

Little proletarians in Warsaw: from practices of Janusz Korczak to theories of Paulo Freire

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Abstract

This article discusses the theories and pedagogical practices of two great educators of the last century – Janusz Korczak and Paulo Freire. The first was a Polish Jew who spent much of his life at Warsaw, where he implemented his ideas on children’s education. Said ideas will be presented here as seen on the *Mały Przegląd* (*Little Review*), a journal founded in 1926 and extinguished in September 1939 with the outbreak of World War II. The second was a Brazilian educator made known for his work on the reading and writing of adult workers. Though Korczak worked with children and Freire with adults, they still had much in common since both fought for the right to education for the oppressed of their society. Furthermore, based on the *Little Review*, I analyse the social and economic profile of children readers; the role of teachers; and, finally, the educational concepts that permeated the work of both educators. To conclude, I present some ideas on social media that are organized through reading and writing capable of raising the social awareness of the disadvantaged.

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Keywords: developmental psychology; media and education; pedagogy of autonomy.

Resumen

Pequeños proletarios en Varsovia: de las prácticas de Janusz Korczak a las teorías de Paulo Freire

El artículo trata de las teorías y prácticas pedagógicas de dos grandes educadores del siglo pasado: Janusz Korczak y Paulo Freire. El primero fue un educador judío-polaco que vivió gran parte de su vida en Varsovia, donde implementó sus ideas sobre la educación de la primera infancia, que presentaremos con base en la revista fundada en 1926, y extinta con el estallido de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, en septiembre de 1939. El segundo era un educador brasileño conocido por ocuparse de los temas de lectura y escritura de los trabajadores adultos. Si Korczak trabajó con niños y Freire con adultos, nada los aleja, sino que los acerca porque están tratando del acceso a la educación para los oprimidos de la sociedad. En el artículo, desarrollo un análisis de "Little Review" para conocer el perfil social y económico de los lectores infantiles; el papel de los docentes; y, finalmente, los conceptos educativos que impregnaron a los dos educadores. Para concluir, presento algunas ideas sobre las redes sociales organizadas por medio de la lectura y de la escritura capaces de aumentar la conciencia social de los más pobres.

Palabras clave: medios de comunicación y educación; pedagogía de la autonomía; psicología del desarrollo.

Resumo

Pequeños proletários em Varsóvia: das práticas de Janusz Korczak às teorias de Paulo Freire

O artigo trata das teorias e práticas pedagógicas de dois grandes educadores do século passado – Janusz Korczak e Paulo Freire. O primeiro foi um educador judeu-polonês que viveu boa parte da sua vida em Varsóvia, onde implementou suas ideias sobre educação infantil, que apresentaremos com base no Maly Przegląd (Little Review) – um jornal fundado em 1926 e extinto em setembro de 1939, com a eclosão da Segunda Guerra Mundial. O segundo foi um educador brasileiro que se tornou conhecido por abordar as questões da leitura e escrita de trabalhadores adultos. Se Korczak trabalhou com crianças e Freire com adultos, nada os distancia, mas os aproxima pelo fato de tratarem do acesso à educação para os oprimidos da sociedade. No artigo, desenvolvo uma análise, baseada no Little Review, para compreender o perfil social e econômico de leitores infantis, o papel dos professores, e, finalmente, os conceitos educacionais que permearam os dois educadores. Para concluir, apresento algumas ideias sobre mídias sociais organizadas

através da leitura e da escrita capazes de elevar a consciência social daqueles menos favorecidos socialmente.

Palavras-chave: meios de comunicação e educação; pedagogia da autonomia; psicologia do desenvolvimento.

Introduction

This text focuses on the children and adolescents who collaborated with the *Mały Przegląd* journal (or *Little Review* in English) in the years 1926-1939, referred by Janusz Korczak as barefoot proletarians (hence this article's title). Little proletarians were children oppressed during the interwar period at Warsaw. Throughout the paper, as I develop the concept of oppressed, I will also present some of Paulo Freire's ideas in order to interface between these two educators.

In 1917, at Warsaw, the journal *Nasz Kurier* (*Our Post*) was created for the Jewish community; however, a few years later, in 1920, it was replaced by the *Nasz Przegląd* (*Our Review*). The later targeted primarily the Jewish elite or Polonized Jews, having being organized by a high echelon of journalists and theatre critics, such as Jakub Appenzlak and Natan Szwalbe. Between 1924 and 1939, the journal was published daily at a price of approximately eight cents of dollar. At its peak, 50,000 copies were distributed among the Polish-Jewish community and abroad, often translated into Hebrew and Yiddish for the benefit of Orthodox Jews.

In 1926, the editors included to the Friday issue a supplement for the children of the Jewish community called *Mały Przegląd* (*Little Review*). Doctor Henryk Goldszmit, better known as Janusz Korczak, was chosen to edit it. Alongside Stefania Wilczyńska, Korczak had been the founder of the Orphaned Children's Home (Dom Sierot) at the 92 Krochmalna street in the year 1912, currently housing the Korczakianum Centre for Documentation and Research.

During World War I, Korczak spent some time doing medical service on the Eastern front. In Kiev, he met the Polish pedagogue and activist Maryna Falska who, after the loss of her husband and two-year-old daughter, had been dedicating her life to help homeless children and orphans affected by the conflict. In 1919, upon his return to Warsaw, Korczak gathered forces with Falska and Maria Podwysocka to found the Educational Centre for Children aimed at the sons and daughters of workers victimized by World War I.

Korczak relevance is made evident by his role during both World War I and II; nonetheless, he was also very active in the interwar period, as exemplified by his activities as mentor for the *Little Review*. He did not carry out his pedagogical activities alone though. Other educators aided him, as it was the case with Stefania Wilczyńska in Dom Sierot, as well as Maria Rogowska Falska and Maria Podwysocka in Nasz Dom. They helped

him to manage the children's homes and assumed the responsibility for it while Korczak participated in the war and while he was living in Palestine.

According to Olczak-Ronikier (2011, p. 36), Janusz Korczak was an introvert, who "never bothered anyone with his own affairs", never talked about feelings, and chose a solitary life. Rather he dedicated his life to children, even living at Dom Sierot for a long time. Some of the Janusz Korczak's most intense work happened in the interwar period and involved his activities and interactions with the children and teenagers cooperating with the *Little Review*.

Focused on this period, I will establish a reference between his ideas and those of Paulo Freire through three main categories: the relationship he established with the children; the conception of education; and a dialogue between the two educators. After a brief contextualization of Korczak's journal, I will present the social characteristics of the children with whom he worked, the inner workings of the *Little Review*, his approach to education, and the convergence between his and Freire's ideas. Finally, I will suggest some ideas for further research on the topics discussed here.

The organization of the *Little Review* in Warsaw

From childhood, Korczak found in reading an ail to his family problems. He used to read Polish novels by Józef Kraszewski, Gabriela Zapolska, Henryk Sienkiewicz, as well as the works of Goethe and Victor Hugo. One of his long-lasting fascinations was *Tyrteusz* by Wladyslaw Ludwik Anczyc. In addition, he read Marx's *Capital*, out of which he borrowed the expression "barefoot proletarians". Literature was a passion he sought to share with children by making them read their own writing. Thus he created a journal of children for children.

As editor for the *Little Review*, he described to the children the newspaper office facilities: that they operated at a large corner house, next to a playground, and to a lake that had boats and turned into an ice rink during winter. Supposedly, in the surroundings of the building, there were bicycles, cars, and airplanes that delivered letters from all over the world. It also had 12 telephone sets, which the children could use to make questions and register complaints. Three editors staffed the journal: a bald old man with glasses to maintain the order, a child-boy editor to listen to the boys; and a child-girl editor to listen to the girls. Korczak also wrote about his personal experiences and difficulties editing a journal with so many different sections. To get to know his future readers, he posed them some questions: What do you like to do? How do you spend your free time? What are your favourite games? Are you facing any problems? Are you a calm person? Do you learn well in school? Does anyone calls you lazy? Which classes do you attend at school? Where and with whom do you sit in the classroom? Do you have good teachers? Do your parents yell at you? Who are the people in your family? Do you have any siblings? Who is the oldest person in your family?

Even from *Little Review's* first issue, Korczak uses imagination and fantasy to reach out to children and adolescents. He presents the journal's office with creativity, posing questions with the intention of motivating children to write. Here we witness the concept of experience used by precursors of the New School, such as Célestin Freinet and John Dewey, as well as by the Russian pedagogue Nadezhda Krupskaya. Around the 1920s and 1930s, all of these sought to value children's experiences by focusing on education.

Still, Korczak differs from other educators of his time – he uses idioms and expressions common to children to enter their world, using his imagination to captivate young readers' imagination. This is illustrated by his book – *King Matt the First*¹ –, published in 1923, which discusses the hardships of adult life. The main character of the book is a ten-year-old boy who inherits the throne from his deceased father and tries to rule a country devastated by "the Big War". The book familiarizes children with politics, including issues like corruption among politicians. According to Witkowska-Krych (2014, p. 180), in its first year the journal received 5,000 letters, and after 10 years they had gathered approximately 45,000 letters from children living in Poland and other countries, like Palestine, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, and Mexico. Occasionally, they would receive letters from France, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and even Australia.²

In general, the letters concerned social issues, which is noticeable in the type of problems reported by the children^{3,4}.

There are three Jews in our class. Two of us live in complete harmony with our Catholic friends, we play with them, we do our homework together, we visit each other, we belong to circles and self-help. The third contrast from us. Always alone, silent and crazy: he will not play with us and will not play especially with Catholics. He always behaves with reluctance and wants to avoid Christians. I give this colleague as an example of my problem. (author's translation).

It is interesting to observe how children write about problems that are part of the adult world, approaching the essence of issues without manipulation. They show original inspiration and truth at the same time. To Freire (1987) the oppressed need an outlet to express this way, which was an opportunity that Korczak gave to the oppressed children despite them being in such an early stage of their life. He recognized them as people who reflect about their ontological and historical vocation.

Landau-Czajka (2018) underlines that, initially, albeit written in Polish, the journal targeted the Jewish community. It is worth mentioning that, in the period between wars, 80 percent of Jewish children attended Polish public schools, which explains the choice for the language learnt at school and not for the one spoken at home. That, on the other hand, also allowed non-Jewish children to write some of articles in the newspaper, which increased its circulation.

In the words of Korczak: "graphomania is not dangerous, what is dangerous is illiteracy. [...] To teach Jewish children to write well in Polish

¹ "Korczak wrote the book in the years immediately following the end of War World One, while independent Poland was being rebuilt. He aimed to demonstrate to children the mechanisms of governing, and the great responsibility it involves." (Polin, 2018).

² Landau-Czajka (2018) ponders why there are no letters from the United States, considering that by that period many Polish Jews had emigrated there.

³ All excerpts from the letters published on the Little Review herein may be found in the repository Polona. Available at: <https://polona.pl/search/?query=maly_przeglad&filters=public:1>.

⁴ Pierwszy list. NR. 285 (3985). (13.XI.1933).

is a beautiful and necessary task. Thanks to this magazine lots of children have learnt to use this great treasure, the Polish language.” (Korczak, 1937, p. 1 *apud* Newerly, 2001, p. 315, author’s translation). A very important part of the journal comprised short forms, called “Current News” or “From the Country”. In the same line of thinking, Freire (1987) believed that literacy is not an invention, and it leads to self-reflection and awareness.

The journal management was also undergoing changes. During the early years, under the direction of Korczak, the majority among readers and writers were children, who made many orthographic errors. As the children grew up, journal affairs changed as well, and by the early 1930s, the majority of readers and writers were teenagers aged 11 to 13 years. So, the journal underwent changes and introduced a section called “Free Tribune”, which allowed younger children to write about their many interests. In short, it was a way to attract young readers while maintaining the original form and objectives of the journal.

Who were the writers and the audience of the journal?

According to Żebrowski (2012), Janusz Korczak proposed innovative pedagogical theories, whose main objective was to recognize the autonomy and dignity of the child in the educational process. His biography showed that he always fought for the rights of children and for the proper development of their personality. The main assumption of Korczak’s theoretical and implemented educational system was children’s self-government (small parliament), which included a court of friendship, a local council and a children’s parliament, as well as a plebiscite of goodwill, discipline, and self-organization.

It is through the journal that the educator allowed children to write freely about what they wanted. For Korczak, children’s letters were most valuable for allowing them to write about things they could not tell their parents, were not allowed to say at school, and would only share among themselves. In the journal, they could share these things honestly, shamelessly and without fear of adults’ mockery. Korczak elevated children’s social status by granting them rights, such as: discussing common problems with adults as equals, complaining, protesting, sharing their opinions on any subject, being protected from adults’ arbitrary behaviour, *etc.* In addition, Korczak noted that children had no legal protection against the abuse and violation of their rights.

Thus, *Little Review* dealt with varied children’s interests, as observed on the issue from June 5, 1931, called *What’s up with us*⁵:

Musical: I am learning Hebrew and music. I play a lot of melodies. Next time I will write more – Fredzio from Nalewki street, Warsaw.

Good Day: And on Saturday I had a good day. I went with my mum to grandma. I ate chocolate and listened to the radio. Then I went home and went to bed – Aron from Zamenhofa street, Warsaw.

⁵ Co u nas slychaé.
Nr. 153(2953) (5.VI.1931).

Wonderful times: I like spring because it is warm, the sun is shining, and the trees are green. It's a happy time. I like spring because the birds are singing – Jankiel from Solca street, Warsaw.

Cousin encouraged: I want to write to the Little Review because I saw the articles of my cousin Władka. I will write an article next time as well – Jurek from Piotrkowa street, Warsaw. (author's translation).

In the column from June 5, 1935, children writing to the journal were living on the streets of Warsaw, specifically in the area where later, during World War II, the Warsaw Ghetto would be located. Some children from other Polish cities collaborated as well and identified themselves by their city's name:

Adek collects money because he wants to buy a bike with two wheels. – *Łowicz*.

Józef has argued that children in the countryside play more intelligently and differently than the children of the city. – *Międzyrzec*.

Srul could not keep up with his tall friends, he tried to imitate a goat and bruised his knees. Lucyna liked how Kazimiera Rychterówna told stories. Rose is sorry that *Little Review* does not print her letters. – *Poznan*.

Nuśka suggests opening a section of scientific topics in *Little Review*. – *Rybczewice* (author's translation).

When reading the journal, we found that the editors concentrated not so much on the issues and the content of the letters, but on what and how the children wrote – their interests, desires, and dreams. Warsawian children identified themselves by their name followed by their street's name. Children from other cities sent their letters under their own name followed by the name of their city. There were also letters from other countries, for the most part, from children who, despite having emigrated abroad with their families, continued to collaborate with the Polish journal. On September 6, 1939, *Little Review* published a letter written by Nina Stokowna, from Bolivia⁶, in which she described her journey from Warsaw to La Paz and her life in the new country.

In the end, we anchored in Buenos Aires. Buenos Aires is a wonderful, big, beautiful city. The most beautiful place of Buenos Aires is probably the Park of Palermo, which has colourful fountains with many beautiful flowers, palm trees, in general, a miracle. From Buenos Aires, we travelled by train for 78 hours to La Paz, the capital of Bolivia. La Paz is the highest capital of the world called the "roof of the world" located in the uplands, surrounded by mountains (Andy – Cordillera) with a shade of pink. One of these mountains is called Illimani and has a snowy top. When the sun is setting, you can see its silver top with a red and yellow glow. White and Indian live in Bolivia. Indian women dress terribly colourful: they wear several tissues with pleated bottoms, one on top of the other and each of them of a different colour, red, green, cornflower, yellow, orange, etc. Blouses have a different colours. On the back, colourful handkerchiefs. An inhabitant of La Paz when has a small child, puts him in the back into a colourful bag. They also carry items for sale in these bags. They have long, black, smooth braids

⁶ List z Boliwii. R.14, nr 1 (6.I.1939).

and on the head wear very high bowlers. I go to school. I went to my fourth year. Now there are vacations and summer here. In my group, there are girls from eight to ten and a half years old. I'm just in the middle because I'm 9 years old. I'm learning Spanish and English. Yes, Bolivia is a very interesting and exotic country! – Nina Stokowna from Bolivia. (author's translation).

Nina's situations mirrors the one of other Polish Jews who fled to other countries away from Hitler's Nazism. Other testimonies on Nazi fear were published in the journal's last edition, on September 1, 1939. A young worker Estera N⁷ wrote about a dialogue she witness between a mother and her four-year-old daughter in a sewing atelier: "Who is Hitler?" The mother asked. The girl stammered, "Hitler is [. . .] small." Then the mother asked, "what does Hitler do?" The girl answered, "he beats Jews." The mother exclaimed triumphantly "What did I say? She even knows her politics well." (author's translation).

The journal's last edition can be investigated in current times only due to the archival storage. As for the young writers, few survived World War II, some exceptions are the historian Bronisław Baczko, the economist Włodzimierz Brus, and the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. The later's contribution to the *Little Review* was registered in the section "A bucket of cold water", created on October 13, 1932, so readers could evaluate the entire team of editors. Bauman's article was published under the title "A bucket of cold water for Dyci of Zamość" in the "Free Tribune" section:

I admit and I agree with you that Janusz Korczak is a truly outstanding man, and I am not the one to tell you who should be your personal hero. However, your own conscience should prevent you from sending praise of a man who created and served the editor-in-chief of a paper to the same paper as a contest submission! It's not only about the editors, but what it looks like in the eyes of other readers? I do not want to blame you or point my fingers at your obvious fault. I only call upon your conscience to address the issue and I am looking forward to reading your answer. – Zygmunt Bauman from Poznań.⁸ (author's translation).

This was published on February 3, 1939, *Little Review's* last year. No response from Dycia was found in later editions. Yet, it is clear that, even with no encouragement from school or teachers, young writers were avid readers, showing a capacity for critical thinking and autonomy while interacting in the newspaper. Bauman is an example of that.

Education from new perspectives

Little Review makes an immense contribution to researchers, enabling them to identify concepts of education that permeated the interwar pedagogical thinking. These concepts appear on points of view of readers and writers; as well as on those of editors, who strategically selected and edited letters for publication. My research revealed that there were different types of schools: such as government schools, unpaid or philanthropic schools, Catholic schools, and Jewish schools. Each one with its own

⁷ Z życia młodzieży pracującej - mój zwykły dzień letni. R. 17. Nr 35. (1.IX.1939).

⁸ Kubeł zimnej wody dla Dyci z Zamościa. R.14. Nr. 5 (3.II.1939).

character and teaching system. Children attending Jewish school-seemed to be under bigger pressure than others, since parents paid for them to learn the principles of the Hebrew Bible. The education in Cheder⁹ seemed to be more rigid, with little time for leisure and an excessive demand for concentration. Teachers were very strict.

On the other hand, in an intensive study of *Little Review*, Landau-Czajka (2018) verified that the school was the most important part in the lives of the children:

Regardless of the opinion about the school, it seems that it was a much more important element of children's lives than it is today. First, it was a source of knowledge, for some children from religious families did not have one source of secular knowledge. For sure, for most, it was the centre of social life. And for many children it was a place much more friendly than a family home; because the home was cold, dirty and there was no food, or because in the darkness of home it was impossible to study or relax, or parents were not too good, or just bad. (Landau-Czajka, 2018, p. 267, author's translation).

Regardless of the importance the school had for children and adolescents, it was not without issues. One of the biggest concerned school capacity; whether because there were no schools available – especially in small towns – or because the ones that were available did not have enough room to accommodate all students. Adolescents were the ones hit harder by the problem, as schools prioritized younger children. At the beginning of the school year of 1928/1929, the editor of the *Little Review* (possibly, Korczak) wrote a text mentioning the school capacity issue. He sadly addressed the situation of the children who attended primary school but now had to stay home pining for the time they used to go to the school. In this case the author referred to public schools, those that were not paid for. Other schooling options were available, provided the family could afford a private school or a private teacher. It is worth emphasizing that a minority among *Little Review's* writers and readers could afford private education.

This research also unveiled that, in general, children and adolescents attended public school for many years without making much progress, especially in what concerns examination and certification. They spent years in the same activities that would only change if a substitute teacher took the class on.

In the early years of the journal, the importance of good public-school teaching was often highlighted; however, there were also frequent and plentiful reports of excessive roughness from teachers in Cheders. Faced with such scenario, editors of the newspaper gave the children the opportunity to give their opinion on what were the characteristics of a good and a bad teacher. On March 4, 1927, the second page of *Little Review* published a column under the title "Polemics. For Teacher"¹⁰. Here, I present the points of view of three different students – Alek, Mietek and Motek – on their teachers:

A good teacher does not necessarily have to be cordial, he does not have to. The teacher should look like this, so that could spark motivation in

⁹ The Cheder was an elementary school for small boys (3 to 5 year-old). There they learned how to read in Hebrew from The Jewish Bible – Tanakh. The children stayed at school for most of the day. Classes were usually held in the teacher's apartment (Melamed).

¹⁰ Polemika. Do nauczycieli. R. 2. NR. 22 (4.III.1927).

each student. I had a history teacher last year, everyone listened to interesting things and even those who did not like him. They sat quietly, each one talking or reading because every lesson had something new or interesting. It is horrible when the teacher is not interesting, and the lessons are boring. – Alek.

I understand that the teacher from Kalisz should return the book to Mateusz. The teacher, when borrowing a book or a pencil should remember to give it back because sometimes the student is ashamed to ask, especially when he is poor. – Mietek.

The teacher has no right to take the book from the student. First of all, the teacher does not pay attention to the fact that the student does not do the homework. Second, the mother can look into the boy's briefcase and see that he has no book. So, he may be punished unjustly. – Motek. (author's translation).

According to Landau-Czajka (2018), in general, children appreciate a more dynamic teacher, with an assertive attitude. As an example, the author cites the letter of a boy, Pawelek¹¹, that claims he really likes his teacher because she plays in the classroom; and when the students talk too much, she tells them to sit under the table to keep talking (author's translation). Freire (1996) also approaches the subject of the traits of the teacher. He mentions children need joy in educational activities and also emphasizes the significance of a simple gesture from the teacher in the life of a student, which can be a valuable training tool.

Little Review gave the children an opportunity to express their fears and talk about the problems they faced in school. That is precisely what Korczak wanted – to give the children a voice in the fight for their rights. Students, especially those attending the Cheder, complained about the intense hours studying as oppose to the little time for leisure. He collected many reports in which children declared they felt constrained within the school system: "there is a rebbe in our Cheder, who beats the children. Because of this, we provoke him. After the lesson, we escape to the yard" (Skargi I Żale Julek Z Ciepłej, Grandy za Bicie, 1929, p. 2 *apud* Landau-Czajka, 2018, p. 217). On the other hand, while denouncing the repression they faced, they rose to the occasion and solved their own problems with no help from the editors and other readers of the journal.

Clearly, physical punishment was among the problems faced by the children, along with the fear of teachers it instilled in them. It was observed that, although Polish public schools did not charge any official fees, families had to cover some of the expenses, which some could not afford. For that reason, teenagers were deprived from the opportunity to learn. The journal reported this situations, which prompted the editor to developed strategies to raise funds to send students back to school. This shows that the newspaper did not settled for reporting, but sought to solve difficulties children and adolescent faced, improving their life conditions. In the October 1, 1937 edition, titled "A common school day"¹², some teenagers who had completed their primary education reported how they missed attending school, and how difficult it was getting used to their new realities, having

¹¹ Wiadomości Bieżące. Kącik dla małych dzieci, 31.XII.1926, nr.360, *apud* Landau-Czajka, 2018, p. 279.

¹² Zwykłe dzień szkolny. R.A. Nr 279. (1.X.1937).

to stay home. Nevertheless, most families faced harsh economic conditions, like reported below, under the title "We just do not have money":

"Believe me. I'm not leaving. My mother pleaded at the Chancellery. Please understand... Okay?" "Right," said the officer, "you do not have money and your son wants to study? And as you can see, I need a coat, I need it very much. And I cannot go to the store and say: Please give me a coat. If I can, I will pay. Right, funny? But it is so. Please, you must understand this." Conclusion, we all understand everything, but we do not have money. – R.A. (author's translation).

The financial conditions of the families impacted children's living conditions and their thinking, which can be seen in a letter published in the winter of 1928¹³ about rich children having a new cap every year, and poor ones feeling discriminated at school. These are stories that show different social conditions of children, especially those treated by both Korczak and Freire as oppressed. For Freire (1987), the Pedagogy of the Oppressed makes sense when people come to be aware of where they live and begin a constant struggle to regain their humanity. On *How to love a child*, Korczak (2018) highlights that children are people, and that adults must not forget this – that although they have different experiences, inclinations, and horizons, adults cannot maltreated children.

Shlomo Nadel, one of the orphans who managed to flee Poland before the Jewish orphanage displacement to the ghetto, writes in his book:

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. (Lipiner, 2015, p. 10).

Further on, he talks about his routine at the orphanage: "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" (Lipiner, 2015, p. 10).

Shlomo Nadel was the son of Josef and Gila Nadel, he was born at Warsaw in 1920. His father passed when he was four-years-old, and his mother, unable to care for him, placed Shlomo at the Orphanage in 1927, where he stayed until he was 16 years old. In many passages of the book, Korczak biographer relates how important the education he received at the orphanage was later on his life, helping to mitigate the lack of a father lost so soon. In another passage of the book, Nadel, who lives in Tel Aviv, describes the Korczak's interactions with the children. The author emotionally recalls the relationships of affection 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

¹³ Caps at school. Little Review. Nr. 20. S.8. 20.I.1928.

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. (Lipiner, 2015, p. 23).

To the children's eyes, Korczak himself often behaved like a child, breaking the rules of the orphanage, while Mrs. Stefka was a much stricter educator. Nevertheless, the role played by other educators working alongside Korczak must not be forgotten.

A dialogue between Korczak and Freire

In an overview of Janusz Korczak's work, Gadotti (1998) points out that the educator practiced a daily dialectic, which is the essence of education, albeit often overlooked in favour of the great pedagogical theories.

Korczak condemned academicism, educational theory without practice had no sense if not applied. This close link between theory and practice gives his writings a particular force, the cause of the greatest success of his work [. . .] Reality is always more alive than the theory (Gadotti, 1998, p. 2, author's translation).

While commenting on the translations of *How to Love a Child* and *When I Am Little Again* for the Brazilian audience, Gadotti observes that Korczak's work resembles Paulo Freire's in that he examined reality first to then formulate his pedagogical theories. In *How to love a child*, the author describes the role played by affection in the development of a child through a clinician's perception, taking into consideration social-cultural and educational issues. Similarly to Freire, Korczak worked with the concept of oppressed on *When I Am Little Again*. He showed how children are an oppressed class, overwhelmed by giants who best them in muscles and knowledge. Korczak (1981) saw children this way due to their subaltern live conditions, having more obligations than rights.

With his vast experience with orphans, Korczak intended for young people to appreciate a systematic work and self-government that would benefit their adult life. He wanted to raise conscious young people for a better future. He saw the education of poor children similarly to the way Paulo Freire saw the education of illiterate workers. Their similarities are clear here; these two educators primarily focused on the education of the oppressed.

Lipiner (2015) highlights that Korczak wanted children to learn from a young age their responsibilities, but in a creative and motivating way. Likewise, Freire sought to motivate his adult students, using themes connected to their social reality.

Korczak devised a system of work credits, or merits. We could do anything to the maintenance of the home or help one of our friends to earn merits. A half hour's work was considered a work unit. For every 500 merits we accumulated, we received a picture postcard, similar to the "commemoration" cards we received as merits for waking up early. (Lipiner, 2015, p. 10).

Korczak emphatically defended children's right to be themselves, to live in the present, to be happy. He never intended to make empty promises for future happiness, as Gadotti (1998) points out. Just as Paulo Freire, Janusz Korczak used strategies to raise the interest of his students. They had a similar goal – to give them autonomy and hope. There is a will to integrate theory and practice, often with practice appearing first and theory later. According to Freire:

What we have to do, in fact, is to propose to the people, through certain basic contradictions, their existential, concrete, present situation, as a problem that, in turn, challenges it and thus demands a response, not only in the intellectual level but at the level of action. Never just lecture on it and never give content that has little or nothing to do with aspirations, doubts, hopes, fears. Content should sometimes raise these fears. Fears of the oppressed conscience. (Freire, 1987, p. 49, author's translation).

Therefore, Korczak's *Little Review* was a kind of circle of culture within Paulo Freire's method, where life is revisited and analysed in a critical deepening and consciousness emerges from the lived world. By objectifying the world, by making it literate, the writer and the reader are united with each other and recognize each other, being a part of the circle of culture. In Freire's circle of culture, one learns as he teaches, in reciprocity of consciousness. Instead of a teacher, the educator is a coordinator, whose function is to provide the information requested by participants and to give conditions for the group dynamics. That is exactly what Korczak did as a coordinator and promoter for the *Little Review*.

Conclusion

The examination of the journal's issues featured here reveal that *Little Review* functioned as a social platform from 1926 to 1939, enabling an interactivity and bidirectionality of communication during the World War II, when social networks on the internet were not yet popularized. Especially in the first five years, when Korczak was the editor-in-chief of the *Little Review*. In addition to publishing children's and teenagers' letters, he also responded to them. He took on the role of counsellor for children, especially for the poorest. In general, one can say that, in a period when

the ideas of the New School began to change what education meant, by taking the focus out of the teacher and putting it on the child, Korczak embodied the ideas of the New School very well. He attempted to empower children by showing teachers that children had great ideas and a voice, as well as problems related to adults.

Korczak paid attention to children and adolescents in a way that teachers did not. Possibly, in the early years of the journal, teachers did not encourage children to read it. Perhaps because there children were free to complain about their teachers. The letters also clarified issues of social inequality among children often present at school. Which in turn revealed the discrimination victimizing them at school, visible in the clothes they wore, the way they spent holidays, etc.

The social inequality evident in this journal, written by children for children, is the link that brings the Jewish-Polish educator, Janusz Korczak, and the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, close. Like Paulo Freire, Korczak used reading and writing as a weapon against social inequalities. Both had the same strategy, trusting education to change the world. They used the power of writing and interpretation to develop consciousness in people, freeing them from a context of manipulation. Korczak's small proletarians and the illiterate workers of Freire learned by reading and writing to understand the world, to be conscious and autonomous people. Though working in different contexts, in different times, and with different people, both educators had the same purpose – social change through emancipation.

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