, Korczak (1930a)

did not fail to criticize schools, recognizing in their space the lack of the philosophy of love. When writes about school, the educator points out that most textbooks are written for adults by adults, as well as that the children, who spend a good part of their life there, leave school the same way they entered—silent and subservient. He also adds that, when talking to some students, they often complain about the school— there are not many praises—, and others believe that it can help one to have a better future, but nobody knows how to think of another model of school than this one that is already ready and the only recognized place to study.

## Conclusion

Korczak wrote about love: 'I exist not to be loved and admired, but to love and act. It is not the duty of those around me to love me. Rather, it is my duty to be concerned about the world, about man' (KORCZAK, 1978, p. 44). Thus, we can see that this life dedicated to child, which we called Philosophy of Love, crosses the limits of his life. This was evidenced when he was presented with the chance to live by Nazis, but preferred death along his pupils. Korczak was an educator who went through two major world wars—I and II. He knew (and lived with) human perversity, reason why he maybe had chosen not to have children or a wife, but to devote to the children of others, especially when those others were not able to take responsibility as educators, tutors, not even parents. He used his medical, educational, and literary knowledge to help children, possibly because he believed in them more than in adults. He took pedagogical actions daily with street children, who were deprived of a responsible adult.

As aforementioned, Korczak tried to bring hope to the children of Dom Sierot until the last moments of their lives. Upon receiving the information that they would be transferred to the Treblinka Camp, he asked the children to wear their best clothes, because they would make a trip, but he did not tell the destination. He bravely went hand in hand with the children to board the train that ended their lives the next day. Yet, we want to point out here that, unlike only writing about a philosophy of love, Korczak has lived by its principles from the moment he learned how to read and found in it warmth for the loneliness caused by his father's lack of affection, to the last minutes of his life.

Finally, a lifetime dedicated to children can be found in sources that World War II cannot erase—above all, in the memories of those who stayed and chose to carry on and publicize their stories and practices. Nowadays, this is a history that can still be visited very closely, for example in the activities currently carried out in the Dom Sierot orphanage, which, in 2019, attended twenty children, and shows the continuity of history—*i. e.*, is still living by the legacy left by Korczak. Hence, we conclude that the philosophy of Janusz Korczak is not the result of a theory created in a four-walled office, but a loving practice held in Warsaw alleys, inspired by what educator Pestalozzi also put together years earlier in Zurich, under the influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau. They are pedagogical practices that cannot be forgotten. On the other hand, they must be remembered and resumed for humanization in the face of perverse times affected by Covid-19, which, to a certain extent, refer to the interwar period in terms of affective, social, and economic crises. Furthermore, the article should contribute with reflections on childhood in the war, since, after Russia's attacks on Ukraine, there may be a new wave of war orphans in a context close to the lived by Korczak.

## Note

1. In the original, "Podjąłem decyzję, by nie zakładać własnej rodziny, nie mieć żony, nie mieć własnych dzieci, tylko wszystkie siły, jakie mi zostały, poświęcić tym dzieciom, które będą pod moją opieką."

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**Received:** 19 July 2020

**Approved:** 24 Feb. 2022