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(R)evolutionary Rights and Hidden Histories: A New Reading of Janusz Korczak

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I, Basia Maryla Vucic, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

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Abstract

Janusz Korczak, Polish-Jewish doctor and pedagogue, is recognised as the father of children's rights. His innovative institutions acknowledged cultural history synthesised with demands for socio-political transformation promoting democracy and diversity. The absence of Korczak in the history of education is linked to an over-reliance on translations and lack of context. The thesis departs from the typical definitions of non-Western and colonial/colonised by providing insight into how Poland imagined itself as neither Western, nor Russian. Employing a revisionist lens, the study retrieves Korczak's narrative of his oppressed society and the impacts of cosmopolitanism. The historical methodology relies primarily upon archival research methods, with a focus on newly independent Poland in 1918. An extensive international investigation identified the archive in Warsaw as the oldest and as holding the largest collection of Korczak material. Combining different kinds of evidence, documentary, visual and physical artefacts, situates selected texts within the complex context in which Korczak worked. By identifying his connection with Warsaw revolutionaries and their philosophy of patriotic, spiritual anarchism, the thesis produces an alternative politicized understanding of his life and work. Examining such thinkers who contested the State challenges assumptions and dominant ideas, especially about children, education, and racism. Thus, the conceptual framework for analysis uses anarchist principles of mutual aid and social justice for an epistemological shift. The concept of (r)evolutionary rights adds a new politicised reading of Korczak, as a matrix of Imperial power and knowledge overlaid every sphere of his life. He conceptualised (r)evolutionary rights in formulating how children's lives intertwined with the collective struggle for freedom, especially during conflict and crisis. By revealing hidden histories, this study illuminates a bold new reading of Korczak and delivers a 'usable past' for political theorists and social practitioners alike.

Impact Statement

Descriptions of the past decade often represent it as a crisis in democracy and human rights. As the pandemic and war further exacerbates divisions, many scour historical precedents for examples of action and policy. The research draws upon historical archives to reveal hidden histories examined through the life and work of Polish-Jewish educator Janusz Korczak, a pivotal figure in the history of education and children's rights. Replacing Korczak within his revolutionary history is an act of resistance as it disrupts the Western hegemonic influence upon existing biographical and academic readings. Drawing out subtleties and nuances in Korczak's texts invites increased scholarship into his philosophy and practice. Introducing the anarchist and cooperative themes within these experiments which declare *children are people*, may entice political theorists and social activists. Furthermore, the research sheds light upon overlapping spheres of action by non-state actors who built their work around women's and children's contributions for broader socio-political change.

This thesis will appeal to an interdisciplinary audience interested in modern European and applied history, especially the Polish context of ideas and various socio-political movements. Korczak's perspective may be helpful in contemporary social struggles searching for new forms of radical organisation, especially in conflict zones and extreme conditions. For engaging with diverse audiences, the study offers varied entry points such as property rights, cooperatives, and local self-governance. Even at a micro-level, those seeking institutional reform may benefit from his rights-based model that built grassroots capacity for leadership, democracy, and economic development amongst oppressed people.

Acronyms

ARA	American Relief Administration
BRPD	<i>Biuro Rzecznika Praw Dziecka</i> (Office of the Polish Ombudsman for Child Rights)
HTLAC	'How To Love A Child' books
IKA	International Korczak Association
KEN	<i>Komisja Edukacji Narodowej</i> (National Educational Commission)
PAKPD	<i>Polsko-Amerykański Komitet Pomocy Dzieciom</i> (Polish American Aid Committee for Children).
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Child Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

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Janusz Korczak (dr. Henryk Goldszmit)

ur. w 1878 r.

Powieściopisarz i publicysta. Utwory wydane: „Dzieci ulicy“, „Koszalki opalki“, „Dziecko salonu“, „Bobo“, „Jak kochać dziecko“, „Józki, Jaśki i Franki“, „Moški, Joski i Srule“, „Sława“, „Król Maciuś pierwszy“ i in.

Figure 1: Official Janusz Korczak Postcard, 1933. Source: National Library of Poland

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background¹

The paediatrician, writer, and pedagogue Janusz Korczak was born Henryk Goldszmit on 22nd July in 1878 or 1879 in a Polish-Jewish family in Warsaw (Figure 1). At the time, the Russian Empire ruled the city and Poland as a country did not exist. His father was a well-respected lawyer who committed suicide in 1896 after a protracted mental illness, leaving Korczak, his mother, sister, and grandmother in dire financial straits. This change in circumstances increased his awareness and sensitivity to societal issues.

Winning a writing contest in 1898 heralds the first time that young Henryk adopted his famous pseudonym of Janusz Korczak, taken from a fictional character. By tutoring and writing, Korczak supplemented the family income sufficiently to enter medical school. Young Korczak was a highly intellectual and socially engaged youth and quickly became dissatisfied with the standard offered by his Russian education. Prompted by his feminist friends, he simultaneously commenced Polish studies at the illegal *Uniwersytet Latający* (Flying University). With a ban on women's education by the Tsar, this institution erratically moved locations, attempting to stay ahead of the authorities seeking to close it down. Withstanding constant aggression, the University was pivotal in educating more than 5000 female graduates, including dual Nobel prize winner Maria Skłodowska-Curie. Coinciding with his legitimate medical studies, Korczak also studied sociology, pedagogy, psychology, and philosophy with excellent professors, subsequently joining the teaching faculty.

After graduation from medical school, Korczak continued his paediatric specialisation in Berlin and Paris before being conscripted into the Russian Army as a

¹ Sources: Poland - Museum of Warsaw; POLIN. Israel - Yad Vashem; Ghetto Fighters' House

doctor and stationed in China during the Russo-Japanese war. During each absence, Korczak's books sold well, gaining him celebrity. Officially, Korczak began his medical career at the Jewish Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital, under the supervision of his mentor Julian Kramsztyk, already a prominent advocate for children's rights (Woltanowski et al., 2018). The example of Kramsztyk sponsoring free medical care and inclusive summer camps for Catholic and Jewish children from impoverished families undoubtedly influenced Korczak into similar community activities while still a medical student (*ibid*). By 1908, he joined the Jewish Orphans' Aid Society and, in 1910, met his future collaborator, Stefania Wilczyńska [1886 – 1942], fondly known as Pani Stefa.

Little information is available on the month Korczak spent in London around this period, except a description he provides of touring orphanages in Forest Hill, which cemented his course of action returning to Warsaw to become the co-director with Stefa of a newly built orphanage, *Dom Sierot* (Orphan's Home) on Krochmalna Street. His commitment to the new Home for approximately 100 Jewish children saw him withdraw from medical practice, though he continued publishing books, newspaper, and journal articles throughout his lifetime. During World War I (WWI), he was conscripted again as a military doctor into the Russian Army. With Poland gaining independence, the Polish Army subsequently promoted his rank to a major during the Polish-Bolshevik War in 1919-1920.

The interwar period marked Korczak's prolific output as a writer, as he often based his ideas on the Home operating as a democratic Children's Republic with a parliament, law court, and newspaper. His books, popular children's texts, and radio show gained him literary recognition and widespread popularity. In demand as a pedagogical expert, Korczak served on various boards and lectured in diverse disciplines ranging from midwifery to the juvenile justice system. The Homes attracted

international renown during his lifetime, promoted by Jean Piaget [1896 – 1980] and Nadezhda Krupskaya [1869 – 1939]. In the 1930s, Korczak travelled to British-mandated Palestine, where he experienced *kibbutz* life, observing, and advising on their educational system. Possible plans to emigrate were interrupted in 1939 by World War II (WWII). A year later, the German occupation forced Korczak to move his children into a makeshift orphanage inside the newly created Ghetto. Though offered shelter and opportunities to escape, he refused to abandon his children despite his ill health. In the Ghetto, Korczak wrote notes published posthumously as the famous *Pamiętnik* (now known as the Diary). The Nazi authorities began the liquidation of orphanages in the summer of 1942. On 5th August, they transported Korczak, Stefa, the staff and approximately 200 children to their deaths in the Treblinka gas chambers.

1.2 Children's Homes

Across Poland, repeated revolutions, wars, and epidemics left many children without family or as 'social' orphans unable to be cared for by relatives. The response to the sheer number of children requiring care generated many solutions, including Korczak's orphanages, popularly known as Children's Homes. Prior to Polish independence, the authorities regarded such institutions as reform schools providing therapeutic interventions for children in vulnerable circumstances, challenging behaviours, or experiencing trauma, however, with the belief that such children were already on a criminal path.

The first decade of Polish independence (post-1918) witnessed the peak of Korczak's literary and educational career. He returned to the Jewish orphanage, *Dom Sierot* (Orphan's Home), on Krochmalna Street, where he had been the director for only two years before WWI. The other director, Stefa Wilczyńska, had single-handedly managed the Home in his absence, and together they resumed the implementation of

Korczak's pedagogical project. To anyone interested in running a democratic school or institution for children, Korczak recommended the book of his other co-director Maria Falska (2007), *Nasz Dom* (Our Home), a how-to manual of sorts. An architectural competition decided the design of the second orphanage dedicated to Polish workers' families. Our Home accommodated 70 children of school age, 10-20 younger children, and 30 older youth who assisted the staff. The structure and operation mirrored that of the Home for Jewish children.

The Homes attempted to avoid extremes of coercion and chaos by using a system based upon mutual agreement, not that all parties were always satisfied with arrangements. The institutional rules changed according to needs and aimed for the individual to adjust to the collective life voluntarily. However, the reciprocity in this pedagogical relationship also targeted the adults, with Korczak fronting the Court on numerous occasions, minimising the disparities in authority. This concept proved one of his most controversial, as Falska (1931) reported during her split with Korczak in the 1930s. This central problem centred upon adults resenting the children's power in decision-making and staff assessment. Furthermore, the initial arrangements which allowed children to destroy property and sack the entire staff cohort would be difficult to reproduce as Korczak probably capitalised on his celebrity status for many of his experimental activities.

Both Homes created self-governing institutions modelling mutual relationships with the collective group (Figure 2). While the 1791 Polish Constitution formed the cornerstone of its legal system, the Parliament responded to democratic pressure, amended, and developed legislation over three decades into a Codex of over 1000 laws. In Our Home, the Children's Court is perhaps the best-known innovation, although this translated name is a misnomer. The more accurate title of Friendly Court or Collegiate Court refers to the legal principle of judgement by peers, placing everyone upon equal

footing. Children and adults fronted the Court to receive judgement, including Korczak himself. Usually, a director or senior educator acted as the Court Clerk, and although not involved in voting or decision-making, they retained a right to appeal. Educators observed children's everyday lives from this position, which Falska (1931/2007) described as reminiscent of the doctor's work in the clinic. The Court encouraged the presentation of evidence, discouraging generalisations and unsubstantiated rumours. Participating in various positions was deemed as teaching diligence, fairness, and honesty in formulating opinions.

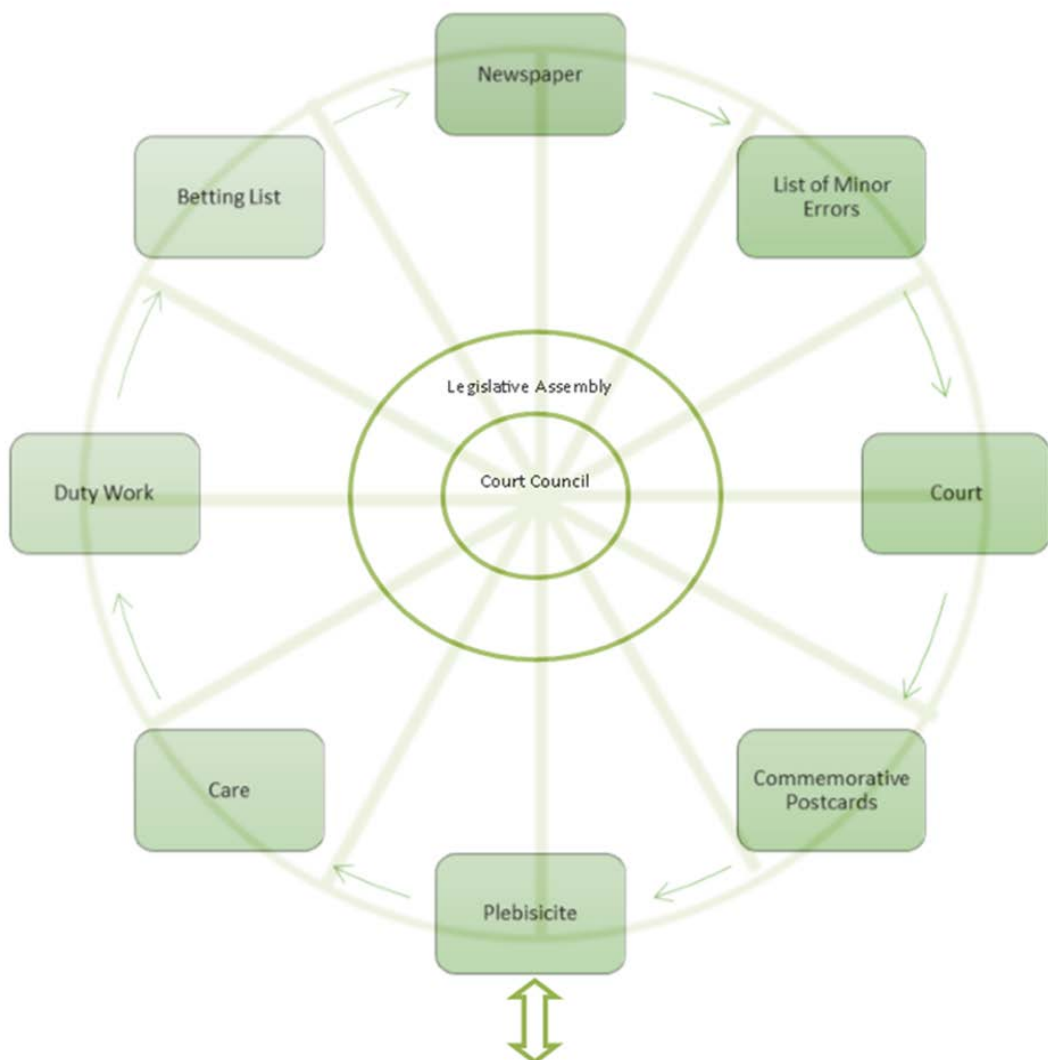


Figure 2: Organisational Chart of Dom Sierot (Orphan's Home)

Source: Adapted from Korczak's secretary Igor Newerly (Kaminski, 1962, p.34).

By examining court proceedings, the Court brought attention to repeated offences. In turn, the outcomes informed the (self-) Governing Council, which was responsible for reviewing and drawing up the rules of Our Home. One of the directors chaired the Council, and the children elected councillors from amongst themselves. In addition, the Council oversaw projects, changes in regulations or operations and any requests of the Court or individual children. This Council also worked closely with the Pedagogical Council, comprising the directors, housekeeper, caretaker and *wychowawców* (educators). The growing collection of legal and governance documentation provided an insightful perspective on evolving life within the Homes. One of the controversial aspects was that adults were also subject to the referendum after a trial period to decide their tenure.

Authority did not originate from adults or outside but emerged out of everyday living and the necessary tasks needed to maintain the Home. This notion of pedagogical necessity or incidental education aligns with concepts in anarchist education (Suissa, 2019c). Contrary to Milne's (2015) description of the Homes as a utopian ideal divorced from society, Korczak fashioned his system as a critical response to other educational reforms with flexibility and suitability for local conditions. Understanding his ideological disputes with other educators helps explain the differences in his decision-making and activities. For example, the Marxist account of Newerly (1967) and the moral education focus of Silverman (2017) ignore the Betting List or trivialise the Lost & Found Box without considering their economic function in rights-based citizenship education.

The Betting List formalises the trades and contracts made by children, with or without permission, through procedures and social conventions. The Lost Box differentiated private property from common ownership. Issues of lying and stealing amongst materially impoverished children concerned Korczak every day, as he devoted

many passages to explaining the significance of children's actions in economic and legal terms. The Homes' processes illuminate the political machinations and complex relations at work by bringing greater transparency to decision-making. There is no predetermined vision of goodness or goal of perfection as Korczak does not remove domination, coercion, or inducements but examines how power relations ebb, flow and change within the group to lessen these elements and build greater cooperation.

1.3 Literature Review

Contrary to claims that Janusz Korczak is a forgotten figure or ignored, my literature review uncovered many dedicated publications and activities. Since his debut in 1896, studies on Korczak's writing, his activities and life have been published in multiple languages, although the English translation of his actual work remains limited (Hartman, 1997; Hammarberg, 2009a). Renewed interest in Korczak's pedagogical ideas coincided with Germany's child emancipatory movement and interest in Holocaust studies (Bińczycka, 1997). Moving the Korczak narrative beyond his death foregrounds his legacy with children's rights and education, which Smolińska-Theiss (2013a) considers an essential step towards retrieving his status as a 'great researcher of children' (p.86). She describes his pedagogical vision and institutions as a public heritage and 'common good' acting as 'a cornerstone for modern culture via the international child rights' movement' (*ibid*).

Although a household name in Poland, Korczak is primarily remembered as a children's author with his book, *Król Maciuś Pierwszy* (King Matt the First). Enduring in popularity, Kulawiec (1989) labelled the book as Korczak's magnum opus centred upon the child-adult relationship. The book portrays the conditions needed to build trust within different relationships rather than separate adult and child worlds with one-way didactics (*ibid*). Not only for the children to trust adults but also for the adults to learn

of children's needs within ever-widening circles. The premise envisaged children moving from the close intimacy of family and friends into diplomatic ties in geopolitical games. The micro and macro levels are necessary for improving adult understanding of equality, respect, and democracy, says Smolińska-Theiss (2013).

Taking a historical perspective on scholarship shows that awareness of Korczak is, in fact, not a recent phenomenon. With over 1000 publications to his name, Korczak appeared on the UNESCO (1997) internationally influential educators' list over twenty years ago. Many studies highlight that Korczak remains relatively unknown and conclude that he is under-appreciated as one of the great pedagogues and champions of children's rights (Bińczycka, 1997; Hartman, 1997; 2009; Valeeva 2003; 2013; Efron, 2005; Eichsteller, 2009; UNICEF, 2011; Kerber-Ganse, 2015). Sociological traditions turned towards child rights, with scholarship from the likes of Mayall (2000; 2002), Alderson (2008) and Liebel (2012), each of whom has shown recent interest in recovering the Korczak legacy.

Behind the Iron Curtain, scholarship on Korczak was limited to a select few and failed to reach a wider audience as conceptions of rights and democracy ensured his books remained prohibited or heavily censored (Smolińska-Theiss, 2012). English translations appeared in the United Kingdom in the 1930s and after his death in the 1940s. The late 1960s saw a volume of selected Korczak works published in the United States. Though edited by the esteemed Martin Wolins (1967) and attracting sponsorship from the National Science Foundation (Washington), these factors were unable to compensate for the unfortunate timing of the publication during Cold War tensions which meant the book failed to strike a chord.

During the past decade, the event 2012: The Year of Janusz Korczak, the Polish Ombudsman for Child Rights, and the work of the International Korczak Association represent the audience most engaged with the subject. My literature review led me to

question why Korczak, as the father of children's rights, remained on the periphery of mainstream pedagogy and if this relates to how he is understood? I problematise accounts that treat the Korczak narrative a-historically, a-politically, or as if he was the founder of Polish education. The findings influenced my decision to explore tightly held assumptions, review biographical details and text references by employing rigorous historical methods in archival research. To be fair to other scholars, as Paweł Jarosz (2012) explains, the multidimensional nature of Korczak makes a complete picture impossible within any one work, as each show 'a different side of Korczak's biography and his heritage' (p.105). It is no small task to tackle Korczak's oeuvre as his work spans genres and subjects. I found it both a help and a hindrance that much secondary literature exists about Korczak. This finding is somewhat surprising, considering authors often describe him as forgotten or burdened by his death during the Holocaust.

I do not mention all available literature here, and by far, the most significant number of comprehensive works are biographical narratives. Examples include:

- Betty Lifton's (1988) biography 'King of Children'.
- Andrzej Wajda's (1990) film 'Korczak'.
- Olczak-Ronnikier's (2011) *Korczak: Próba biografii* [An Attempt at a Biography].
- Stachowicz (2012) 'Korczak'.
- Medvedev-Nathoo (2012) *Oby im życie łatwiejsze było... O Janusza Korczaka i jego wychowanku* [May Their Lot be Lighter... About Janusz Korczak and his Student].

Biographies tend to stick to a formula, especially early versions aimed at definitive cradle to grave narratives of facts. According to Pimlott (2004), later biographies aim to capture the essence of the subject, just as a portrait represents more than a good likeness, the subtleties revealing a background of history, philosophy, and culture. The

influence of the Warsaw intelligentsia on Korczak is commonly acknowledged but without making connections to revolutionary politics (Lifton, 1988; Falkowska, 1989; Silverman, 2017). Furthermore, it is apparent that many comprehensive studies, such as that of Newerly (1967) and Silverman (2017), have failed to recognise the significant role played by the radical women that surrounded Korczak.

Later biographies are far more nuanced, such as Olczak-Ronnikier's edition, which she acknowledges as only an attempt. She reveals Korczak's esoteric practises building upon the work of Rudniańska (2005), who revealed his membership within Masonic organisations and underground networks. Likewise, there have been welcome efforts to retrieve the legacy of women working with Korczak, such as Kicińska's (2015) book dedicated to his co-director, Pani Stefa and the republication of the book *Nasz Dom* (Our Home) by his other co-director Maria Falska (1928). Among the Poles, Theiss (1992; 2014; 2018) makes eloquent arguments for the connection between women's emancipation, political agitation, and education, an aspect that influenced my research direction.

Much of the research has been descriptive, so his biography remains the most visible aspect even with a revival in scholarship. Accounts are deficient in neglecting Korczak's ideological position to explain his views within the contemporary or dominant historical discourses. Despite other writers citing Korczak's life events and people he encountered, they diminish the importance of Korczak's writing by reducing it to a patchwork of quotes supporting their ideas. Such secondary sources use Korczak symbolically for conveying other moral or political meanings. Thus, he appears as the socially aware doctor (Lifton, 1988), a patriotic Pole (Newerly, 1967), the Holocaust martyr (Cohen, 1994), the moral educator (Silverman, 2017) or an innovative pedagogue (Veerman, 2014). Many authors attempting to fashion a Tolstoy or Gandhi-like figure of peace and moral education, ignore that he produces most of his work

amidst conflict and political struggle without refuting violence or military action.

Critique of existing accounts around the complex phenomena within Korczak's texts became crucial to elucidating a new understanding. I use analysis of primary sources rather than recollections of his persona.

Although I initially approached this process as geared towards a corrected version, the widespread acceptance of specific errors incentivised a comprehensive historical examination. The primary sources are texts, newspaper articles and organisational reports published during his lifetime. I initially intended to produce a monograph of Korczak by deep diving into his body of literary work and activity in the Polish language, situated within the historical context. However, this position required familiarity with many other thinkers, events, and influential people. As Korczak attended university in Warsaw, Berlin and Paris and was fluent in five languages, the academic span is wide by necessity. Such exploration of text seeks to remove or disembody Korczak from his personal and historical reality while avoiding more misunderstandings of his philosophy.

The Diary usually sets the place for Korczak introducing many foreign readers to his work via his death in the Holocaust. His popularity amongst English speakers must be attributed primarily to Betty Jean Lifton's (1988) biography, *The King of Children*, published in the United States, with new editions appearing as recently as 2018. Research conducted by Kicińska (2016) and Witkowska-Krych (2019) demonstrates that Korczak was not wholly unique or acting alone. Over time, he was one of several prominent actors interacting within social networks and amongst a larger population. These interactions formed positive and negative relationships, built associations, and bore social structures and causes. Hence, Korczak must be methodologically localised to understand him as a social actor whose identity is formed by and forms locally embodied social facts.

Beyond the various biographies, most academic scholars examine his educational writing and work much like Silverman. The most recent publication by Berding (2020) tackles Korczak's educational practices thematically, listed as respect for every child, participation, justice, dialogue as expression and communication, and the educator's self-awareness and reflection. His book, *Educating for Justice* is a suitable introduction but uncritically repeats existing narratives to fashion stories based upon Korczak's work with children. Berding moulds Korczak around contemporary notions of children's participation within democratic education. Hartman (1997) found such normative, replicative reading popular amongst Eastern Europeans, extracting pedagogical methods to formulate a Korczak system.

For many years, a handful of Polish scholars worked laboriously upon Korczak, neglected in English-speaking circles and by researchers in Poland. Aleksander Lewin, a professor of education and former staff member working directly with Korczak at one of the Homes, was the most significant post-war contributor. The output of Lewin (1978; 1986; 1988; 1999) was immense though burdened with Marxist ideology that fashioned Korczak as the model Soviet teacher fighting for the little proletariat (Smolińska-Theiss, 2013a). By framing Korczak's motivation and views within a Marxist discourse, the structural weight of that ideology caused individual agency, and even the child, to almost to disappear (Gąsiorek, 2013).

Regarding Korczak's absence from academia, Hartman (1997) advocated for critical comparative reading of Korczak with other educationalists and philosophers. He aimed to elucidate new interpretations and use Korczak's texts as a 'humanistic contrastive counterweight' to gain new insight from empirically-based research (*ibid*). Such critical evaluations have generated a revival amongst non-Polish and Polish researchers alike, attempting a philosophical turn with comparatives of Korczak with Buber, Nietzsche, and Dewey (Vucic, 2019). Articles proliferated to show overlap

between Korczak and Buber, especially regarding their Jewishness, spirituality, and educational ideas, but none have explored the possible political links via anarchism or recognised Buber's Polish connection.² Depoliticising or confusing political influences is a common occurrence, perhaps exacerbated by Hartman's criticism of Polish academia as his recommendations skewed towards enticing foreign researcher interest. By specifying a focus on gathering more data, he privileges the existing body of knowledge and the empirical case. According to Porpora's (2015) argument, what is more important, and to be undertaken first, is the conceptual and philosophical work I am doing here.

One common denominator in scholarship is the suggestion of Korczak working in isolation from other influences and without theory or philosophical underpinnings (Lasota, 2012; Silverman, 2017; Berding, 2020). Academics conflate Korczak's ideas with other educators like Dewey, Steiner and Montessori creating a pedagogical pastiche (Wołoszyn, 1997, p.34; Valeeva, 2013, p.88; Kirchner, 2013, p.180, Wróblewska, 2017; Silverman, 2017, p.3; Tsur, 2018). Likewise, Lifton (1988) writes in her famous biography, 'although they were never to meet, Janusz Korczak and Maria Montessori had much in common' (p.92). Of these researchers, Liebel (2016; 2018) labelled Korczak as belonging to groups of little-known Eastern European actors and events, calling it a hidden history of child rights. I incorporated a similar concept into my thesis title as hidden histories. Beyond the legalistic construction of rights, Liebel (2018) appears perplexed by Korczak's distrust of authorities and the State, unable to resolve it with the democratic activities within the Homes. I find that Liebel ignores the historical context of Polish rights movements, for example, describing Korczak's scepticism towards the State as a preference rather than a reaction to being jailed for his

² For examples see Kurzweil, Z.E. (1968) Korczak's Educational Writings and the Image of the Child, *Jewish Education*, vol. 38(1), pp 19-28; Cohen, 1994; Efron, S. (2005). Janusz Korczak: Legacy of a Practitioner-Researcher. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56(2), 145-156; Boschki, R. (2005) Re-Reading Martin Buber and Janusz Korczak: Fresh Impulses toward a Relational Approach to Religious Education, *Religious Education*, Vol.100(2), p.114-126; Smolińska-Theiss (2014); Silverman (2017).

illegal educational activities (*ibid*). Although Milne (2013; 2015) and Liebel diligently include Korczak within the intellectual currents in the Russian Empire at the time, both also de-historicise Korczak.

Likewise, despite Veerman's (2014) awareness of a rights-based movement associated with revolution in the Russian Empire, his chapter on Korczak failed to make any connections. It is an issue plaguing even Polish scholars such as Igor Newerly, Korczak's former secretary who took many years of research to conclude, 'it's not you (Korczak), it was Doctor Trentowski in his "national pedagogy system" who prioritised the discovery of the rights of children' (Jakubiak & Leppertin, 2003, p.224). Although Lifton (1988) and Eichsteller (2009) refer to Trentowski, it is without acknowledging the significance of historical continuity of the pedagogical project building generation to generation. The Polish belief that a society discovers rights before any declaration mirrors the principle of society before the state found within anarchism. Compilations of Korczak's rights appear in the works of others, and such artificial constructs remain superficial if not grounded in the philosophical and historical traditions from which his ideas emanate. I propose that the issue stems from scholars failing to recognise that for most of Korczak's life, Poland did not exist. Thus, like other Poles, he lived and worked as a colonised subject or under occupation.

The Polish government dedicated 2012 as The Year of Korczak, eliciting a tremendous outpouring of activity with over 25 countries involved in activities (BRPD, 2013). Recent attention from scholars in literature, art history and urban environments has seen a more nuanced approach to criticism. While remaining on the margins, the literary turn advocated decades ago is experiencing an exciting revival, with the likes of Gąsiorek (2013) offering insightful fragments incorporated into my subsequent arguments. In 2018, the POLIN - Museum of the History of Polish Jews held a temporary exhibition called *W Polsce Króla Maciusia: 100-lecie odzyskania*

niepodległość (In King Matt's Poland: The 100th Anniversary of Regaining Independence) attracting over 60,000 visitors. The Museum's interactive child-adult space and accompanying Polish-English text by respected academics and researchers provided a snapshot of how the political and historical context of Korczak's life and work is understood (Czerwińska, & Sztyma, 2018). Like this research, POLIN chose a similar historical period to define his context and focus upon Korczak's democratic education against a backdrop of newly independent Poland, however, the similarities beyond this are few.

Many people honour Janusz Korczak's Holocaust legacy and recognise his influence in Poland's proposal of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). A few like Petersen (1995) recognise Poland as repeatedly setting off chains of events that led to new nation-States after the collapse of Empires, and again, during the communist era to fragment the Soviet bloc. However, rarely are children's rights considered as weapons in the hands of the weak in their struggle against powerful oppressors.

1.5 What are Children's Human Rights?

The inspiration for this research began with Korczak as a pioneer in pedagogy and children's rights, which is the common approach for child rights scholars. Over a series of project iterations, the political dimension came to dominate this study and thus provides an alternative reading to the usual portrayal of his life and work as solely dedicated to children. Indeed, it is useful to consider how his pedagogical work and collaboration with women had far-reaching impact upon social and political issues that are still relevant today. Thus, the following provides a brief summary of where Korczak's views on children's human rights sit and how his pedagogical experiment sought to liberate people from below. It is not intended as an in-depth discussion, nor

does it engage significantly with important contemporary scholarship, as children's rights are no longer a key theme within the thesis.

In his discussion on children as rights holders, Archard (1993) proposes two competing accounts based upon either the will theory or interest theory. The first theory considers rights as a product of motivation and choice. Incorporating the assumption that children cannot exercise choice based upon rational decision-making, usually places an age caveat on who can hold and exercise rights. The second theory recognises children as rights holders, but these are held in trust by parents and guardians who act in children's interests and welfare.

Considering Korczak's bold statements, neither theory sits squarely with his views. Instead, he agrees with researchers such as Alderson (2008), that children are rational beings who can make decisions on matters of importance to them. Korczak repeatedly states that children are people today not tomorrow, only lacking in maturation, experience, and status. As Korczak's work predates the scholarship dedicated to children's rights or childhood studies, a brief discussion of human rights is necessary.

The Oxford Dictionary of Law describes human rights as the 'rights and freedom to which every human being is entitled' (Law & Martin, 2014). Beitz (2009) explains that rights protect or benefit rightsholders by affording status and freedoms, usually accompanied by specific responsibilities and actions for duty-bearers to ensure provision and facilitation. For thousands of years, fundamental human rights were attributed to a divine creator or supposed to be an innate aspect of human beings. Such general rights to life and liberty appear universal, even in a diverse world.

Greek philosophers conceived of an underlying truth or ethical foundation for rights as natural law and envisioned an underlying justice to which man's law should aspire to conform (Law & Martin, 2014). This view suggests that human rights are part

of human morality and appear in social norms and group behaviours. For example, the right to life emerges where the majority value human life and prohibit murder (Nickel, 2021). This theory suggests that human rights rely on existing moral consensus and becomes problematic for changing practices or beliefs. As contemporary societies shifted away from a theological basis for human rights, enactment through law and institutions provided a more rational and practical foundation for accepting a broader set of rights. Thus, the contemporary perspective incorporates more specific rights, such as the right to education and the right to a fair trial (Nickel, 2021). Doubt over the religious or moral basis for rights appeared amongst Korczak's collaborators, such as his atheist co-director, Maria Falska. Therefore, it is helpful to incorporate a political conception of human rights, which often involves explaining what rights achieve practically.

John Locke (1632–1704) argued that people have natural rights to life, liberty, and property, irrespective of the laws under which they lived (Tuckness, 2020). In his *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke claimed that men are naturally free and equal and enter into a social contract with others to ensure stable and comfortable living conditions. His justification for legitimate political government relied upon the people's consent, without rulers or religious leaders using coercion to force the masses into sharing their own beliefs. Locke defended the principle of majority rule, and where governments failed to protect the rights of the people and promote the public good, he asserted their right to revolution (*ibid*).

Central to Locke's political philosophy is his theory of natural law and rights. Historically, natural law was distinct from societal laws or conventions, with the former viewed as a set of moral truths which applied to all people regardless of the laws in their society. Locke proposed that natural laws could be deduced by all people by reason alone, unlike divine law revealed only to certain people. However, he saw no issue with divine or biblical law, if it did not contradict natural law. Similarly, natural law was

considered anterior and superior to the laws of man (Law & Martin, 2014).

There is a great deal of debate on how Locke's theory resolved that duties are emphasised within natural law, while natural rights are related to an individual's entitlements, claims or privileges (Tuckness, 2020). One academic position suggests that Locke sides with Hobbes to declare that the duties of natural law cease where an individual's self-preservation is at stake. Clearly, Korczak's actions in remaining with his children until his death deny he could have held any such self-interest as paramount. Other scholars adopt the view that Locke elevated natural law over natural rights, emphasising the duties people hold not to kill, enslave or steal (*ibid*). This thesis supports the argument that individual rights exist to ensure we can fulfil our duties to others as more consistent with Korczak's stance, although rights and duties are not merely two sides of a coin, nor the means of one to the other.

Exploring Korczak's writing will show that he believed that the natural law tradition provided the foundation for discovering rights, as customs, behaviours and rules developed from different societal histories. In his lifetime, Korczak challenged the West for appropriating the term "child rights", as he demanded respect and recognition for the equal and fully valued child to take their rightful place amongst humanity (Nowicka, 2013). He viewed the 1924 League of Nations' Declaration of Child Rights as pleading goodwill and duties towards children rather than human rights. However, one must remember that Korczak did not have equal human rights status, due to racial discrimination against Poles. This distinction also illustrates the pressure that newly independent Poland placed upon existing governments and their paternalistic attitude towards their colonised subjects, unwilling to risk growing democracy from below.

Today, scholars generally consider human rights forming part of positive or treaty law rather than natural law (Law & Martin, 2009). Rights' declarations and treaties do not necessarily describe the existing consensus but hold an aspirational

agenda based upon ethical arguments to justify creating a revised consensus. Nickel (2021) argues that even if unanimity is lacking, the existence of human rights appears most secure when the theoretical basis and legal norms are closely aligned with the majority's morality and suit their practical needs. An approach that starts from a rights declaration or existing laws can become an inquiry into jurisprudence. It can openly explore moral and political issues by committing to implementation locally and practically. Here, a rational agreement can create different norms if moral reasons are 'combined with true premises about current institutions, problems, and resources' (*ibid*).

These outcomes occur by exploring relations between individuals and their government's obligations. I will show that Korczak closely aligns with such an approach by using cultural history and empirical research to identify his society's pre-existing moral and legal consensus. To build a strong foundation for his institutions, he examined what individuals justifiably demanded from each other and their government. Korczak declared that children are rational people and could formulate a justified political morality through reasonable agreement. He remedied the problem of implementation encountered by theoretical top-down declarations by addressing the smallest of people. My findings suggest Korczak sought to resolve his sympathy towards traditional communities and religious beliefs with the secular demands of modern society and intentionally began with a meagre list of universal rights for children. His Children's Republics focused on how the children themselves guided action and evolved in what Beitz (2009) called emerging and evolving discursive rights practice. Rather than debate rights at an international level, I argue that Korczak intended to circumvent the State as the main political sphere for changing the acceptance of various human rights and their implementation. He developed his understanding of human rights from his practice by observing what the citizen-child regarded as valid claims, entitlements, and obligations, generating and enacting norms

in their daily lives. By conferring the rights of political participation and equality to children, his socio-political network built pressure from below to form a basis for self-governance without the usual prerequisites of a liberal society, democratic government, or international intervention. Upon Poland's independence, children's human rights gained widespread acceptance by combining a robust legal framework with support from strong moral and practical reasons.

Decades later, Łopatka (2007) explained Korczak lay such a firm foundation defining the child as an autonomous person from birth which emboldened Poland to propose the UNCRC. Indeed, Łopatka classified the draft UNCRC within his categories of human rights divided into political, socio-economic, and personal:

- (1) Political rights including statehood, freedom of speech and the right of association.
- (2) Economic and social law, including the right to work, remuneration, the right to personal property, the right to rest, health and education, the right to use cultural achievements and creative participation. Personal rights, including the right to privacy and protection of religion.

(Balcerek, 1986, p.24).

All citizens were entitled to these rights regardless of age; thus, in Łopatka's reasoning, they also apply to children but with the requirement of additional provisions due to immaturity, either intellectual, social, or physical (*ibid*).

My exploration of Poland's struggle for existence clarifies how each category of human rights became an avenue for Polish oppression but simultaneously offered the tools to resist the Empires. Recognition of children as citizens from birth appeared as an integral aspect of Korczak's work and as a strategy forging the pathway to national freedom. I pose the issue lies with portrayals of him as an individual working in relative isolation rather than in connection with socio-political movements. The devastation of WWI engaged the Polish medical fraternity in practical humanitarian efforts to prevent starvation and the spread of the typhus epidemic. Through Korczak's perspectives on

these events, I orient the reader around valuable information regarding the Poles' political aims, networks, and strategies. Here, Korczak grounded his work on children and women's contributions while setting his sights upon an extraordinary socio-political transformation.

1.6 Summary

In summary, disciplinary boundaries, reliance on translated sources, and limited attention to historical context leave scholars, translators, and readers primarily closed off from other interpretations of Korczak's texts. Though events and organisations have facilitated a revival, I counter by showing a trend in scholarship idolising and isolating his actions as an inspirational teacher. Stereotypes emerge from his popular image as a saintly old man caring for children until his heroic death during the Holocaust. Though recognised as the forefather of children's rights, scholars portray him as a solitary individual without a role or interest in the political struggles raging around him.

Many readers encounter the 'Old Doctor' Korczak during the Holocaust and find it difficult to reconcile such an image with a young, political revolutionary. Therefore, I pay significant attention to his early career as a young writer before and immediately after WWI, which I deem essential for understanding his views and motivations. Most English language studies fail to engage with previous Polish scholarship, so they misunderstand the context outright. The significance of Imperialism, nationalism, and communism upon the development of educational strategies in the Polish territories is barely known. Replicating what McCulloch & Lowe (2003) label as the centre-periphery phenomena of Empire, this is the concept that consistently places Great Britain at the centre of the educational relationships with her Empire and other countries. To embark on an activist-grounded exploration of the periphery requires a knowledge of these elements from a Polish point of view, somewhat outside of Western

history. For instance, until he was 40 years old, Korczak had his Polish language and customs violently suppressed by Russian authorities, yet only Smolińska-Theiss (2012) registered censorship within his dissident act of writing.

By briefly outlining the Polish history of revolution, medicine, and education, I emphasise how little is known about this innovative period, and its neglect allows for fundamental errors in understanding Korczak's texts. The reforms had an immense impact on the Polish language, education, and culture, which served as a prelude for my methodological approach in text analysis. Hence, the first half of this thesis traverses the territory in various ways to better situate Korczak's texts within his language, literary genre, and socio-political debates to demonstrate alternative *non-Western* meanings.

In conclusion, Korczak's texts have well outlived their author and the historical circumstances of their creation, significantly diversifying how his work is now read. In considering Korczak as a political thinker and activist, I seem to be in dialogue only with myself. This literature review shows the neglect of political themes by others who deem Korczak apolitical and ahistorical. Rather than preconceiving pedagogical themes, I examine his work in terms of its overarching narrative, paying specific attention to the overlooked contextual aspects of his work. Stripping back the image of a kind, old doctor and his orphans allows for a detailed investigation of the social institutions and influences guiding young Korczak, expanding possible factors behind his decisions and actions. What is revealing is the emergence of themes such as domination, organisation, mechanisms of change and mutuality. Examining why other educators are known while Korczak is forgotten requires a more profound exploration of power and historical revision. Thus, I demonstrate that an analysis situated within the periphery rather than the centre illuminates the originality within Korczak's ideas. Instead of seeking congruence between the meanings of his text in the past and their interpretations in the

present, my historian-theorist collaboration suggests that there might be something more going on, inviting others to explore this branch of political thought and activity.

The distinction I make with the conceptual framework is to address the importance of Korczak as a political storyteller, weaving compelling stories to build national and historical myths centred upon the child. As Korczak studies and narrates what is happening in his society, underpinning his work are political theories, and as such, his ideas on human rights and democracy still have relevance in our society. The 19th-century Poles adopted patriotism and anti-Statism to withstand the forces of cosmopolitanism and assimilation. In their rights' struggle, the Poles deemed themselves and their territories enslaved by the Empires and sought freedom from foreign rule. It is a call repeated by Korczak throughout his texts, referring to himself as a slave under the Empire. He engaged in debates with anarchist thinkers while articulating principles related to indigenous anarchism in the form of a people's struggle for language, culture, and land rights. Poland was characterised by anarchy with centuries of conflict, political failures, and resistance to Western civilisation. That Woodcock (1968) labels most Eastern Europeans of this period as holding anarchist sympathies justifies the interrogation of Korczak's thought and practice through anarchist concepts. Anarchism demands an epistemological transformation centred upon social justice to question the dominant narrative. Therefore, this thesis retrieves the crucial role of Polish revolutionary history in understanding Korczak's ideas on children's rights and childhood as emerging from a patriotic and anarchistic spirit. As Imperial power and knowledge shaped everyday life for the inhabitants of Warsaw, his work explored the contributions of women and children within his consideration of the most crucial issues. Korczak linked the human rights of children as vital for social and political transformation. Adopting a genuinely childist lens, Korczak shone a light upon the daily struggles and rights of a forgotten third of humanity to declare that children are people.

Chapter 2: Research Design

2.1 Rationale

The literature review revealed that researchers investigating Korczak's pedagogical approach could not resolve his mistrust of authorities with other citizenship activities. Scholarship perpetuates the problem by treating State-citizen as the only possible relationship, while failing to acknowledge the Polish struggle for independence. Such an omission would be unthinkable in almost any other colonised context. While other scholars have concentrated upon Korczak's Jewish heritage and anti-Semitism as a dominant influence upon his work, I explore his Polishness. I offer an alternative understanding of Korczak's conception of rights as emerging within the emancipatory atmosphere of revolution. Under such circumstances, his early work was directly shaped as a criticism of the authority of the State/Empire and sought independence (politically, culturally, and spiritually) for both Poles and Jews living together on Polish lands. Here, a more comprehensive solution is available by identifying Korczak's use of rights as a political instrument of disruption within the currents of anarchism.

Due to repeated foreign interference, the Warsaw intelligentsia was decidedly anti-State, and as Woodcock (1962) noted most Eastern Europeans held anarchist sentiments. Therefore, I engage with the classical anarchist school of thought to analyse Korczak's theory and practices in relation to his cultural milieu. Anarchism provides useful conceptual tools for interrogating his writings on democracy, education, and rights, which emerged outside the existing legal framework alongside revolutionary movements.

Polish revolutionary movements operated along the anarchist principles described by Kinna (2016b) as non-domination, direct action, illegality, and flatter hierarchy deemed necessary for challenging the state's legitimacy in everyday life and

building a new society. Showcasing a rich anarchist catalogue, Kinna (2019) explores social networks, cooperatives, grassroots organisations, and educational experiments devoted to stateless, direct action, but without considering Poland. Like Bartelson (2001), I challenge the history of anarchism that understands anarchy as the Other in opposition to the State, creating domestic insiders and international outsiders.

Historically, most Western ideas depend upon creating difference as binary opposites, says activist poet Lorde (2021), while giving simple examples of dominant/subordinate or good/bad. Lorde (2003) is famous for coining the phrase ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’ as the tools are imperfect, restrict the possibilities of change and are even dangerous by unintentionally reinforcing social structures and processes (p.25).

However, Lorde (2021) later contradicts her original position stating she no longer rejects such tools unequivocally and introduces tension to the initial premise she devised decades earlier. In her new stance, Lorde advocates for the use of whatever resources are available, as the master’s tools allow the powerless entry into the master’s house to chip away at power from within. Hence, ‘the master’s tools’ is also a phrase Kinna (2019b) borrows as a title in her work on anarchism for reimagining the State. The challenge is in critically adopting the existing legal, political, economic, and educational tools when aiming at a radical purpose.

In contemporary society, the primary legislator of the catalogue of human rights is the State, and this is generally applied so far as it is aligned or beneficial to its own interests. Conversely, however, rights are also a political instrument levied against State leadership and laws. Many socio-political movements seize upon rights as a weapon against either the weak or the powerful, usually concerning individuals outside their group. Overlooking the concept of struggle within human rights neglects the revolutionary moments in history where the weak masses have wrested power from the

ruling elite or vice versa. This ‘connection with agitation, protest, destabilisation, even violence has always been part of the human rights story’, asserts Gearty (2014) in his elaboration on the foundation of rights in society (p.37). Therefore, I move beyond the current historical portfolio of anarchist movements by highlighting Polish direct action and resistance against oppression by co-optation of the master’s tools to satisfy local needs and independence. While often failing, each attempt was neither isolated nor wasted, as the next generation reflected upon institutional and organisational governance questions much as Joll (1979) predicted. I examine the role of prefiguration as communities gradually transformed social relations to reduce coercion and increase self-government, refashioning their culture and society. The action relies upon gradual evolution for change to occur patiently, with such work serving as preparation for the significant task of stateless governance. On the other hand, anarchists became synonymous with violent revolution seeking to destroy the existing order and the state during this period. Thus, I will show the Poles combining the two approaches of evolution and revolution as (r)evolution in their quest for rights from the turbulence that marked their existence.

2.2 Goals & Research Questions

In his day, Korczak was an international figure in Polish literature and education. Nonetheless, his voice is generally absent from the established canons of educational scholarship. The exceptions are restricted to those described in the literature review, while his activities appear as mere footnotes in histories of education or children's rights. This thesis aims to cultivate a more profound interest in Korczak’s philosophy and practice amongst academics, policymakers, and practitioners. Engaging with a wide range of disciplines, his school of thought is well-positioned to enter the contemporary debates on rights, education and beyond. Here, identifying underlying

principles and theories provides an entry point and foundational study for Korczak's literary oeuvre to enter the philosophical canon for further research. Building on this, the objectives of this research project were to:

- (1) offer a reappraisal of an era of radical socio-political reform as seen through the lens of a prominent figure.
- (2) piece together relevant Korczak texts.
- (3) provide context and conceptual tools for understanding events and actions during crucial turning points in Korczak's life and Warsaw society.
- (4) challenge political narratives and promote different ways of thinking about Korczak's contribution in the study of education and political history.

The literature review and pilot study elicited a broad set of questions related to Korczak's understanding of children's rights and his relevance in the history of education. My original query related to Korczak's general absence in academic debates, so slides into the category of 'neglect filling' as described by Cohen and colleagues (2017, p.167). My initial research questions focussed on Korczak's educational ideas and practices. A common starting point for historical researchers is to go to biographical sources and supplement with institutional records or personal papers, in an attempt to excavate previously unknown and underutilised material. The *Kalendarz Życia* (Life Calendar) by Falkowska (1989) proved crucial here because it offered a chronological account of key events in Korczak's life and catalogued commentary in contemporary periodicals and local newspapers by his supporters and critics. Referring to these primary sources redirected my inquiry over time towards understanding how his Polish context influenced Korczak's beliefs and impacts his presence today.

Situating Korczak's texts within his context clarified the research category as a new formulation of an existing idea, and this political insight required consideration of how

the research results could match relevant theory. Although I had conducted a thorough archival and digital search of Korczak's texts, employing all materials is not feasible for the thesis which required a smaller selection to better fit the constraints of time and space. A decision was taken to focus on his well-known publications and assess for the effects of censorship, either by Tsarist or communist authorities, the writer himself, or by contemporary academic selection. Texts were sampled to address specific aspects of my main questions about the context, influences, and power. For example, comparing different editions of the Diary proved illuminating for which material editors chose to exclude during the communist era. I found much like Plimlott's assessment, that 'a particular line in an "otherwise colourless" paragraph might provide a vital link' (McCulloch, 2004, p.28).

Specifically, I queried how such underutilized fragments and overlooked dimensions of Korczak's writing could reveal more about his role and actions, while better understanding his general absence in educational debate or academic scholarship. What was the way in which Korczak's life unfolded within, and was shaped by, and helped to shape, a particular political, economic, social, and cultural context? What was the impact of his contribution during the transition to Poland's independence? What dilemmas or criticism did he encounter?

According to White, research questions need to be specific and concise by addressing the focus, persons involved, location and the historical period studied (Cohen et. al., 2017). Initially, the investigation began with research questions exploring Korczak's role within the history of children's rights, however, the outcome produced an alternative reading of Korczak that is relevant to broader social and political events than initially anticipated. Thus, I reframed the original research questions as follows:

1. How was Korczak a product of his time **and** place?
 - a. Who or what influenced him? Who or what did he influence?
 - b. What important debates did he engage with?
2. What key themes appear through his texts and life, and why?

2.2 Political Theory and Historical Research

The following paragraphs highlight the dilemma between political theory and historical research, summarised via their confrontation over a text. The historian would narrate what was happening and the consequences of actions back then. In contrast, the political theorist is more interested in its validity and treats the text as a historical artefact used for their purposes beyond the historical phenomenon (Pocock, 2011). The historian studies the interaction between what the author meant, the languages available to him and what the text meant to readers of the time. Whereas the theorist concerns themselves with what it means within their enquiry of issues conducted in the present (*ibid*).

Generally, studies of such actor performances are micro-histories, focused on the texts' immediate rather than long-term consequences. Although even without a diachronous focus, this Korczak study progressed as per the framework Pocock (2011) provides:

1. Demonstrating that others read Korczak with meaning distinctly different to what he intended.
2. Demonstrating that Korczak, as an author innovated in the Polish language, modifies the implications of what he said.
3. Demonstrating Korczak's writing is now acted upon in language contexts and circumstances vastly different to those in which they gained meaning.

(ibid, p.5)

The literature review has evidence of all three, opening possibilities for incorporating the political dimension into the historical narrative.

The political turn of this study introduces concepts associated with anarchism to

build a framework exploring similar ideas found in Korczak's work. Classical anarchism is usually tightly bound to class struggle, so I follow the lead of Kinna (2016a), who argued that historians could contest the current delineations. Removing this 'distorting lens' can broaden the understanding of revolutionary movements and their ideological framework (*ibid*, p.46).

The relationship between history and political theory is complicated as theoretical schools agreed upon the canons of political thought rather than historians (Pocock, 2011). A history of political theory would suppose the theory to be an ongoing activity with generalisations and change occurring over a period, which a narrated history could demonstrate. However, this is not easy to distinguish from a history of political thought, and generally, it is the choice of literature that has determined the labels of theory or thought. Thus, Polish anarchistic literature remains marginalised despite its influence on famous revolutionaries like Luxemburg, Mazzini, and Bakunin.

Furthermore, like Scott's (2009) radical history, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, I challenge assumptions to examine events from the perspective of stateless and oppressed people. The historian encounters an occupational hazard in writing about a particular period in that it inevitably requires writing about an earlier time (*ibid*). Such is the case here, which necessitated exploring Polish history and educational endeavours long before Korczak. In demonstrating that hidden histories exist, I provide political theorists with a usable past for adding Korczak texts to the canon for future study.

Most studies on Korczak begin with a biographical narrative, and there is a deficiency in exclusively individualist or collectivist accounts. Similarly, the preeminent writer on anarchism, George Woodcock, tends towards a biographical and historical approach in his analysis (Evren & Kinna, 2015). A different picture emerges in reading classical texts with a broader historical, artistic, and political lens by balancing political theory and historical research. I reserve this work as a history of philosophical ideas and

their manifestation in events and practices rather than a philosophical study per se. Rather than providing definitions, facts and legal arguments, political theory employs a critical approach to speculate on alternatives. Critics of existing regimes are generally more attractive to political theorists, as the discipline 'aims to explain, justify or criticise the disposition of power in society' (Goodwin, 1997, p.4). Using this definition, I position Korczak as a political theorist describing and criticising the division of power within one-on-one interactions and how these fit within societal power structures. Simultaneously he criticised the macro level as society structured by oppression and hierarchies.

According to anarchism, the historian aims to enlarge the picture of the world as it stands today (Joll, 1979). To understand the revolutions hatched in Poland, I retrieve elements of anarchism to show how such principles guided Polish revolutionary action. In responding to Western domination, Korczak adopted a similar position to other Poles resembling the anarchistic worldview.

In Western history, the Enlightenment is of tremendous significance, as a period fashioning a new predetermined vision of society with cosmopolitan ideals that European and Russian leaders actively competed to create. The Polish experience during the Enlightenment differed significantly from the West. Rationalism and secularisation marginalised the Poles, stereotyping them as backward barbarians hindering European progress. Poland delineating the borders between civilisation and anarchy helped to construct the East-West schism in Europe. I highlight the tension between cosmopolitanism and patriotism, where the latter meant loyalty to one's homeland and people. Diversity was characteristic of those groups resisting the unification and domination of Empires.

In contrast to the static position, anarchism held a dynamic vision based upon continual self-mastery, spontaneity, and freedom (Suissa, 2001). To explore Korczak's

relation to the anarchist position, I examine the Polish historical quest for freedom and independence. While Western anarchism dismisses Polish anarchism as nationalist, I find support from revolutionary thinkers such as Mikhail Bakunin and Karl Marx for the independence of Poland. Likewise, anarchists mistakenly celebrate cosmopolitanism, despite its role in subjugating the local populations fighting for their indigenous and religious rights. Hence, Korczak argues for freedom of religion and language while expressing compassion for those resisting modernism and change.

By staying close to literary and historical roots, I account for correlations between the standpoints of Korczak, Bakunin, and Kropotkin. The evolutionary theory of Mutual Aid provides the backbone for my conceptual framework that follows both sociological and economic threads into cooperativism. Essentially, I am concerned with the influences and motivations of Korczak's thinking and actions and how his writings may illuminate the historical period in question. Such thinking relies on ontological pluralism by simultaneously entertaining numerous viewpoints to gain fuller and complementary knowledge about the object of study. Therefore, reading against existing influential interpretations of Korczak's ideas is extended to reading classical anarchist texts with similar care. Re-contextualising and historically situating anarchist principles is desirable, say Kinna and Prichard (2009), to clarify contemporary issues accompanied by more imaginative solutions. Therefore, I argue that excluding Polish perspectives and their examples of direct action represents the 'predeterminist trap' where anarchists decide for 'others' how the future should look (Kinna, 2019a, p.238).

2.3 Methodology

The research has undergone several project iterations, beginning with a pragmatic problem-centred approach to Korczak's educational practice by attempting to discover what worked? However, it soon became clear that a paradigm shift was needed

into a category that Lukenchuk identified as critical and concerned with the analysis of power and ideology (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). This methodology section explores how I could have approached the research differently and why the chosen approach is preferable. According to the editors of the book *Research Methods in History*, methodology has almost disappeared in many dissertations overshadowed by narrative practises appearing as a product of the researcher's meanderings (Gunn & Faire, 2011). The editors cite prominent critics bemoaning the lack of rigour in methodology, although their recommendations fail to resolve the issue satisfactorily. Thus, the methodological debate amongst historians continues, often to the bemusement of social scientists (*ibid*). Where the historical researcher remains closer to sociology or economics, methods appear more precise, leaving archival research as the most precarious. Apart from apparent skills in linguistics and technology, there is little clarification available to the historian regarding decision making for the strategies pursued. A succinct description for the issue is a 'creative mess' where present-day research methods fail to clarify historical complexities especially involving fragmentary sources (*ibid*, pp. 1-2).

Primary sources generated during the period in question are usually the domain of the empiricist historian, but using Polish sources produces an alternative social history to conventional political history, a 'history of the people' (Martin, 2017, p. 324). Often such history from below commits to class struggle with a Marxian approach, which others have found to be the case with scholarship on Korczak during the communist era (Smolińska-Theiss, 2013a; Gąsiorek, 2013). Thus, a revisionist study of Korczak and Polish history of education requires the unusual step of questioning both the dominant narrative and those studies citing deep rooted economic and social factors related to little proletariats and the working class.

The historian of childhood, Fass (2013) suggests placing both sources and actors

in context, but to do this, she favours broad sources producing big data. Thus, I cannot entirely agree with her approach, which forgoes what she calls ‘small, privileged texts’ and ‘history from below’ often invisible in official records (p.4). The destruction of wars and repressive regimes in Poland depleted archives, and to ignore fragmentary evidence would obliterate much of modern Poland’s history. Instead, I argue that the few precious postcards, newspapers, and rescued volumes remain witnesses to this period. On the other hand, it was perhaps naive to justify my earlier narrative approach as telling a hidden ‘story’ in what Fass calls repaying a ‘debt to the dead’ (*ibid*). The methodology becomes the intermediary between the supposed theories and the data sources for a more rigorous design. This explanation outlines how I viewed the whole problem of Korczak's absence and justifies the resultant knowledge.

An important feature of undertaking social history is the willingness to supplement documents with other sources. Thus, the act of recovering lost voices as in Korczak’s literary texts empowers oppressed people by allowing them to speak for themselves to contest the consensus and generate a new perspective in the explanatory critique available. Thus, the goal of the study represents an ontologically driven inquiry into the historical origins of Korczak’s belief system concerning children’s rights, and the aim is to produce an alternative reading. Whereas most of the literature defines Korczak strictly within child rights studies and education, I employ an unconventional approach by examining his work with children and women about socio-political change. My objectives are to introduce Korczak’s oeuvre into contemporary political debates. My strategy explores how he viewed human rights through a different belief system. For Korczak, children’s human rights represented master’s tools that he envisaged seizing for broader societal transformation and the liberation of oppressed people.

My collectivist approach to methodology gave space to the role of groups, those working with Korczak and in competition, in driving their purpose and spread based on

political and national interests. The little-known fact that his second orphanage had an external advisory board raised the question of why he included such a board, given his reputation in education and celebrity status. Noting that one board member included the renowned professor of special education, Maria Grzegorzewska, elicits the question of what assistance she provided? Conversely, future President Bolesław Beirut with limited credentials or experience - how did he benefit from membership? Recognising such high-profile Board members suggested that the purpose of the orphanage was to scale up the model nationwide. This study proposes that education and child care during this period is complex, with cultural, political, and economic components. These groups resisted authoritarian Empires through multi-faceted actions while building a new democratic nation from below.

2.4 Methods and Sources

I adopted the historical methods primarily through archival research in Polish language sources, mainly at the *Korczakianum* (Museum of Warsaw). I followed McCulloch's (2005) recommendations for investigating complex and difficult issues, to combine primary and secondary sources, and complement with other historical data such as visual evidence and physical artefacts. To address the issues of reliability and bias, I follow Martin's (2017) triangulation process which makes use of a wide range of different kinds of evidence, representing alternative interests, placing each source in conversation with each other. The process also served as an epistemological exercise, where McCulloch (2005) argues that even a single document can be useful in reconstructing the experiences and viewpoints of an individual or group. A key question asked by historians is whether a document is representative. In the case of Korczak's texts, they bring credibility in their account of events by providing a unique insider point of view which is rarely available during many of the events under scrutiny here.

Thus, the usual questions of how typical or generalisable the sources may require suspension due to the circumstances in which they were written and the survival rate of evidence during this period (*ibid*).

The majority of Korczak texts and subsequent scholarship remain difficult to access. The reasons are multiple, including the destruction of material during wars, the Soviet era and small publication runs appearing predominantly in Polish. Hence, gaining access to much of the material became part of the research methods. Access drove the requirement for traversing the territory in various ways and appreciating data from different disciplines. A significant obstacle was gaining physical access to Korczak material, guarded carefully from the public for many years. To this end, I developed good relationships with the Museum, IKA, and the Polish Ombudsman for Child Rights (BRPD

Given the utter devastation of Korczak's hometown of Warsaw and the manner of his death during WWII, the archival material is small compared to other historical figures. Mostly these are held within the research-archive centre of the Museum of Warsaw and International Korczak Association (IKA), both located in one of the former Children's Homes. Aside from the primary repository in Warsaw, the Ghetto Fighters' House in Israel holds Korczak's publications and correspondence with former students who emigrated. However, the organisation does not grant access to outsiders, as it has not systematically reviewed or organised its material, in lacking the resources and Polish language skills to do so. Thus, this private collection does not meet the basic criteria to be classified as an archive for historical research (McCulloch, 2004). Through IKA, I contacted researchers in 23 countries for information, browsed university and museum collections, local historical society archives and private collections so am confident to confirm that the search strategy for sources was exhaustive.

In the case of the Warsaw collection, I initially relied upon the tacit knowledge

of the archive personnel employing their existing conceptual model developed and augmented by categorisation and past researcher requests. This Museum organises and manages documents organically, growing over time by adding new categories and secondary sources. From my digital searches, I was armed with comprehensive background information for these visits, facilitating deeper discussions with archivists that honed my requests for obscure materials usually neglected by others.

Though some of Korczak's original publications have survived, my study relied heavily upon republished copies and compilations of his texts, letters, and memoirs which according to McCulloch (2017) constitute hybrid sources. There is little possibility to determine the authenticity of these sources as original manuscripts are not easily accessible for study, so reliance is on verification by the Museum of Warsaw as to these reflecting genuine texts.

To ensure I was not overly dependent on the Museum of Warsaw as a single source, I gathered many different pieces of evidence, from wide-ranging sources including analyses by well-respected historians. Historical research relies on various sources, primary and secondary and oral tradition (Gunn & Faire, 2012). Primary sources may include eyewitness accounts oral or written testimony, including diaries and letters. It is also found in public records or legal documents, minutes of meetings, newspapers, and artefacts such as posters and photographs. Given the historical period, oral histories are no longer possible as unless re-analysing previous testimonies provided to other researchers.

Elena and colleagues (2010) noted that the preliminary stages of historical research rely heavily upon the researcher's intuition and aptitude to facilitate information seeking. These scholars also argue that this is not a haphazard fact-finding mission and that historians combine scientific knowledge and experience to guide their inquiry. Understanding the socio-historical context of Korczak texts relies on broader

knowledge of the era. Through geo-historical walks in widespread locations, I can relate to Suissa's (2010) research of 'sitting in silent archives, rummaging in second-hand bookshops' to trace revolutionary footsteps (VII). The main activity required gathering and evaluating the evidence related to this period and assessing how that evidence contributes to a greater understanding of Korczak's activity and disciplinary histories generally.

Using documentary analysis, I traced several initiatives relating to education and child welfare before and immediately after Polish independence in 1918. However, following along the biographical order of the Polish archives and accepting the histories compiled by previous researchers would preserve their internal logic within my research process. I chose a different tactic by deep diving into specific events which allude to Korczak's motivations for opening the Children's Homes. My results question the existing narrative of his early career describing his desire to model his orphanages on those he visited in London. Secondly, I draw from his writings and actions during WWII. From donning a Polish military uniform in his old age to his broad denouncement of the West, he implicated the role of Enlightenment ideas in oppressing Eastern Europe and precipitating the Holocaust.

Although I initially considered digital search methods as only supplementing my archival searches, this simultaneous activity was invaluable in locating additional material and ensured an exhaustive search strategy. Given the fragile and fragmented nature of Polish and Jewish historical records, historians took significant steps to digitise historic newspapers, publications, and other evidence usually not readily accessible, such as personal correspondence and photographs. The most significant Polish-language source is the National Digital Library, *Polona*, created by the *Biblioteka Narodowa* (National Library of Poland). I began with this digital source because it contains literary manuscripts by Korczak and some of the writers he

referenced, such as Juliusz Słowacki and Stefan Żeromski. Furthermore, it contained relevant periodicals and newspapers identified by Falkowska (1989) as critiquing Korczak's work. These writers also worked during the period of interest, and I used such primary sources to substantiate or refute claims I encountered in secondary sources and compare them with Korczak's narration.

Throughout my investigation, I conducted additional searches as needed from the *Federacja Bibliotek Cyfrowych* (Federation of Digital Libraries) and the following regional collections:

- *Wielkopolska Biblioteka Cyfrowa* (Digital Library of Wielkopolska)
- *Jagiellońska Biblioteka Cyfrowa* (Jagiellonian Digital Library)
- *Śląska Biblioteka Cyfrowa* (Digital Library of Silesia)
- British Library
- Metropolitan Archives (London)
- University College London
- National Library of Australia (Trove)

Furthermore, I had alumni access to the *E-biblioteka Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego* (University of Warsaw's e-Library) and the *Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej* (Academy of Special Pedagogy), both institutions with historical ties to Korczak.

To ensure the process was systematic, I summarise the process as follows. I broke down each topic into a series of questions that defined the tasks required and whether to retrieve information from primary or secondary sources. I maintained notes and took photographs of documents, as is standard practice amongst researchers. I organised the archive per research sub-topics and captured interesting events, citations, and quotes using software packages to store and collate fragmented information.

For the preliminary digital searches, I reviewed Korczak's texts and secondary source citations and footnotes to identify entities relevant to the research questions,

focussing on names, organisations, places, and events. Using a software application, I formulated these in chronological order and overlaid them with his life history. I found numerous primary sources from the historical period in question using generic keywords in both English and Polish, such as [orphanage] coupled with places [Forest Hill] and date restrictions [1909-1912]. These materials were checked against secondary sources and the primary lists compiled from Korczak texts.

Initially, my investigation began with closely related terms like the name of the other orphanage director [e.g., Falska], but via these connections, I quickly expanded to unforeseen combinations of search words such as [e.g., Warsaw-terrorism] and [e.g., Montessori-eugenics]. Each search produced useful primary and secondary sources providing material on Korczak's relationships with other actors, debates, and events. Furthermore, using combinational searches directed at specific journals, associated positively and negatively with Korczak, proved invaluable in identifying related themes and locating rare primary sources for familiarisation with Korczak's philosophical ideas and historical context [e.g., journals written by Warsaw doctors debating Darwin].

The initial list of generic search terms expanded from those commonly investigated and analysed by existing secondary sources to my more specialised concepts [e.g., Hoover-PAKPD]. Using a hierarchical taxonomy, I initially employed concept maps to organise names and domains of interest. However, I switched to a semantic network structure to enrich my search, as the analysis of word meanings and relations between concepts became central for understanding this writer. As I deeply engaged with the historical context, I found a mental model of the relationships to be more semantically rich and efficient given the inquiry's linguistic, political, and philosophical nature. Unlike other researchers who may progress incrementally with general terms that seem more relevant, I found that the seemingly unrelated and specialised terms [e.g., Mutual Aid] enriched the keyword lexicon.

To keep the network manageable, I reduced the number of associations to stick with a set of essential concepts most clearly related to those I identified within Korczak texts and the historical period, such as war and race. This redaction assisted in finding relevant primary sources while helping me to better understand how these were chronologically related to one another.

Once I identified the considerable impact of censorship on Polish literature, I adapted the key search strategy by reversing the common practice by historians who favour simple searches in digital archives (Elena *et al.*, 2010). I subsequently used advanced searches with more synonyms and greater combinations in digital searches of library and museum collections in Poland, the United Kingdom and Israel. This decision reflects the broad and exhaustive nature of my investigation of Korczak sources and the historical context generally. While I achieved the most successful results within Polish archives, digital repositories such as the British Library and National Library of Australia (Trove) contributed access to lost primary sources in other languages. My success is evident in finding translations of Korczak's books published under different titles, located as far afield as London and Istanbul, not catalogued within other bibliographies or repositories. From the results of digital searches, I simultaneously proceeded with traditional search methods by following up information within physical archives as catalogued in the table below (Figure 3: Methodological Timetable).

Good practice in historical scholarship employs footnotes rather than in-text referencing, and I took a licence from the convention to orientate readers more familiar with educational research. Attempting to maintain chronological sense between historical events and publications, I provide the original publication date alongside the accessed contemporary reference (*i.e.*, 1919/1993). In the How to Love A Child (HTLAC) series, the quotes appear as originally numbered fragments to retain the author's sense of urgency, timing, and authority. I use titles of Korczak's work first in

Polish, with a simultaneous translation, and subsequently, only the English version. All translations are my interpretations of Korczak's text rather than definitive. At times, previous well-known translations are maintained for access, consistency, or to facilitate fluency for the English reader.

Beyond the external elements, I undertake a small amount of internal criticism by weighing the testimony found against other sources of historical information. I questioned and substantiated the reliability of document contents to challenge biases within interpretations. Therefore, I used many archives and materials such as legislative acts, newspapers, postcards, textbooks, reports of institutions and significant location visits coupled with extensive secondary literature on the subjects (Figure 3). The accuracy of historical data can usually be verified by comparing accounts to determine if there is agreement. Instead, this thesis argues that existing reports by non-Polish scholars reveal oversights or omissions. The problem is two-fold, lacking sufficient historical knowledge about the period Korczak was writing in and a bias towards a Western interpretation.

Furthermore, scholars have been underestimating censorship and Korczak's competence as a writer. Here scholars assume his quotes are straightforward with little lost in translation. My goal of understanding why the Korczak movement has failed to gain traction beyond tight-knit groups requires exploration relatively independent of current literature. In this search for cohesion, the most crucial reference plane lies not with other scholars but with Korczak's actual writings and critical reviews within his lifetime. I retain selected educational themes, but the intention is to illuminate historical context and political theory, which now receive less attention.

Figure 3: Methodological Timetable

Methodological Timetable		
1.	<p>Building an awareness of the socio-political context of Korczak's lifetime (May 2016 -2019):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In three years, I visited locations that Korczak mentions as significant in his life. In these locations, I engaged with Jewish, immigrant and local history to sensitise to the atmosphere of the specific period 1899-1910 related to his visits. • A survey of selected Polish language secondary sources, primarily Falkowska (1989), was undertaken to prepare a 'topical bibliography'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warsaw (where I lived for approx. three years) – I attended Polish language and culture courses for two consecutive years at the University of Warsaw. I joined historical workshops and tours conducted through the Jewish Historical Institute, Korczakianum – Korczak archive at the Museum of Warsaw and POLIN Museum of History of Polish Jews. I also enrolled as a researcher-observer at the Maria Grzegorzewska University of Special Education (APS) and studied Masters and Doctoral level courses in Social Pedagogy, Theories of Education, History of Education, Philosophy in Education and Pedology amongst others. Both universities have a historical connection with Korczak as a student and lecturer. • I conducted geo-historical walks in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kiev ○ Berlin ○ Paris ○ Geneva and Swiss cantons ○ London ○ Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and surrounds • A 'topical bibliography' was undertaken of publications about Korczak's life and writing during his lifetime. The polemic commentary, critique and reviews of his books and activities show how his views resonated with others in the public sphere. Compared to contemporary reviews, these have received little consideration and provided valuable clues about the debates in which Korczak was involved.
2.	<p>To understand the conditions Korczak was working under and compare these with the conditions he may have encountered in London. It is a commonly held view that the Forest Hill orphanages were the model and inspiration for Korczak's decision to build and run the Children's Home (Lifton, 1988).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review historical and technical information such as reports from the Children's Home, architectural plans, maps and footnotes from the editors of the collected works. • Visit the London Metropolitan Archives, Museum of London. • Visit the Lewisham Local History and Archive Centre, which holds material on the 'Forest Hill Industrial Schools for Boys and Girls'. The file contains Committee reports, local maps, photos and parent letters from both orphanages/schools known as Shaftesbury House and Louise House from 1909-1911 when Korczak visited. Neither home is operational, with only the original Louisa House still standing. • Forest Hill Historical Society - seminar dedicated to Korczak by local historian responsible for collating the archive record and guest speaker, Dr Wojciech Lasota from the University of Warsaw (former Korczak, archivist - Museum of Warsaw).

5.	Mapping Korczak's Philosophical & Pedagogical Position	I created concept maps from the connections I found between Korczak's writing and other well-known thinkers and social actors.
6.	Pilot Study 1: The Lifton Effect	Reading Korczak – see Chapter 1
7.	Pilot Study 2: Montessori v Korczak	Born Criminal – see Chapter 6
9.	Relevant Presentations (feedback & dissemination)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCL Doctoral Conference – June 2017 • Child Rights Research Symposium, Geneva – August 2017 • 3rd International Congress on Rights of the Child/8th International Korczak Conference – Sept 2017 • Sustainability, Interdisciplinarity and Transformative Change, IACR, August 2018 • Child Rights Research Symposium, Geneva – August 2018 • Child Rights Research Symposium, Geneva – August 2019 • Celebrating Children's Rights at UCL, November 2019 • History of Medicine and Childhood, ACLA, April 2021

2.5 Scope

In studying a Polish-Jewish figure, the problem of what is Polish and what is Jewish is a complex one, treated here as inseparable from its complicated and diverse history. My study employs the Oxford Dictionary definition of the nation to refer to a body of people united by shared history, culture and language inhabiting the Polish territory. Describing the nation-building activity in multicultural Poland before independence or WWII involved the citizenship activities of diverse people and groups with and without State intervention or control. I rely upon definitions of the nation of people as an evolving concept, while the nation-state attempts to apply boundaries to this informal identity. The tension appears as the fluid nation continuously changes while the static state resists.

Due to its complicated history, references to Poland in this thesis may refer to the present country, the inter-war period, under occupation or during partitions when it did not exist. I acknowledge that applying the term Polish to specific regions and individuals is contested. Referring to the Poles, Jews or intelligentsia is not meant to imply that such groups were homogenous in their political and religious beliefs or ethnicity, nor to exclude the experiences and actions of other minorities living in this geographic region. The fear of any group losing its unique identity sits in tension with the enrichment brought from outside, much in the way the old joke asks what dishes make up Polish cuisine, namely 'Ukrainian borscht, Lithuanian dumplings and Jewish fish' (Fischer, 1993, p.203).

Conversely, I increasingly narrow the labels to focus upon the group Korczak referred to as 'us'. This dynamic association shared the literary and personal influences that shaped his career and activism, where such influences contributed to individuals perceiving and reacting differently to the world. Though his Jewish-Polish identity amongst rising anti-Semitism in the 1930s is essential, others devote time to such

explorations, so it was not the focus of my research (see Berger, 2006; Efron, 2008; Silverman, 2017). Meanwhile, Michalek (2018) notes that narrow portrayals of Korczak as a real Pole or real Jew often appear without Polish cultural-historical context. As the research explores his earlier career, investigation during the Holocaust does not feature strongly, except to include his writing from this period. I recommend Witkowska-Krych's (2014; 2017; 2019) research for a trans-national and sophisticated analysis of experiences in the Warsaw Ghetto.

The scope by no means addresses other crucial issues such as urbanisation, migration, and anti-Semitism. As described in the search strategy, I began from a broad base to deliberately narrow down a few select events in Warsaw during the decade when Korczak began his professional career as a writer, doctor, and educator. As a period of unpredictably quick social changes, the backdrop of war and epidemic coincided with a tumultuous period in Korczak's personal and professional life. Here, the intention is to raise awareness of the mostly unknown political climate and severe conditions that characterised Korczak's early career and connected him with past revolutionaries and later with humanitarian aid efforts. His Diary as a written source provides a frame of reference, and Martin (2017) claims such educational biographies are useful for assessing power relations and ideological clashes in shaping an individual's experience (p.326). Therefore, this thesis argues that though a complex and multidimensional individual, Korczak was not outside the divisions and debates of the period he lived. I focus on the history of medicine and evolutionary science to explore Korczak's professional role as a pedagogue-doctor, primarily as I have medical science and education qualifications.

Likewise, the substantiation for focusing on the Polish influence relates primarily to my expertise and that Korczak wrote exclusively in Polish despite being multi-lingual. My decision also draws directly from Korczak, who cryptically stated his

perspectives on the Holocaust relate to being born in Poland more than being Jewish. He viewed himself as enslaved under Imperial colonisation as his texts incorporate the theme of slavery on multiple occasions. However, rather than solely blame the Russian Empire or Nazi Reich, he expanded his criticism towards the West. Thus, I relate theories of domination to the intellectual and political landscape Korczak experienced, both in literature and life.

Taking heed of McCulloch's (2003) centre-periphery criticism of historical research, this thesis reflects a distinctly Polish viewpoint and unique starting point for such research. For this period before an official history of child rights, because Korczak and other Poles articulated themselves as slaves under the Russian Empire, the timeline engages with concepts of slavery.³ Just as some scholars make a case for incorporating Kropotkin's Russian background as essential to understanding his anarchism, I do the same for Korczak's Polishness. Presenting the case for Polishness clarifies the form of anti-West patriotism and abolitionist motifs infused within Korczak's life and work.

Though events appear roughly chronological, this is not actually the case as I must rely on relevant anecdotes and reflections scattered throughout his writing. Scholars and biographers have often sought to explain Korczak's activities as solitary, without precedent and theory. Their approach is reminiscent of certain literary criticism that only attends to the text as if emerging from a timeless vacuum. In contrast, I propose reading Korczak's work together with themes prevalent in Polish literature and culture. For example, revealing his position on cosmopolitanism by analysing his texts placed in the context of Imperial expansion and colonialism to present my new politicised reading. Thus, I bring to the discussion relatively unknown documents from his lifetime to clear up contradictions and reconstruct the inherent logic of Korczak's position. Historians must consider how a document may have been understood in its

³ Regarding the interchangeability of slavery with agricultural serfdom in Eastern Europe see Kluchevsky's hypothesis in Domar (1970) equating similar economic forces in the Russia as colonial North America.

context, via recognition of technical phrases, esoteric allusions and references to individuals and institutions. As well as of the changing usages of particular words and terms (McCulloch, 2004). This semiotic approach emphasises the search for deeper meanings in text to consider symbols, imagery and even what is absent. Such arguments suggest there are different ways of reading texts based upon the reader's interpretations and intentions (*ibid*).

Generally, investigations such as these provide precise definitions and explain the terminology. However, my argument is that translation can serve to further domination by conflating the concepts of the oppressed into the oppressor. Furthermore, the Polish language has evolved through resistance to the oppression of its neighbours, becoming one of the tools that are inseparable from Poland's historical-political struggles. Thus, I repeatedly interpret definitions, theories, and texts from the periphery position of an Eastern European rather than those offered by Western imperial history. I relate certain concepts to their Latin and Polish linguistic origins with subsequent literature adaptation. A similar precedent appears in Kinna's (2019a) book on the theory and practice of anarchism, *The Government of No-one*. Using etymology and literary criticism, she arrives at an understanding of domination as 'a diffuse kind of power [...] in uneven access to economic or cultural resources' (*ibid*, p.60). The rejection of such social power and privilege unifies anarchism and forms my central argument, including Korczak's narration of children's struggles in an adult-dominated world.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Ideas become ideology through coherent and repeated patterns, observed within the choices made by individuals and groups around their beliefs and assumptions about how a society works or should work. Often thought and action joins in rendering ideology invisible, incorporating intellectual and emotional components articulating the

hopes, fears, and hatred behind knowledge and practice. Beginning from contemporary knowledge about historical events reinforces the dominant position and makes it challenging to reveal who or what may be suppressed.

The concept of ideology has become controversial by raising issues about neutrality and historicity. Simply put, ideas provide explanations for the way the world is, and so influence the way people act; ‘ideologies can act as a form of social cement, providing social groups, and indeed whole societies, with a set of unifying beliefs and values’ (Heywood, 2017, p3). This ideological framework encompasses a critical element of the existing model and the desired alternative to conceive how this change may be achieved (Figure 4).

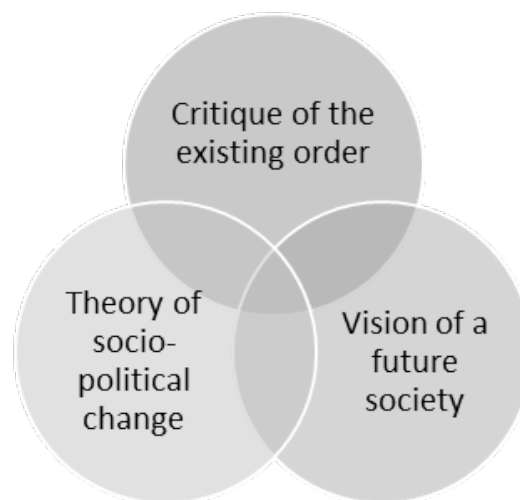


Figure 4: Elements of Ideology. Source: Heywood, 2017

Adopting an ontologically driven inquiry into the historical origins of this child rights ideology avoids exploring potential threads at random. I find the nexus encapsulated in Korczak’s (1942/1967) Last Lectures and Great Lives series. Designed to outlive his death in the Holocaust, he leaves clues for future treasure hunters to piece together the old-world order alongside his alternative, with the following lecture titles;

Emancipation of Women
Heredity
Loneliness
Napoleon
What is duty?
The medical profession
Amiel's memoirs
Reminiscences of a doctor
London
Mendel
Leonardo da Vinci
Fabre
The senses and the mind
The genius and his environment (mutual impact)
The Encyclopaedists
How different writers worked
Nationality. Nation. Cosmopolitanism
Symbiosis
Evil and malice
Freedom. Destiny and free will

p.481

This narrative approach challenges the view that processes within the history of ideas could be unproblematic or without discontinuities. It is an approach drawn directly from Korczak's memoir, encouraging the reader to undertake an archaeological dig of his life, stating that it could prove fruitful to tell his own story differently from the usual style. Using a metaphor of digging a well, Korczak (1942/2012) explains how to proceed with reading his work and life;

one cannot start from the depths, but first must clear the top layer broadly, tossing shovelfuls of soil aside, not knowing what lay beneath, encountering tangled roots, obstacles, and things missing, those placed by others and yourself, difficult subjects lay like stones.

p 8.

I explore how to read Korczak and delve into these obstacles and the issue of language, translations, and subjectivity in Chapter 5. In his digging-a-well metaphor, first, the site must be cleared wider than required. Linguistic hurdles come from text fragments no longer within the cultural vocabulary, such as insider jokes or long-forgotten events. At times, my investigation resembled a biographical dot-to-dot, as each name and figure of speech served as epistemic tools clarifying ideas and concepts.

Engaging with contemporary scholarship, Foucault's ethical and political notions and genealogical tools appear to resonate with this research direction strongly. However, by ignoring material and historical conditions, Foucault perpetuates the French legacy of the men of reason, The Encyclopaedists. In contrast, Korczak emphasises identity as part of the collective (nation), and his priorities for reconstructing the new world began with the Emancipation of Women. Finding that censors during the communist era removed this list from the Diary (1978), I suggest it was problematic for their Marxist ideology and represents a vital absence within his political dimension.

Another critical tool Korczak (1942/1967) provided in his last weeks of life, listing the biographies he planned to write;

Pestalozzi, da Vinci, Kropotkin, Piłsudski, and a few dozen more, including Fabre, Multatuli, Ruskin and Gregor Mendel, Nałkowski, Szczepanowski, Dygasinski, Dawid.

Ever heard of Nalkowski? The world knows nothing of many great Poles.

p.430.

Realising the connections between these Greats and famous others allows a more profound comprehension of his ideas. Answering the sub-question regarding his influences untangles his educational philosophy. The list of Greats included, perhaps as expected, Polish national heroes such as Piłsudski and the pedagogues Pestalozzi, Nałkowski, Dygasinski and Dawid. The addition of Szczepanowski, an oil industry pioneer, appears odd unless the reader knows the wealthy industrialist employed his fortune towards creating cooperatives to end the misery of Galician Poles.

Furthermore, the seemingly disparate list of thinkers – Fabre, a French natural scientist, Kropotkin, an anarchist geographer, Mendel, the founder of modern genetics and Ruskin, an English art critic, all share the common link criticising aspects of Darwin's evolutionary theory. This finding shaped my second pilot study forming the crux of my chapters on the hidden histories of medicine, science and education constructed as tools of domination against the Poles.

2.7 Thesis Structure

Colonialism is challenging to define and multifaceted, though anarchist scholarship is often drawn into Western apologetics debating colonial methods rather than ethics (Baudouin, 2003). Hardy's justification for domination is typical of the era, generally representing the European efforts in 'civilisation of natives and barbarians' with the latter referring to the Eastern Europeans:

The greatest difficulty is to impose regular and stable working habits on a population preferring a nomadic life to a sedentary effort [...]. As these populations represent infant societies, [...] it is admissible to apply the same treatment we apply to our own children, that is to submit them to a compulsory system.

ibid, §7

This metaphor of raising rebellious children relates well to the uncivilised peoples resisting domination. Thus, I overview the revolutionary resistance of Poles from the 18th to the 20th-centuries and the simultaneously oppressing and liberating roles of medicine, education, and commerce.

Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the research with background information on the topic. The literature review answered the first research question of how is Korczak understood? I catalogued growing interest in retrieving his school of thought in Poland and abroad to demonstrate the topic's significance. However, as is often the case with historical figures, Korczak's work is read differently and employed to serve various agendas. First, I summarised the issues found during the literature review to show that an over-reliance on secondary sources, translations and ahistorical scholarship has facilitated the propagation of errors within the common understandings of Korczak's philosophy and practice. Then, I re-placed biographical details within the historical context by retrieving little-known archival documents and exploring historical sources in London and Warsaw. My findings suggested an anti-capitalist agenda and the notion that Korczak's motivation was political instead of philanthropic.

Chapter 2 has presented my overall research design, including the outline of my methodology, scope, purpose, and significance of the project. By advocating for reading in Polish, examining errors, and favouring a Polish perspective on historical events, I show how translation can absorb the oppressed into the meanings of the oppressor. Finally, I outline my decision-making throughout my research journey and historical arguments, including introducing anarchism within my analytical framework, which I expand upon in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 introduces classical anarchism as a school of political thought. I highlight the exclusion of Polish revolutionaries within this political history via the 19th-century debate known as the Polish Question. I evaluate the interactions between well-known political figures and the Poles to argue for greater inclusion of the latter's ideas and activities within scholarship. To locate Korczak's position on the national question, I use various publications to analyse the similarities and differences between his position and classical anarchist ideas. Critically reviewing anarchistic references, themes, and motifs within Korczak's texts demonstrate his debt to Polish predecessors, including the radical professors at his university. Utilising etymology and historical precedents, I trace anarchist themes of domination, civilisation, and slavery. My primary argument for differentiating Polish thinkers from classical anarchism is that the Polish version entwines metaphysics within their political goals. Moving beyond class struggle, the epistemological basis for Polish anarchism appears in their fight for indigenous rights to land, language and culture, drawing from their perspectives as oppressed people. The specific examples answer the second research question by foregrounding Korczak's influences, who remain relatively unknown compared to other thinkers. By adhering to the perspectives of Russians and Westerners regarding Polish nationalism and culture, contemporary historians and theorists perpetuate the legacy of domination against the Poles, as explained in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 *Inventing Eastern Europe* draws its title from scholarly debates on the construction of the East-West schism in modern European history. It is relevant that the Poles and Eastern Europeans appeared within the defined 'West' only recently. This Western status was not the case for Korczak's era or when Poland proposed the UNCRC under communism. As Poland is a member of the European Union, it is now considered Western; therefore, the historical position of Poles as non-Western requires explanation. To familiarise readers with the context, I provide a brief overview of the history of Poland, its demise and the centuries of Western European and Russian oppression that followed under the guise of enlightenment progress. Then, guided by Korczak's Last Lectures, I construct a deliberately skewed genealogy to outline his distinct perspectives on cosmopolitanism, famous philosophers, and the Holocaust. Specifically, I show how Korczak problematised the Enlightenment history of philosophical ideas, which challenges the ongoing uncritical commitment to cosmopolitanism in education and contemporary academia. Subsequent chapters undertake hidden histories centred upon the master's tools, namely literature, medicine, education, law, and commerce related to Korczak's role as a writer, doctor, juvenile defender, and educator.

Chapter 5 *Propaganda of the Deed* continues the case for reading Korczak in his original Polish and for the general inclusion of Polish scholarship. Though fluent in many languages, Korczak's choice to write solely in Polish demonstrates resistance to Imperial attempts to eradicate his language. From my preliminary analysis, I propose that Korczak's writing sits within specific genres of literature, especially propaganda. Much like poetry or prose are more suitable for interrogation by a philosopher, this is not a philosophical work in the contemporary sense. Korczak acted as the publicist for specific movements and knew 'how to throw a book like a bomb'. Responding to my second research question, I embarked upon a literary analysis of his original texts in Polish by employing cultural and linguistic sensitivity to the ambiguities I encountered.

Simultaneously, I schooled myself in the Warsaw intelligentsia's historical events and prominent debates using historical documents such as newspapers, journals, and visual evidence. Using images such as paintings, photographs and logos for historical research is relatively new, and useful in analysing different representations of children and adults at the time (Martin, 2017; McCulloch, 2017). Censorship greatly impacted Polish publications; thus, I combine literary analysis and iconography⁴, which Martin (2017) suggests as valuable for extracting meanings and recurring motifs within seemingly unrelated sources. Care was taken in not overinterpreting the material but using images for verification of contextual information and comparison with secondary analysis.

I initially focussed upon events which others may find significant to broader European history, such as WWI and WWII. I also narrowed this potentially mammoth task, by focusing upon thinkers and events Korczak quoted, especially those associated with the 1905 Warsaw Revolution and evolutionary debates. Thus, my research became attuned to divulging his influences and answering the research sub-question. Retrieving a legacy of underground networks reveals the overlooked role of women in Korczak's inner circle and their involvement at all levels of revolutionary action.

Chapter 6 Revolution or Evolution delves into the tools of medicine and science employed to medically categorise the people of Polish territories as sub-human and a threat to Western civilisation. From my second pilot study, The Born Criminal section presents a comparative critique that teases apart the differences between Korczak and another doctor-educator, Maria Montessori, active in the same era. Thus, to answer the second research question, the chapter provides information on the rise of anthropological arguments and socio-political debates around evolutionary theory. These scientific debates unlocked an entry point into Korczak's ideas and how

⁴ Iconography: understood to mean a range of, or system of, types of images used to convey particular meanings.

evolution appears as a theme in his texts countering positivist materialism and Social Darwinism. During the text analysis, I simultaneously built a conceptual framework beginning from Kropotkin's theory of Mutual Aid, with in-vivo addition of relevant concepts encountered in Korczak's literature. Unashamedly one-sided, I aim for an epistemological shift with this framework using Korczak's texts written from his declared perspective as a slave, rather than Kropotkin's status of a renounced prince.

Chapter 7 School on the Moon focuses on the issue identified in the Montessori exercise to contest educational writers repeatedly conflating Korczak with other educators such as A.S. Neill. An overview of the history of national schooling outlines how Poland's neighbours aborted its innovative education system and crushed resistance during culture wars. Exploring what makes education radical engages with the Polish history of education, supporting the notion of Korczak continuing a political project begun many years prior. Anarchism identifies domination as occurring on multiple levels; micro-political, institutional and through conquest, with Korczak's model aimed at all three. His nation-building project served the stateless people attempting to win back their ancestral territory alongside cultural and religious freedoms. The findings suggest Korczak's resistance to the domination of the master's tools of universal scientific laws, mass schooling and any predetermined vision of society.

Chapter 8 Prefigurative Practice outlines how Korczak's Homes introduced a radical Pedagogy of Law by embracing the historical and cultural institutions relevant to the children. His practices of self-government featuring mutuality and autonomy demonstrate prefigurative practice with and by the child-citizen. His strategy of building a grassroots alternative amongst the weakest members of society, based upon cooperatives, sits well with anarchist theorists such as Ward (1982) and Franks (2012). Kinna (2016a) aligns Kropotkin's anarchism with encouraging youth to question

authority, while Korczak ascribed such resistance to the youngest children, even infants. Korczak advised those in authority, whether child or adult, not *to govern too much* rather than the anarchist positions effusing *no government*. He encouraged his readers, young and old, to develop a critical understanding of who or what they hold as authorities while consenting to conditions of freedom. Rather than impose democratic and judicial systems that shift power and authority into the children's hands, the children could challenge the very principles of law-making and governance by actively researching the flaws of practice and implementation.

Chapter 9 Little People explores lesser-known examples of Polish education and cooperatives, further situating Korczak within rich and dynamic schools of thought and action. This chapter underpins the themes I explore throughout the thesis, including self-government, mechanisms of change, prefigurative practice and mutuality. The concept of prefiguration allows the evaluation of direct action by the actors themselves, here achieving greater autonomy via cooperative networks. The weakest social strata co-opting the master's tools of commerce and law allowed them to build themselves into a force through cooperation and consumption rather than competition and production. At this point, I also credit Jean-Jacques Rousseau's observation that in Poland, the *sejmiki* (little parliaments) are more critical in achieving people's freedom and securing a rich material life than the central government. The economist Stanisław Szczepanowski adopted this strategy for the self-government of Galician communities attempting to satisfy their inhabitants' material and cultural needs. He implemented economic cooperatives and educational institutions for oppressed people to mutually self-help towards improved life conditions without centralised control. Scholars encounter him amongst the Greats, though to date, they have not explored how Korczak related the Galician model of economic rights and cooperativism to children. Korczak (1942) credits Szczepanowski as providing a template for the practical application of

political theory. I suggest the Polish cooperatives embody the classical anarchist vision of spontaneous, voluntary associations in federation together, satisfying local needs and aims.

In offering a new politicised reading of Korczak, I have re-placed his life and work in slave hood as revolutions, political movements, and war rage around him in the name of freedom. Addressing his absence in academic scholarship reinstates perspectives of the oppressed instead of the oppressor and shifts arguments beyond national or class struggles. Thus, the thesis represents a usable past for the reader to assess whether these political theories and actions are relevant today. Here, I explore the potential usefulness and relevance of the final conceptual framework in practical terms by analysing the *save the children* action in which Korczak took part.

In the political form, anarchists often argue for individual rights and the concept of unanimous rule, while I challenge its desirability using Polish history to show how individualist freedoms brought cataclysmic results for its citizens. The philosophical school emerging after Poland's destruction sought to reconcile the position of the individual within society. I explore this school of thought and associated direct action linked to the organisational strategy of Polish cooperatives as embodying democratic communalism. As such, these municipal organisations and their practical dilemmas give insight into the conditions of freedom for the next revolution advocated by contemporary libertarians (Bookchin, 2015).

In Chapter 10, *Saving the Children*, I demonstrate that solutions can indeed come from ordinary people. According to Kinna (2016), Kropotkin's vision for anarchism can be distanced from simplistic notions that people are naturally good, and that history will always progress. In its place, she affirms his belief that 'ordinary people had the capacity to resolve complex social problems through their direct interactions' (p.191). Therefore, I extrapolate Korczak's model of children's

organisations forming a grassroots network ready to emerge when crisis destabilises the hierarchy above. I analyse the example of saving the children during WWI in Poland and whether this direct action meets the criteria for anarchist praxis.

Despite a knowledge gap in educational and sociological research identified by several scholars and named by Liebel (2012) as the hidden history of child rights, little is known about such rights' movements. Thus, I have chosen to isolate the save the children's action away from other debates for a sharper focus. The goal here is to present a new reading of Korczak rather than an amalgamation of contemporary debates and opinions. I look to references in Korczak's texts to guide the analysis and selection of events or texts. The quest for Polish independence characterises the thesis by showcasing opportunities that appeared during WWI for socio-political reorganisation veiled by the emergencies of famine and epidemic. I deliberately adopt a one-sided discussion on the saving the children action, as this Polish perspective invites a new interpretation from those on the ground, such as Korczak and his colleagues. Such analysis from below makes it ideal for an anarchist reading of rights by taking the victims' opinions and actions seriously.

In contradiction to the anarchist position that holds any engagement with the state contrary to their revolutionary politics, I propose that building networks of international solidarity by connecting grassroots federations in a united cause can also include representative government, especially where there are no opportunities for self-determination. Kropotkin held a typical view that the democratic state remains a source of oppression, while the Poles deemed representative government as potentially alleviating some of the sufferings they endured under Empires. Hence, such advocacy for independent, democratic States can be viewed as an interim society transitioning towards universal fraternity and internationalisation.

In summary, I bring academic rigour in my historical research and text analysis

to urge readers to approach Korczak as a philosopher provoking critical thinking on various socio-political themes. Furthermore, I present examples of *critical doing* to demonstrate Korczak's propaganda of deeds, infused and expanded via revolutionary movements. That is, uncovering a hidden history of activist action in everyday practice amongst ordinary people longing for something better. The ethical framework in Korczak's literature and life has explicit lessons for every new generation to look for solutions amongst themselves and even within. He told his readers that they are a democratic force that can supply the anarchist impulse in the tension between creation and destruction. However, where individuals seek peace or comfort, there can only be passivity and stasis in service of the status quo. Cooperation implicitly means joining the struggle within a democratic mesh that produces creative conflict.

2.6 Significance

The 30th anniversary of the ratification of the UNCRC sparked increased interest in the history of this important legal instrument. Meanwhile, the last two decades have also seen criticism of the perceived top-down nature of the UNCRC. The declared main message of Janusz Korczak was that the child was a rational person with rights, deserving of dignity, love, and respect from society. Outlining his central principles, the right to respect and the right to be heard emphasised participation and dialogue. The education model he devised rests on principles of self-governance with the creation of democratic institutions, but is repeatedly described as without method, theory, or a systematic approach.

The start of a monograph on an individual usually demands a short biography such as the commonly accepted version on Korczak provided in my Introduction. The chapter served the purpose of examining various readings and teasing out existing beliefs about his context. This analysis uses references in Korczak's text and other

historical sources to debunk some tightly held assumptions regarding his early life, political leanings, and subsequent decisions.

The conclusion is that Korczak had a political dimension situated at the vanguard of socio-political movements, with a theoretical relationship to anarchism. The error occurs by viewing his pedagogical ideas and experiment as if undertaken in isolation as an exceptional individual without any predecessors or collaborators. In this manner, his work with children is disconnected from the anti-State political agenda evident during his earlier involvement with revolutionary groups fighting for independence. Framing his ambitious project as a socio-political experiment within underground networks reveals underlying anarchist processes and collective actions.

This research contributes to the body of knowledge by retrieving a failed anti-State model which successfully, albeit briefly, reformed a civil society from the ground up until being engulfed by other forceful political currents. In providing a usable past, this thesis reveals an alternative reading of Korczak's ideas and approach developed during his long-standing practical work with children. Investigating his philosophy of education, which emerged from the circumstances of oppression, conflict, and crisis, provides possible solutions to issues encountered within society under challenging conditions today. His theory, that children are people, brought radical changes to educational, health, and social services, while also influencing parental and public attitudes.

During Korczak's early endeavours, censorship and oppression shaped a remarkably transferable approach in its ability to transcend political and national boundaries. Suissa (2019a) recommends thinking about the relationship between the child, the school, the political and the social within a new paradigm to lift the constrictions often encountered within the philosophy of education. My new reading of Korczak gives an insider's perspective of this revolutionary period of history to explain

why he identified himself and his school of thought as non-Western. His fragmented text serves as a road map into Polish anarchism, introducing his oeuvre into contemporary political debates by encouraging those who usually dismiss this period of historical thought as having been exhausted. In conclusion, as many seek historical precedents for current crises, my research looks to Korczak as he narrates how non-government actors took advantage of destabilised hierarchies and secured status and freedom.

Chapter 3 The Polish Question

By reading in the original language, I found Korczak's texts repeatedly focus on themes related to Polish independence, such as property, slavery, cooperation, and culture. Secondly, I uncovered his involvement with women's rights activists, secret networks, and violent revolutionaries. Therefore, certain anarchist concepts are highly relevant for the analysis. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this thesis follows Korczak's genealogy of ideas to reveal hidden histories of oppression and domination, creating the Warsaw atmosphere into which Korczak was born and educated. I characterise the Polish revolutionary movements as a form of patriotic spiritual anarchism reacting to Western cosmopolitanism that forced cultural changes to dominate all facets of their lives.

Opting for an analytical framework based upon Western and Russian anarchists threatens to distort findings by interpreting Korczak texts within another ideology, albeit a related one. To emphasise his Polishness, I relate the convergence of Polish and anarchist concepts. Though it is not my intention to explore the history of anarchism, this chapter outlines background information of the various interacting factions. Without a doubt, there were anarchist groups active in Poland in Korczak's time, but he viewed these as imports ensnaring disenfranchised youth and impoverished workers.⁵ Under the domination of the Russian Empire, most Eastern Europeans united against State centralized power without necessarily forming the anarchist movements that appeared in the West (Woodcock, 1962). This analysis needed to expand beyond the classical anarchist movement to focus on what Woodcock (1968) called the anarchist idea underpinning such revolutionary action. Ideas, he explained, are longer lasting than any cause or organisation. Hence this thesis presents the pathway from the Polish

⁵ Anarchist groups, such as The Avengers and The Internationalists in Poland appeared under foreign influence in the 20th century.

Question to the Polish Idea, which eventually captivated the Warsaw *intelligentsia* and Korczak.

The late 18th-century was an age of revolutions, which Freeman (2011) correlates with the historical struggle for political and religious freedoms. Historians trace French, American and Russian revolutions, meticulously scrutinising every episode and actor. However, in his book, *The Anarchists*, Joll (1979) lamented that analysis usually favours successful revolutions, severely restricting the field of study by tossing aside curious failures, together with the associated thinkers and actors. Though his promotion for the study of failures as rewarding is in defence of classical anarchism, it also makes a case for studying the Polish history of revolutions and reforms. While the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) and US Bill of Rights (1791) bask in the limelight of success, there is little attention paid to another member of the trinity – the May Constitution of Poland (1791). The emergence of human rights often links with the emancipatory history of the modern State in the French and American Revolutions. Since the Empires tore apart Poland, marking an era of political bondage, the failure diminished the Constitution's repute and broader relevance. Such lesser-known historical events are influential in Polish philosophy and literature underpinning Korczak's Polishness. The timeline includes the Partitions of Poland, the Polish Revolution (4 Years' Sejm of 1788 – 1792), the Napoleonic Wars, the November Uprising (1830–31), the *Wiosna Ludowa* (Spring of Nations; People's Spring, 1848-1849), the January Uprising of 1863, and the Revolution of 1905 (Święćkowska, 2020). Thus, I take up the notion of anarchism as a history of ideas and one of action (Evren & Kinna, 2015).

3.1 For Your Freedom and Ours

The derivation of anarchism comes from the Greek term *an-arché* to elicit its primary understanding amongst 19th-century anarchists as ‘non-rule’ or no government (Woodcock, 1989). Following the terror of the French Revolution, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) critiqued society, the State and private property related to labour and mutual exchange, declaring himself an anarchist. In his essay, *What is Property?* Proudhon (1876) took a sociological perspective to understand humans in relation to other people and nature itself. His goal was decidedly political, as he used historical analysis to unveil systems of power and oppression usually taken for granted or deemed natural. Anarchists adopted Proudhon’s theory to claim the relationships cultivated by private ownership retain the tyranny and domination found in slavery, even after slaves are formally liberated (Kinna, 2019a; Kinna & Prichard, 2019).

The founder of the anarchist school of political thought is the Russian aristocrat, Mikhail Bakunin [1814 – 1876], who said:

If there is a State, there must be domination of one class by another and, as a result, slavery; the State without slavery is unthinkable — and this is why we are the enemies of the State.

(1873/1990, p.178)

The abolition of all nation-States is difficult to comprehend, though if set within the historical and ideological context, such views become less extremist to the contemporary reader.

In Franks’ (2013) experiences, the anarchist ideology is difficult to define or explain satisfactorily, so he prefers to categorise based upon principles, aims, or practical features. His common denominator for social anarchism is the rejection of the state and state-like bodies, which firmly places Korczak’s politics outside anarchism and within the realm of social democracy. However, such arguments fail to acknowledge that almost all Poles expressed anti-State sentiments, as explained above. Therefore, it is practical to demarcate the political factions using several principles

captured within the concept of direct action. This process mandates the oppressed to contest domination continually in their pursuit of social goods, rather than controlled by a revolutionary vanguard or external representatives (*ibid*). The loss of their country fashioned the Poles into the most active revolutionaries in Europe (Procyk, 2001). Poles joined and led uprisings from America to Turkey, but surprisingly, they rate few mentions in anarchist scholarship. Tracing historical threads show Bakunin was privy to Polish plans in failed uprisings and later those hatching in exile under the Siberian snow (Lavrín, 1966; Kaminski, 2012).

Commonly, anarchists identify their political movement as emerging in 1864 from the International Workingman's Association (commonly referred to as the First International). Here, the ideological content presented by the faction associated with Bakunin led to his label as the father of anarchism. For the most part, the political theory developed by Bakunin appears as a reaction to the theories of Karl Marx (Suissa, 2001). Marxists and Anarchists shared some key concepts involving class struggle, private property, and the aim to overthrow the State as the primary defence of both domination and private property (Kinna, 2019a). Where Marxists seek to seize power from the State to ensure it gradually withers, anarchists seek to accelerate the destruction. Marxism also relates power to material interests, whereas anarchism rejects more comprehensive forms of domination, even describing democracy as the tyranny of the majority over the individual (*ibid*). In addition, the divide over the state's role in socialism saw Marx favour the rise of the working class that anarchists would describe as a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' (Avrich, 1967, p.107).

The schism between Marxism and Anarchism, Franks (2012) blames upon the interpretation applied by the Bolsheviks. Before the Russian Revolution, he identifies more fluid interactions between various revolutionary groups. Likewise, certain historians attribute the emergence of anarchists in the region to various 19th-century

underground groups challenging the Empires and attempting to reinstate Poland (Kofman, 1968; Romanska, 2009). The network of the 1820s stretched from St Petersburg to Paris, with sympathisers amongst the Russian military and revolutionary leadership, who fondly referred to young Poles as *Mleczko* (Baby Milk). In Russia, Inquisition-style hunts rounded up schoolboys and students operating under banners such as Black Brethren and The Philomaths. Under arrest, authorities subjected the youth to cruel punishments, including exile to Siberia (Kukiel, 1960). These revolutionaries aiming to restore the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, potentially as it once existed, sparked debate amongst political thinkers on all sides. Liberal democratic theories provided the Poles with the ‘moral justification and a theoretical foundation’ for realising their revolutionary aims (MacDonald, 1941, p.321). What I find interesting is that contemporary debates on the Marxist-Anarchist schism revolve around the assumption of an abstract state. In contrast, I hypothesize from a critical perspective where the Marx-Bakunin disagreement emerges from attempts to resurrect an actual State - Poland. The historical debate became known as The Polish Question, arguing whether Poland was a ‘necessary nation’ or dismissed as a ‘sentimental memory’ (Marx & Engels, 1952). Therefore, the following section provides a brief historical overview of how foreign revolutionaries intersect with the freedom goals of the Poles.

Beginning anarchist history from the First International excludes the Polish revolutionaries fighting for political, cultural, and religious independence. Annual meetings had been established in several countries to commemorate the failed Polish revolution, which symbolised the quashed hopes of many. In response to the failure, Marx retained the role of the state as crucial to the progress of social emancipation, declaring that all revolutionaries must stand in solidarity with the Polish cause. In London in 1847, Marx was the key speaker representing the Democratic Society. As an economic crisis loomed, the movement gained momentum amongst English workers

and those protesting Manchester capitalists. In defending another attempted uprising by the Poles, Marx delivered a powerful speech on the Polish constitutional monarchy and subsequent partitions by the Empires. He defended the maligned 1791 Constitution for legislation enshrining democratic representation, freedom of the press and abolition of serfdom, appearing as moderate liberalism. He subsequently framed his class struggle ideas defining the Polish Question, where ‘the political question was bound up with the social question’ (Haenisch, 1937, p.98).

In reality, German and Russian thinkers had little commitment to the plight of the masses, Polish or otherwise. Viewing them as pawns to bring the Russian and Germanic Empires into conflict, the Poles served as a barometer of the revolutionary mood across Europe (MacDonald, 1941). With the Poles failing again in their 1863 uprising, ideologues lost interest in their strategies, absorbing the Polish proletariat into the class struggles of international socialism or anarcho-syndicalism. Thus, this brief historical summary reinstates the Polish Question of a stateless nation of people instead of an abstract nation-State, repositioning the bleeding heart in the rift between Marxism and Anarchism.

The failed uprisings of 1830 and 1846 resulted in Polish revolutionaries exiled to Siberia or fleeing into Western Europe. Unrest in one country affects neighbours, as information and revolutionaries spread to new locations. The Poles in exile often served as a conduit between the more influential French, German and Russians, but alliances remained precarious without sufficient funds, diplomatic ties, or status. For example, letters held in the British Library confirm Proudhon’s acrimonious contact with Polish revolutionaries, investigated in detail by Zimmerman (1984). The Polish revolutionaries often spoke of rootlessness, having endured either unwelcome exile abroad or continual persecution at home, with little chance of permanent asylum without abandoning their cause for Poland. Initial involvement with Polish emigres inspired a belief that the

restoration of Poland was a prerequisite for all of Europe's nation-less, that is, the landless workers and peasants (Walicki, 1980). However, by defining a more explicit direction towards the proletariat, Marx strained solidarity. With increasing racist discourse successfully breeding contempt, other participants labelled Poles as homeless beggars and conspirators daring to teach Westerners about liberty (Haenisch, 1937).

The emigre group split into factions as the opposition on the left centred around the radical militant leader, Joachim Lelewel [1786 – 1861]. A highly influential geographer, historian, and politician, he led the 1830 Uprising, subsequently forming The Democratic Society for Unity and Brotherhood of All Peoples with Engels and Marx. Within this organisation, Lelewel provided the most developed democratic theories and was the active and experienced revolutionary (Haenisch, 1937). Though Bakunin would later protest that the Polish revolutionaries meant nothing to him, he was well acquainted with Lelewel. In Brussels, the charming Pole schooled Bakunin in radical ideas opening the door to revolutionary circles (Nettlau, 1964). Indeed, scholars note Lelewel's older views on communal governance are like Bakunin's concept of collectivist anarchism (Rysak, 2009; Kamiński, 2012). On the anniversary of one Polish uprising, his speeches praise such 'democratic associations against oppressors' (Haenisch, (1937). Woodcock (1962) also acknowledges Bakunin's initially favoured the Poles, who 'in the mid-nineteenth century peculiarly symbolized for the democrats of western Europe the plight of subjected nationalities' (p.163). Note, the English thinker finds this association peculiar and announces he is suspicious of Polish goals or ideas, which he declares nationalist (*ibid*).

Examining this earlier period finds Bakunin's developing anarchist ideology intertwined with the Poles, as Marshall (2009) describes him as deflated when his barbaric force failed to materialise. Similarly, Joll (1979) insisted the failure did not shake his 'devotion to the cause of the Polish national revolution' (p.91). Though 70

years have passed since Weintraub (1949) made his declaration, I reiterate his words that ‘Bakunin’s participation in the political activity of the Polish emigration, the role that the Polish question played in his plans, his numerous contacts with Poles – have all been hitherto very inadequately investigated’ (p.72). He likewise identified the issue with biographers and anarchist scholars relying on a skewed perspective by failing to include Polish sources or scholarship. Despite producing copious political, historical, and geographic scholarship, these publications remain on the margins. The need for secrecy has left the various traditions generalised as nationalist, with the fluid nature of interactions and influence minimised in scholarship (Procyk, 2001). Undoubtedly, few scholars have had an opportunity to read Kamiński’s (2012) Polish biography of Bakunin. Spanning two volumes, it is an impressive piece of scholarship on the anarchist, using multiple language sources from different countries. Most contemporary anarchist texts hold less interest in anarchist history, often find such Polish connections incomprehensible and reduce them to nationalism.

Polish translations of Jules Elysard (pseudonym of Bakunin) began appearing in *Tygodnik Literackie* in the 1840s (Kamiński, 2012). Warmly received, Bakunin’s relations with Poles intensified as the Russian felt responsible for the Tsarist policies against Poland and often personally addressed meetings attempting to improve Polish-Russian relations (*ibid*). The abstract ideals of liberating humanity were brought into the practical domain, as his Polish colleagues drew Bakunin’s attention to Slavic history and society, which preceded the State system. Lelewel’s motto of ‘For Your Freedom and Ours’ appealed to all inhabitants by promising full equality and freedom (Procyk, 2001). His historical approach highlighted centuries of diverse traditions existing, interacting, and cooperating in Slavic brotherhood. Fashioned as a political religion, nationalist revolutionaries adopted myths, symbols, and rituals to shape solidarity and capture new followers. Bakunin greatly admired Lelewel and his devoted students who

refashioned the academic's scholarship into poetry, prose, and even a Messianic cult (Weintraub, 1949; Lavrin, 1966; Kamiński, 2012; Chwedoruk & Batelt, 2013).

Above all, Lelewel, already a towering figure in revolutionary Europe, reinforced Bakunin's commitment to democratic, Slavic, and federal ideas until relations deteriorated. However, the impact of the failed Polish 1863 insurrection is rarely mentioned, as Senn (2008) glosses over details by merely describing Bakunin as returning to London from his 'Polish adventure' (p.30). What is evident is that the more experienced Poles helped establish the fledgling anarchist propaganda machine in London (*ibid*). The pinnacle of Bakunin's involvement came with signing the agreement in Warsaw's National Central Committee in September 1862 and his attempt to participate in the January Uprising the following year. The rebellion's failure unravelled Bakunin's decades-long relationship with the Polish émigré group. The Poles' fondness for the dramatic led to accusations of betrayal, personally undermining the Russian as a traitor. The failure of the Uprising ceased Bakunin's interest in national liberation and his Polish allies, as the friendship turned hostile. The leading novelist, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski,⁶ was informed of the anarchist's revised opinion of the Poles as Jesuits, aristocrats, papists, anti-progressists, fools (Kamiński, 2012). The Poles and Bakunin eventually parted, disagreeing on rigid materialism and atheism. Indeed, the anarchist, Rudolph Rocker (1964) explains that 'only after the defeat of the Polish insurrection of 1863 and Bakunin's moving to Italy, where he found an entirely new field for his energies, did his actions assume an international character' (p.19).

The new 'red radicalism' became dangerous for the Poles, who kept abreast of Bakunin's announcements at various congresses, such as the League of Peace and Freedom in Geneva Congress in 1867. The Parisian newspapers bristled with reports of

⁶ Kraszewski was close to the Goldszmit family and Korczak chose his pseudonym as a tribute to the great writer

Bakunin's sarcastic reproaches on the 'People's Polonia', and the radical Poles raised concerns of their former friend now fuelling Moscow's nihilism. The new form of pan-Slavic anarchism became synonymous not with the cultural evolutionary process but fearful repression that would tear culture down. Generations of Poles sought to repair the deficiencies and perversions they perceived in their society regarding religion, state, family, and property as a continuum of humanity's work of thousands of years of civilisation. They feared materialist science used as a political 'ram for pounding everything left and right' where any difference would be smoothed entirely and blurred (Kaminski, 2012). That is not to say this opinion was held by all, as Bakunin retained Polish supporters convinced by his atheist vision of stateless socialism. This complex history of ideas intertwined ebbed and flowed, renewed, and transformed encounters with groups and individuals.

In his Confessions, Bakunin appealed to the Tsar to end the Russification program against the non-Russian Slavs issuing a warning:

(Russia) would be hated by all those Slavs as much as she is now hated by the Poles; instead of being a liberator she would only become an oppressor of the family of the Slavs at the cost of her own welfare and freedom; finally, she would end by hating herself as a result of being hated by all, and in her victories, by force, she would find nothing except torment and slavery.

(In Lavrin, 1966, p.143)

While unable to consolidate his position amongst the Polish networks in the West, Bakunin capitalised upon his arrest during an eventual transfer to Siberia. While in exile, Bakunin married, in Woodcock's (1962) description, 'a pretty, empty-headed Polish girl' (p.132). It reveals Woodcock's attitude in that he does not even name the young woman. In reality, Antonina Kwiatkowska [1849-1887] also held revolutionary convictions, facilitating translations and new introductions for Bakunin (Billingsley, 1998). After Bakunin's death, Kwiatkowska kept his legacy alive and wrote his first

biography, though unable to publish due to financial reasons (Chwedoruk & Batelt, 2013).

At first glance, Polish nationalism seems to be at odds with anarchism, yet historical generalisations are at play, as mentioned earlier. Furthermore, some authors argue against the reduction that anarchism equates only to anti-statism (Schmidt & Van der Walt, 2009; Suissa, 2019c). Writers describe classical anarchism as a fluid ideological tradition to broaden its scope but retain links to syndicalist roots and the class struggle. Where anarchism emerges in response to capitalism and the modern state, such anarchist thinkers unashamedly declare no interest in any philosophical or spiritual roots stating that such currents remain outside even the broadest anarchist tradition (Goodway, 2006). Ignoring the philosophical threads before the First International serves to exclude the Polish revolutionaries fighting for political, cultural, and religious independence, who inspired Bakunin to adapt their ideas and practice.

By 1869, Bakunin declared education as common property to engage citizens in mental and manual pursuits. To declare faith in a mass uprising, both Marxists adopted a similar slogan, where ‘the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working classes themselves’ (Draper, 1971, p.81). This proclamation by various revolutionary factions repeatedly appeared in calls for a social and economic revolt against authority. Going a step further, Polish activists saw their rebellion as transforming the moral order, a cultural or spiritual revolt (Brzozowski & Śniadecki, 1904). In tracing anarchist history, Marshall (2009) recognises the role of Polish nationalism as driving Bakunin’s aims of freedom for the colonised people of the Russian Empire. He distinguished their form of ‘national uprising’ against the oppression of what Bakunin described as people’s ‘right to be itself, and no one is entitled to impose its costume, its customs, its language, its opinion, or its laws’ (*ibid*, p.33). Taking anti-authoritarian opportunities fulfils what Scott (2009) calls ‘the art of

not being governed', providing an anti-colonial example to others struggling against European domination. One example of the convergence between anarchism and anti-colonialism appears in the Filipino revolutionary campaign for indigenous self-determination. In 1898, the revolutionary writer, Jose Rizal, cited the example of Russia enslaving Poland by forcing 'her to speak Russian' while other nations willingly strip themselves of 'nation-ness', the 'guarantee of liberty, a preservation of a way of thinking, where language is the very thought of a people' (Anderson, 2005, p.112). European imperialism and the extermination of local peoples is well-documented but perhaps overlooked inside Europe. Thus, the emerging European state differentiated between enlightened law and cultures, labelling the Slavic people as barbarians resisting Westernisation (Pagden, 2012).

To differentiate a love of one's local place from state-based nationalism, I introduce the concept of *patria*. Bakunin echoes Lelelewel's concept articulating provincial patriotism as a form of regional individuality where 'every commune [...] every nation, to live, to think, [...] and to set in their own way, and this way is always the outgrowth of a long process of historical evolution' (Reznik, 1927, p.292). Later the anarchist Gustav Landauer wrote a similar expression of patriotism as:

Why should one [...] preach the ending of all bonds and therefore of all differences in the world? [...] I am happy about every imponderable and ineffable thing that brings about exclusive bonds, unities, and also differentiations within humanity. If I want to transform patriotism then I do not proceed in the slightest against the fine fact of the nation [...] but against the mixing up of the nation and the state, against the confusion of differentiation and opposition.

(Lunn, 1973, p. 263)

Despite recent shifts and revisions, the canon of classical anarchism remains under the influence of Woodcock (1962), who asserted the Polish revolutionaries adopted violent strategies unrelated to anarchism, merely endemic habits of their nature and culture. Paradoxically, he also outlined how Bakunin identified Poland as Russia's

weakest point and conceived his ideas amongst Polish revolutionaries. Uncritical assessments also appear in Levy's (2004) social history of anarchism, as he briefly explains that both Bakunin and Kropotkin supported the cause of Polish freedom but 'envisaged Russia as a stem culture around which other Slavic nations would cohere' (p.336). After enduring harsh Russian oppression, Poles could not again risk their culture and status as a satellite. An anarchist once wrote that 'enemies will write their history' (Levy, 2013, p.26). Although racial and national stereotypes are well known in anarchist history, no scholar identifies that those scientific ideas of racism fed directly into Western anarchism to ostracise the Poles.

Woodcock (1962) created a narrative of Russian revolutionaries not trusting the Polish revolutionaries he labels as 'nationalists' for 'their particular brand of expansive nationalism' (p.171). He appears to blame Bakunin's early failures upon his paradoxical associations with the Poles. Nevertheless, he contradicts himself in the same paragraph by quoting Bakunin as dedicated 'solely with the Polish, Russian, and Pan-Slav cause' (*ibid*). The Polish influence on Bakunin is hardly far-fetched, having gained renown as military strategists and experts in guerrilla warfare led uprisings in both Prussia and Italy in 1848, even hired in Western universities as war studies lecturers⁷.

Indeed, Kinna (2019a) fuels dismissals by calling such anarchist nationalism a superficial disguise for fascism. In contrast, I make a historical argument that specific Polish action at the time represented what Kinna calls indigenous anarchism, taking the form of a people's struggle for language, culture, and land rights. The 19th-century Poles adopted patriotism to withstand the forces of cosmopolitanism and assimilation. In their rights' struggle, the Poles deemed themselves and their territories enslaved by the Empires, and it appeared 'the means of freeing indigenous peoples from the rule, direct

⁷ <https://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/ludwik-mieroslowski> accessed 06.03.2021

or indirect, of foreign imperial overlords' (Pagden, 2012, p.333). It is a call repeated by Korczak throughout his texts, referring to himself as a slave under the Empire.

The notion of 'indigenous anti-statism' is not unsupported, as Adams (2015) used it to characterise Kropotkin's form of anarchism. As argued previously, understanding Korczak's stance requires the intellectual history of his predecessors who set about defining their nation, usually in highly charged political texts. Exploring different currents of romantic nationalism, Bilenky (2012) finds some Poles imagining their nation as historical and, even more importantly, ideological. Though not celebrating diversity specifically, they considered Slavic people's ethnic or cultural differences minor obstacles for national unity. Attempting to engineer a new Poland, nationalisation had little to do with language or cultural assimilation. Instead, these groups focused on building a shared political identity. Within this nationalism, better-labelled patriotism, Billenky highlights three key elements as follows:

- Based upon the common people or 'folk' regardless of linguistic, religious or ethnic differences.
- United by the Polish Idea relates to the will of the people and love of the land as heirs to a legacy of Slavic democracy.
- The importance of the Polish language as expressing a 'common political culture'.

(ibid, pp.152-3)

It is immediately apparent that these leaders could hardly isolate their patriotism solely within the political sphere. Though perhaps disputed by them, the Polish thinkers certainly elevated Polishness above other traditions by drawing upon its language, history, and other cultural domains, which could eventually subsume other ethnic identities. Conclusions drawn from this period demand caution as the notion of Polishness and even the language oscillated, far from being clear cut. Though 19th-century thinkers provided little detail on how this project would occur, they could not have foreshadowed one path their unique patriotism would take into right-wing nationalism later.

For an agreed position of anarchist thinkers, Carter (2013) explains that ‘existing forms of government are productive of wars, internal violence, repression and misery’ (p.7). However, it is challenging to use versions of anarchism restricted to political theory, a set of practices, or specifically anti-State and still focus on Polish actors. In line with Kropotkin’s explanation, anarchistic movements displayed resistance against authority and norms in every sphere of life, with a long history dating back to ancient philosophers and religions (Kinna, 2019a). Though not inventing this form, to avoid confusion, I refer to Polish anarchism, which appears historically as spiritual and political, as a philosophy of life.

Under the motto, ‘War is the Father of All’, Polish revolutionaries accelerated their activities during periods of instability and crisis, without necessarily orchestrating such conflict themselves (Nałkowski, 1904, p.1). Thus, I introduce this concept that conflict is creative and coin the term (r)evolution (explained in greater detail later) to describe their process of societal transformation. Furthermore, by providing an overview of competing revolutionary factions and underground networks, I challenge whether Bakunin’s covert vision of secret societies was a product of his imagination, as Avrich (1967) stated. I show how such secret networks operated, focusing on those involving women. By revealing hidden histories, I suggest alternative influences upon what is generally considered classical anarchism during this period, usually focused only upon class struggle or wage slavery.

During the 1840s, Bakunin’s political activity consistently considered Polish issues, encouraging Kamiński (2012) to portray him as an honorary Pole. Others also show him attempting to build a Russo-Polish alliance to usher in a Russian-led, Pan-Slav federation. He published his text, *Appeal to the Slavs* in 1848 in German and Polish, borrowing heavily from the Polish poets using similar Biblical motifs to describe the oppression of Poland as ‘the martyr on the Cross’ and ‘the Ark of salvation’ leading all

‘slaves out of the desert into the promised land of freedom for all Slavs’ (Weintraub, 1949, p.77). Certain scholars question Bakunin’s atheist beliefs after finding such mystical elements within his materialist anarchism (Marshall, 2009). Perhaps the omission of the Polish connection disguises a degree of wounded pride, as the young Bakunin admired the revolutionaries as men of passion and action who in return mocked his naivety and lack of work ethic (Senn, 2008; Chwedoruk & Batelt, 2013).

3.2 Lord or lord?

Anarchist scholars remain resistant to philosophical roots outside of the political sphere, like Goodway (2006), who discounts anyone who obeys the authority of God from the anarchist canon. The Polish version entwined metaphysics inseparably within the political domain as a spiritual form of anarchism. Today’s anarcho-pacifism is associated with the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy [1828-1910], who drew upon Christian theology to reject the State’s political and military power. Exploring the pre-existing anarchistic threads before Tolstoy, Avrich (1967) outlined peaceful religious sects in the territories of the Russian Empire, resisting all external coercion by preaching a relationship with God. Likewise, Kropotkin validated such Christian anarchist precedents during the Middle Ages as resisting either Church or State (*ibid*). Religious anarchism rejects earthly domination, recognising only a divine master. Such anarchists may reject hierarchy and the State's authority by favouring self-mastery and governance ‘for the Kingdom of God is within us’ (Marshall, 2009, p.IV). Avoiding the metaphysical has left certain Polish revolutionaries out and leaves the study of anarchism somewhat bereft. Their form of religious anarchism also answered to divine power, but instead of pacifism, these Poles drew from a history of violent oppression and failed uprisings for a philosophy of struggle and suffering.

Polish thinkers in exile developed a form of Messianism, becoming revolutionary leaders even sometimes elevated as prophets. Avrich (1967) viewed Russian anarchism as characterised by ‘utopian ideals and a replacement of metaphysics and complex philosophy with a vague messianism offering few blueprints or realistic solutions’ (p.253). However, Avrich appeared to exclude or be unaware of actual Polish Messianists or their influence on anarchist thought. Specifically, a young generation adapted the political ideology by creating poetry, prose and even the Messianic cult mentioned earlier, gaining the admiration of Bakunin (Weintraub, 1949; Lavrin, 1966; Kamiński, 2012; Chwedoruk & Batelt, 2013). Stripped away of mysticism, Bakunin’s anarchist school of thought bears a solid resemblance to the Polish socio-political theories. Almost a century ago, Rezneck (1927) declared that ‘Bakunin’s philosophy was essentially the old metaphysics, fused with the new science, and fired with the spirit of revolution’ (p.274). Certainly, the concept of a collective soul and other spiritual anomalies are vestiges of his entanglement with Polish revolutionary poets, defining his early writing and redacted in the 1860s.

Elevating Poland to be a Messiah for all nations, these poetic bards proclaimed a universal war for the freedom of all peoples. As the old order declined, Messianists believed nations would reimagine their co-existence. Poland’s suffering and fate prefigured a broader spiritual revolution that would determine the evolution of humanity and freedom for all from slavery and oppression (*ibid*). Born in a dramatic period, Messianism offered a solution to Poland’s woes with the movement achieving academic and cult status, especially amongst the Polish emigres in France and Switzerland. The poet Adam Mickiewicz [1798–1855] was not the source of the idea but served to popularise Messianism in general. Mickiewicz belonged to an exiled triad of Romantic poets, including Juliusz Słowacki [1809–1849]. Their moniker *Wieszcz* (Bards) carried additional meaning beyond a national poet, akin to a visionary or prophet delivering a

sacred text. The resurrection of Poland, the nation often took the guise of a political and spiritual entity within an ideology geared towards international brotherhood. By overly exaggerating Polishness, writers shaped political and religious values into an instinct or feeling akin to the national spirit. Mickiewicz positioned Polish national virtues against individualistic Western materialism and Russian collective oppression to promote his idea of a freedom-loving Slavic brotherhood and the universal war for all people (Wientraub, 1949; Bilenky, 2012). Contemporary artists view Mickiewicz as a political prototype fighting closely with Italians, Jews, and Turks; he ‘abandons the word in favour of the act’ (Cegielski, 2014). The cross-cultural influence and appeal of his political activism appear broader than the class struggle rhetoric of the era.⁸

The Poles scattered across Europe, bringing their revolutionary ideas and strategies across national and political lines. Italians and Poles increasingly questioned the French as the epitome of freedom and democratic revolutionaries. They accused the West of being incapable of representing Southern and Eastern Europe (Procyk, 2001, p.8). Their movement denounced the domination of a hierarchy of nations by declaring all nations of people as equal rather than a few nation-kings elevated above others. The new generation of political activists objected to older revolutionaries’ cosmopolitan ideas, centralisation tendencies, religious indifference, and the inability to act decisively when needed (*ibid*). Riall (2008) incorrectly attributes such ideological threads indebted to Bakunin’s anarchism by ignoring Polish sources. Quite clearly, the Italian revolutionary leader Mazzini rejected both atheism and rationalism as he translated the poem of Mickiewicz, *Do Matki Polki* (To Polish Mothers), to ignite the political consciousness of Italian women (Kukiel, 1960, Procyk, 2001).

⁸ Adam Mickiewicz Museum, Turkey <https://muze.gen.tr/muze-detay/adam>

Many decades later, young Korczak described falling under this Messianist spell, memorising poetic verses as prayers, confessing his commitment to their revolutionary cause ‘I love Poland so, that I am ready to sacrifice everything for her’ (Falkowska, 1989, p.44). Using Korczak’s text references to this left-wing faction reveals his interest in their political aims and strategies. He celebrated his revolutionary predecessors and their spiritual anarchism in the opening of his famous book, *How to Love A Child*. Written during World War I and even if read literally, Korczak (1918/1993) has barely disguised its quasi-nationalistic statement to Poles by inserting the famous quote from their beloved poem:

*For to be born is not to be raised from the dead;
the coffin may give us up again, but it will never gaze like a mother at us.*

[Anhelli]

p.1

Signposting *Anhelli* informs the reader that Korczak intended the *How to Love a Child* volumes to take a specific form akin to the Messianist genre. He feigned disappointment in his *Diary* (1942/1967), recalling how he had discovered the revolutionary poets already pre-empted and trialled many of his ideas. The poem’s metaphysics states that deed and sacrifice were needed for the nation’s resurrection, continually improving humanity within the historical process. A storyline perhaps not lost on readers of Korczak’s biography.

Beginning at the Marx-Bakunin fracture and 19th-century political economy, classical anarchism and utopian socialism appear as Enlightenment products sharing a cosmopolitan outlook and assumptions (Joll, 1979; Levy, 2011). Anarchists have held that nationalism, legal frameworks, and private property inhibit and perpetuate domination. However, I examine how Korczak employed such structural institutions by

turning the master's tools into vehicles that facilitate the transition from oppression to freedom.

Like Suissa (2019c), anarchist theorists trace the connections between slavery and property ownership emerging during the European expansion of colonisation. She cites the historical origins of domination from the Roman Empire, where 'dominium meant the absolute right to dispose of a thing as one pleased' (*ibid*, p.360). Domination-subservience belongs to the Latin word family of *dominus-domini* related to the master or lord of the household with control over the family, slaves, and other household property. There is an awareness that historically, writers such as Locke and Jefferson theorised greatly upon freedom and liberty but implemented little in practice, even profiting from slavery (Gourevitch, 2014; Kinna & Prichard, 2019).

Revolutionary schools of thought tend to favour Roman republicans, British abolitionists, and in the case of classical anarchism, the Russian aristocrats. Slaves and the oppressed rarely have the opportunity or luxury of theorising their role or understanding of *dominium* to *libertas* not from afar but as it unfolds. An alternative to the writings of Roman Emperors traces radical reformers amongst the slaves, for example, via Judeo-Christian biblical teachings with figures such as Moses and Jesus demanding freedom from oppression and slavery. Similarly, Korczak viewed enslavement under Imperial colonisation as inseparable from the religious and social teachings embedded within the culture. In his first publication after Poland's independence, he used the term 'slave' or 'slavery' 23 times to continue his arguments beyond the goals of statehood:

The child feels the pinch of slavery, suffers from the fetters, longs for freedom he won't find because, while the form may change, the substance of the ban and coercion is sustained. We cannot change our adult life so long as we are reared in slavery. We cannot liberate the child as long as we remain in chains ourselves.

§98, HTLAC – Family, 1919/1993

Historians often begin with ancient Rome and Greece, as did Das Kapital where Marx (2019) wrote ‘the Roman slave was held by fetters; the wage-labourer is bound to his owner by invisible threads’ (p.628). Neo-Roman republican vocabulary binds Marx to specific moral commitments. The foundations of these civilisations were built on slavery, so ancient thinkers ignored slavery as a mere fact of human existence. It mirrors the phenomena of contemporary scholars employing utopianism while ignoring Thomas More’s (1949) subtle dystopian warnings that such progress dictated the enslavement of allies and dissenters (Avineri, 1962).

In contrast to the rise of nationalism in the 19th-century, patriotism had its origins some 2,000 years prior.⁹ The native tribes subsumed under the rule of the Romans had little choice in joining the Empire, but celebrated *patria* as patriotic loyalty to one's land, town, home, in other words, recognition of *topos*, that is, their *place* in the larger *cosmos*. The Latin word *civitas* and its derivatives of civil and citizen point to a particular interdependent life lived in cities as government centres.¹⁰ Population pressure upon Roman towns necessitated planning to maintain order and refinement of customs. Relying upon centralised institutions and homogenised processes, the network of cities became the means of controlling the vast Roman Empire. The transition of agrarian farmers developing Rome heralded the creative and technological change required for cultivating nature instead of hunting, gathering, or herding. The aggregation of people forcing greater cooperation became the underlying process of civilisation. Like the Roman Empire, the Enlightenment brought economic prosperity, intellectual creativity, and individual freedom to many in Europe many centuries later.

In many ways, the Enlightenment served to break away from religious tradition by inventing new values grounded in reason, science, and the pursuit of progress.

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/patriotism-sociology>

¹⁰ Collins Latin Dictionary (2000)

Contrary to popular belief, Western intellectuals identified that the most primitive and savage of all were those living in Europe enslaved under the shackles of masters and priests. This notion effectively drew a cultural line between rural and urban, with only the latter capable of fashioning a commune valuable to the state (Pagden, 2012). It also characterises different experiences of the Enlightenment, which created a new East-West schism. Marx's *Das Kapital* clearly illustrates the 'ethnocentrism of a "barbaric" East and a "civilized" West' in discussing Poland under the Russian Empire as non-Western (Anderson, 2002). The divide forms my argument for viewing the Poland of Korczak's time and ideas as non-Western.

In their chapter, Boisen and Boucher (2016) present a discontinuous timeline to show how theological concepts of property rights and punishment responded to the 'civilised' world encountering the 'savage' during colonisation (pp.148-165). Likewise, in *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin (1902) wrote on the cooperation within social groups and institutions existing as tribes, villages, guilds, and the medieval city, achieved by the creative genius of 'half-savage masses' in Europe. What is striking about his account of human evolution and mutualism is that he stopped before the Enlightenment, usually credited for introducing tolerance and rights to the world. Western science could not acknowledge the apparent unity of nomadic, pastoral, and barbaric tribes as their world knowledge appeared inaccessible in unfamiliar studies, unintelligible legends, or sacred texts. Conceived as nations with a divine master, the Enlightenment ensured these peoples' exclusion from the auspices of civilisation. Displaying an aggressive nature, their warrior temperaments and wild behaviours generated fear and confirmed no possibility for centralised control as their irrational worldview and very existence repeatedly threatened civil authority in European cities. Though such native people may have the capacity for understanding, their lack of practical and agricultural advancement left them viewed as incapable of holding property rights (Boisen & Boucher, 2016).

Labelled the 'right to husbandry', ownership linked to labour as an obligation towards use, cultivation, and production of the available resources, the concept appearing with Locke and earlier in More's Utopia (1486). Though many anarchists favoured forms of primitivism returning to a pre-industrialised world, Kropotkin welcomed progress believing technology would relieve humanity of the worst forms of labour and allow for more leisure time (Avrich, 1967). In a slightly different vein, Korczak explained that as capitalists replaced indentured people with machinery, technological progress had promised but failed to deliver emancipation:

The face of the world has changed. No longer muscle power that does the work and defends against an enemy. Not the strength of muscles that tears from the land, forests and seas – control, supply and security.

A dominated slave -- the machine.

Muscles have lost their sole privileges and their singular value.

Now greater respect is afforded to intellect and knowledge.

The Child's Right to Respect, 1929/1993, p.430

The distinction between the occupation of land and its ownership, as Bain (2016) puts it, placed the onus upon indigenous people to demonstrate civil society and productive use of the land through labour. Otherwise, in European minds, nothing stood in the way of their cultivating and working other lands if they so desired. The colonisation issue regularly featured in Korczak texts, as he wrote in terms of demographics, work, and organisation about the desire to dominate the world;

The question is how to divide the conquered areas, the task of assigning work and collecting payment from each to husband the globe mastered by man.

How many workshops, and how should they be distributed to provide work to hungry hands and brains?

How to keep the human (ants) swarm in discipline and order?

How to guard against the ill will and madness of the individual?

How to fill each hour of life with action, rest, satiety and leisure to root out apathy and boredom?

When to unite in focus and facilitate communication, and when to scatter and divide?

Here urge on and encourage... there brake and inhibit... here ignite... there dampen the flames.

Politicians and legislators try carefully [...]

The Child's Right to Respect, 1929/1993, pp.430

3.3 The Place of Work

Examining the issues of colonisation reveals that the historical relationship of the West with the Russian Empire is not easily defined; as Hosking famously described it, 'Britain had an empire, but Russia **was** an Empire' (Plokhy, 2006, p.250). Through the conquest of diverse people, Russia's mode of colonisation formed a massive multi-national state, which comprised different religions, languages, and cultures (*ibid*). Misunderstanding this historical position is the issue Kofman (1968) identified in Proudhon's 'one-sided denunciation' of the Polish cause and counter-intuitive support for Russian aristocratic oppression (p.40). However, Proudhon did agree with Bakunin on the international conflict that Poland's fate rested upon its geographic position (*ibid*). The era ushered in a political role for the geography expert in deciding national boundaries and territorial claims.

Amongst others, Springer (2013; 2014) and Ferretti (2018) prominently argue for the role of radical geography within anarchism and vice versa. Dramatically, Fleming (1979) announced a revived interest in anarchist geographers such as Kropotkin and Elisée Reclus [1830-1905] as paving the anarchist way to socialism and freedom. The issue with Reclus is where certain studies portray him as a colonialist, or at best, ambiguous about French colonialism (Baudouin, 2003). Undoubtedly, some of his expressions are problematic in advocating for the expansion of Western civilisation, where scientific knowledge would transform the world with harmony, brotherhood and

‘racial mixed breeding’ (*ibid*, p.100). While papers adhere to this portrayal of Reclus, there is a growing defence of him (Ferretti, 2013). Nonetheless, he propagated prevailing scientific and racist ideas, especially in his *Universal Geography*, which became the authoritative text elaborating on every continent and its human populations (Baudouin, 2003). Significantly, he collaborated with anarchist educators such as Ferrer to produce teaching materials free from religious and patriotic ideas, which I explore in greater detail in upcoming chapters.

Many scholars criticise the monopoly of the European genealogy of thought, recommending the inclusion of the historical experiences of those who resisted being civilised (Araújo & Maeso, 2015). This thesis outlines that although 19th-century Europe ostracised Poland as a land of ignorant barbarians and peasants, it also reveals a stockpile of alternative thinkers rebelling against the West and Russia. From my previous research, Western scholars note anarchist threads in Korczak’s work, but I assert that these are better associated with Polish predecessors. For example, Korczak eulogised his professor, the radical geographer, Wacław Nałkowski [1851- 1911], as the highest artist with all the answers (Falkowska, 1989). I located his original death notice to find Korczak and colleagues emphasising that the Polish professor’s originality rivalled Reclus (*Prawda*, 1911, nr11, pp.12-13).

Elevating the importance of place, Nałkowski incorporated sociology and ethnology into geographic knowledge, pointing to the relationship between the environment and human characteristics and behaviours. He conceived geography as a science about the relationship between nature and humanity, offering a Polish perspective to dispute stereotypes of Eastern Europeans. Encapsulating Nałkowski’s geo-cultural understanding, Plamenatz (1963, p.5) described political geographers as having an awareness of the role of the natural in political and social theory. One can

envisage that Nałkowski taught his students that the physical environment, climate, and soil were more than merely the backdrop for human activity but inherent within the nature of a nation. However, he also formulated innovative precursors to bioregionalism far beyond either Kropotkin or Reclus. He lamented the enslavement of people, animals, and habitats in the name of profit, warning there was no escape to primitivism or wilderness due to the widespread degradation of the landscape.

I correlate some of his ideas with contemporary feminist *politics of location*, where Rich (2003) declares that if theory rains down from above but does not smell of the earth, it is of no use. Her words criticise the divide between theory and practice, echoing Korczak's criticism of Marxist ideology, which he observed is pure rainwater in theory but tainted and dirty in practice as it flushed through the gutters of life. Musing upon theory, Rich views abstraction as oppression of distance 'away from the heat and friction of human activity' (*ibid*, p.39). Likewise, these themes of friction, place, and work appear throughout my analysis. As described in the methodology section, my approach encompassed *patria* as the relationship of the historical to geographical.

At the turn of the 20th-century, this concept of place became popular amongst historians of education, recognising the subjectivity of local experience and rejecting utopian visions (Rousmaniere, 1903). A century later, radical writer Rich (2003) explores her identity as a feminist, queer and Jewish, but claims geographic location is the ultimate determinant in her life. Like Korczak (1942) said, not because he was Jewish but because he was born in Warsaw, Rich also credits her origins, birthplace, and home as the deciding factors of her life course. I believe Korczak took this a step further as he wrote of his relationship with Warsaw as not merely an influence or a window as some call it. Korczak (1942/1967) claimed his identity is intertwined with

his city, declaring ‘Warsaw is mine, and I am hers’ but something more, he says ‘I am her – shifting, unstable and suffering’ (p.442).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica differentiates patriotism (love of country) and nationalism (loyalty to one’s nation) despite being often treated synonymously. In explaining his patriotism, Korczak’s (1942/1967) loyalty remained tied to Warsaw, calling neighbouring Polish towns and cities distant, unknown foreign lands. Thus, the secondary form of patriotism is explored here through the concept of *patria* (Latin) as related to one’s origins, both hereditary and geographic.¹¹ Warsaw’s violent and exciting atmosphere saw students like Korczak adopting a complex stance around domination, conflict, and struggle. His geography professor proved highly influential in shaping the young man’s views as he attended secret lectures alongside thousands of women at the Flying University (Falkowska, 1989). This fascinating thinker ahead of his time caused Korczak (1942) to lament that the Western world knew nothing of Nałkowski’s great work. In today’s terms, Nałkowski should have credit for fashioning a generation more ecologically aware and egalitarian. Undoubtedly, his views were radical, feminist, and anti-clerical but deviated from the secularist, socialist, or liberal global trends. Contrary to others, Nałkowski charged the proletariat as a mass that will fall easily into predesignated paths under the sham the guardians of order offer them. He echoes the anarchist warnings that overinflating the working class would lead to a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ (Avrich, 1967, p.107).

Contemporary social anarchists reject competition, hierarchy, and unjust authority by proposing a society organised on mutual aid, cooperation, and solidarity (Fleming, 1980; Kinna, 2019a). The 21st-century ushered in the second wave of anarchism, according to Kinna (2019), one concerned with domination and power in

¹¹ Collins Latin Dictionary, 2000, p.152

other categories such as sexuality and ethnicity. Thus, the 19th-century anarchist tradition expands with overlooked Polish thinkers such as Nałkowski and Korczak, who employed anarchist concepts to argue for the rights of women, minorities, and children.

Traditional anarchism during this period tends to constrain itself within the political sphere, committed to the anti-capitalist worker's struggles. Repeatedly Korczak mocked revolutionary and reform agendas that held the narrow focus on workers' rights without paying heed to gender, age, and ethnicity. For example, by defining children's growth as work in the same vein as unpaid domestic or reproductive labour, he effectively expanded the worker's struggle to include all younger people, regardless of gender, class, or political affiliation. This concern with purpose and work, rather than increased leisure, is also found in Woodcock's (1968) turn of phrase advocating the replacement of 'Useless Toil' with 'Useful Work' (p.58). However, Korczak goes further with a philosophy of work for organising his Homes and society at large, instead of a predetermined organisational vision imposed by a set division of labour.

The additive approach commonly appears in studies to address the historical absence of women, giving examples of heroic acts and outstanding individuals restoring names to existing histories. In anarchist history, adopting this approach, I could add Korczak and his female colleagues as relevant figures to the anarchist canon. The significance of revealing forgotten figures highlights that canon formation is incomplete and the value of such historical research. Adopting a feminist approach questions patriarchy and increases the visibility of women and issues historically associated with them, such as raising children and housework. As Rich (2003) warns, scholars must be careful not to apply Western generalisations to the experiences of others living elsewhere in time and space. While males usually dominate historical narratives, repeated wars and arrests left Warsaw and the Children's Homes with a skewed ratio towards females, significantly changing the dynamics through their leadership and

involvement in mass action. Although adopting such an approach may expand existing historical knowledge and reveal these rights movements, it is unlikely to challenge ideas and activities in contemporary research and settings.

Similarly, I argue that Korczak knew his domestic pedagogy and commitment to caring for children centred upon undervalued menial and feminine tasks. Scientists and activists often treated his socio-political experiments reforming society from below as curiosities or misunderstood as solely educational models. His simple theory stated that all children are already rational people, which stood in stark opposition to the prevailing ideas of the time. The literature review showed that most understandings promote a pedagogy of sympathy for poor orphans based upon philanthropic duty. Similarly, the individualist narrative of his heroic and enduring fame ignores that many others jointly worked for the political goals of this collective. Like Korczak, the utopian charge continues to be levelled at intellectual and ecological anarchists with sarcastic jibes that if everyone is free, who will be left to sweep the streets? (Kinna, 2019a). Korczak's approach is historically grounded in the Polish example of overcoming the deep distrust held by traditional, rural communities towards incoming educational and political changes. Tracing Korczak's pedagogy offers pathways for common anarchist debates, including the rural-urban divide, mental-menial work, paid-unpaid labour, and property rights.

Certain feminists reject the violent legacy of founding fathers and deepen social anarchism by committing to plural and fluid means resembling the desired end. They seek alternatives in writing about anarchism and feminism to challenge the historical orthodoxy and provide new ways of understanding anarchist theory and practice. Such anarchists who prefer anarchism with a small *a* cite the Russian anarchist Emma Goldman as encapsulating their movement within her motto 'if you can't dance, it's not my revolution' (Kinna 2019a, p.146).

The predetermined issue also appears in anarchist education, as Suissa (2010) warns that there is a temptation to deliver in a planned fashion by preconceiving an outcome. She makes an important distinction that anarchism is not necessarily geared toward producing a perfect utopian dream as it rejects the concept of a static society or abolition of the state through chaos and disorder. Though seeking creativity and encouraging cooperation, the default position still talks of anarchism as a society with a particular order or comprising specific content. Contemporary movements adopt thinkers and practices to articulate anarchism and associated movements as a moral force for good (Kinna, 2019a). Limiting responses in such ways rejects direct action that does not meet current criteria, as Kinna positions action resembling traditional culture as outside anarchism and prefigurative practice. Therefore, I contemplate where this leaves indigenous rights to self-government? What of freedom of religion, language, and education, without domination and imposition upon different peoples? Instead, the anarchist perspective should bring fresh insight into the relationship between education and societal change by offering a critical dimension useful for disrupting entrenched ideas and practice (Suissa, 2010). Employing the elements of anarchism in this analysis, I show how such principles appear in Polish revolutionary direct action, specifically in the education and care of children.

Chapter 4: Inventing Eastern Europe

The origins of anarchism appeared to the Western Europeans as a decidedly foreign wave from the Russian Empire. The division of Europe into East and West is often attributed to WWI and later cemented by the Cold War. The curious labelling is generally abandoned as the European Union tries to present a cohesive geographical and cultural unity. However, it is a much older idea related to economic, cultural, and religious divisions. The notion is significant for this study as it repeatedly appears in Korczak's texts where the haughty West derides and dominates their backwards, underdeveloped neighbours. Examining the intellectual history of the 18th- century, Wolff (2012) argues that the Enlightenment philosophers conceptually reoriented the European continent into Western and Eastern. They desired a new construction of the civilised world centred upon Paris and French perspectives. To affirm the importance of Western Europe, they deliberately cultivated an idea of the backwardness of Eastern Europe despite most never visiting the region (*ibid*). This chapter presents how the Poles experienced the Enlightenment completely differently from Western Europe and Russia.

With studies of history and geography no longer in favour, it is perhaps easily forgotten that Poland lay cut off from the West with limited interaction behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. Exploring the complexity of Eastern Europe's relationship with the West, Morison (1992) catalogues the West as Britain, Western Europe, United States and even Japan as his chapters focus predominantly on Poland as central to the Eastern European side of the story. Sitting between Western and Eastern Europe, Catholic and Orthodox, Germanic and Slavic, Poland without barriers or protection, served as a country of transition or a bridge in Nałkowski's (1882) description. Later, the communist era ensured few scholars with the Polish history prerequisite for understanding events and ideas under the Russian Empire. It results in little exploration

or clarification of Korczak's (1942/1967) cryptic writing during the Holocaust, as in the passage related to a lifetime of disaster 'not because I am a Jew, but because I was not born in the West' (p.506). In his Diary, he explained his predicament directly correlated to being born in Eastern Europe. Indeed, the US Holocaust Encyclopaedia acknowledges Polish victims exterminated as sub-human Slavs and potential resistance leaders under German occupation¹². However, it appears that Korczak suggested the Holocaust continued a legacy of action against Poland under different guises. Studies have established that the Nazi regime intended to redraw Europe's border to exclude the Slavic people. Nazi propaganda outlined the following history,

the German people were the only bearers of culture in the East and in their role as the main power of Europe protected Western culture and carried it into uncultivated regions. For centuries they constituted a barrier in the East against lack of culture (Unkultur) and protected the West against barbarity.

(Connelly, 1999, p.14)

Scholars commonly discount Hitler's racial worldview as insane and irrational despite drawing directly from the Enlightenment division of Western and Eastern European constructing the boundary between the civilised and barbaric. Thus, this chapter reconstructs a hidden history from Korczak's notes, proceeding much like Ward's (2004) hidden history of housing. A broader approach begins with the master's tools of knowledge that subjugated and ostracised the religious Poles from any recourse and engineering their disappearance from the European landscape. Korczak's timeline shows that the Polish experience of the Enlightenment shaping a unique perspective on ideas and events usually treated as universally accepted.

Capitalising on the scientific revolution shaking people's faith, French philosophers realised the separation of Church and State required more preparation and diplomacy than bloodshed. To redress any residual influence of Holy Rome, Wolff

¹² <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/mosaic-of-victims-an-overview> accessed 06.03.2021

(1994) details the invention of Eastern Europe to contrast the enlightened West. Any resistance articulated as sentiment or historical precedents easily crumbled under new weapons such as the principle of free science (Pagden, 2012). The resulting purely humanist mythology enshrined man, reason, and progress above all other myths. Learned men established measurements of progress and enlightenment, creating a hierarchy of nations, placing Poland and her large populations of peasants and Jews at the bottom (Wolff, 1994).

In the West, the nation-state and national identity developed simultaneously after the Empire, but the Slavic nations developed in opposition to the Russian Empire-State. Arguments for independence and self-government by the various colonised nations drew upon their roots for historical precedents and origins. The Russians reacted by adopting a similar historical turn with a land-grab strategy claiming other nations' histories for tenuous links to substantiate their claim over territories. Increasing turbulence saw Orthodox Russians identifying themselves with the Emperor and the fatherland, differentiating themselves from the Catholics to the West, specifically, the Poles and Lithuanians (Plokhy, 2006).

Poland also touted mythology on the historical origins of Slavic nations, and with Warsaw's location on the periphery of Empires, her inhabitants gained labels as Slavs and non-European, 'being neither West nor non-West' (Sushytska, 2010, p.6). The history of Poland showcases both western and eastern influences with remarkable contrasts between the opposing factions of Francophiles and Slavophiles. This movement is different to that commonly associated with *narodnost* and national superiority that gained ground with Russian intellectuals in the mid-1800s. Although, they similarly demanded civil liberties for peasants while labelling the Western reform agenda as undermining existing culture and upsetting harmonious social relationships.

4.1 Slavophiles

By the 17th-century, Poland was the largest kingdom in Europe. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth implemented a parliamentary system, the Sejm, which had to consent to any new law. While the rule of other monarchs was absolute, the role of the Polish king was unique, not inherited but elected by the *szlachta*. Eligible Polish aristocrats and foreign princes comprised almost 10% of the population, compared to around 1% for the English or French aristocracy. Basing their status on an ancient claim to ‘golden freedoms’, the *szlachta* often took advantage of their position, controlling both the Church and legal system to paralyse the Executive.

An overly confident Poland gloated with the phrase *Musi to na Rusi* roughly translated to ‘coercion is a Russian thing’, claiming only Poles have free will and do nothing under duress (WJSP, 2021). In contrast to the West, the system protected the country from religious wars, massacres and even witch hunts, producing a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Commonwealth, highly attractive at the time to Jews, migrants, and asylum seekers (*ibid*). The privilege and extravagance of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility attracted the attention of foreign gentry eagerly adopting the Polish language and names in exchange for status, rights, and entry into this glamorous lifestyle. While diversity enriched the Polish Kingdom, wealthy outsiders bought their way into the ruling class threatening the delicate balance. Such reflection does not exonerate that the peaceful existence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth hid domination by the Poles over dissatisfied minorities and peasants.

The French Revolution of 1789 claims credit for creating a new myth of revolution (Joll, 1979). However, French revolutionary history intersects with Poland, as the longest-reigning queen of France, Maria Leszczyńska [1703 – 1768], was Polish, leading to reciprocal cultural exchange. The aristocratic connections between Poland and France introduced the unique cultures and traditions of Eastern Europe into

Versailles. Polish royalty maintained a proud legacy of stopping the Mongol hordes from invading Europe (Guesnet, 2019). As a frontier kingdom, wars, raids and trading with various Eastern people and the Ottoman Empire brought food, products and customs not seen elsewhere.

According to ancient maps, a warrior tribe called the Sarmatians populated Eastern Europe, with Polish nobles claiming them as ancestors (Zembaty, 2018). Fashionable Poles differentiated themselves from ordinary people by adopting costumes of oriental silks and sabres, eccentric beards and mohawk haircuts, shocking other Europeans who thought they resembled Persians or Native Americans (Wolff, 2012). The country was divided between Francophiles seeking Western modernity, while the opposing faction clung defensively to their legends infused with ‘high-pitch religiosity, fact denying and hopelessness, all inspired by holy men and smashed by an industrial empire’ (Zembaty, 2018) (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Contrasting Costumes of Polish Nobles by Lewicki (1841). Source: Jagellonian Library

Research is dubious regarding the tribal origins of the Poles, but the return to a golden era persists as a great longing of the people. These Poles maintained the anarchist link between art, literature, and revolution admired by Woodcock and others (Evren & Kinna, 2015). Recalling legendary heroes, both male and female, signified more than acts of remembrance but later served to swell the national spirit and advertise a call to arms in preparation for uprisings. Representing an authentic and non-Western heritage is also interpreted as a stand against urbanisation, industrialisation, and even popular culture uninvited from the West (Zembaty, 2018). People voluntarily choosing to be ungoverned barbarians had no place in Western civilisation, their temperament associated with the wildness of their terrain (Petersen, 1995). Not requiring the sailing ships of conquistadors, I outline how the enlightened despots and philosophers sought to punish the backward Poles, who paid a hefty price for loyalty to their traditions.

The 18th-century saw the Kingdom of Poland holding a unique royal position amongst European states, as it held 'free' election for the throne rather than hereditary dynasties. The *Sejm* (parliament) featured *liberum veto*, or freedom to vote, based on a principle of unanimous consent and equality of all nobles. The *Liberum veto* reserved the right of any individual member to end a parliamentary debate or overturn existing legislation. Operating at an even higher level, this so-called Golden Rule required the consent of all members for legislative proposals to pass (Wandycz, 1980). Despite *liberum veto* strengthening the road to constitutional reform, this individual right is also cited as a major cause of Poland's political downfall, as parliament failed to reach consensus time and again. A weakened sovereign allowed aristocratic landowners to resist royal reforms in serfdom and economic structure.

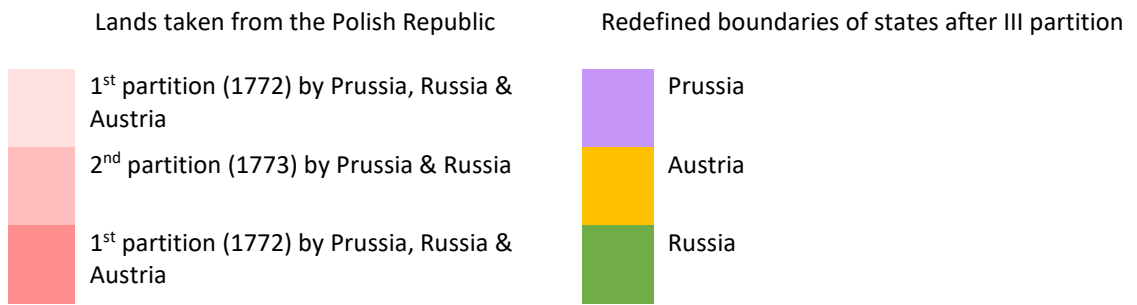
Meanwhile, foreign powers leveraged parliamentary members' self-interest and corruption to paralyse the Commonwealth completely. The phrase 'Polish parliament' entered languages to mean chaos, disorder, and inaction amongst decision-makers as

'*liberum veto* had become the sinister symbol of old Polish anarchy' (*ibid*, p.87). This anarchy sufficiently weakened the Polish state economically and politically, making it vulnerable to invaders seeking its collapse. *Liberum veto* is better regarded as a symptom rather than a cause, as the nobility enjoyed equality in name only as wealthy landowners or those involved in commerce prospered.

At the same time, foreign pawns with little stake in Poland's economic development or any legislative outcome engineered stalemates. Russia and Prussia threatened war if the Polish King ended *liberum veto* with a new Constitution. Thus, the "Golden Freedom" of Polish liberty had decayed into an instrument of oppression already wielded by her enemies. Following the rude awakening of the First Partition, the new Constitution hastily abolished *liberum veto* and the rule of the one over the many. Initially an admirer, Rousseau eventually called the veto barbaric, vowing excessive use should attract capital punishment, though he later refused to abolish the veto, 'reluctant to smother rooted plants by scattering new seeds' (Wolff, 1994, p.238). The First Partition of the country by powerful enemies was a wake-up call for the Poles, but the action came too late as the 1791 Constitution proved the final straw, with the Empires tearing Poland apart soon after (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Map of 3 Empires after Partitions of Poland. Source: Krzysztof Machocki (author's legend)



A faction of French philosophers targeted the perceived darkness existing in such Catholic strongholds with weak government, observing the Polish failures as correlated with its decadent nobility and fanatical clergy. Across Europe, Poland symbolised anarchy without order or clear leadership, viewed as a declining culture. It embodied the adage *Polska nierządem stoi* that can be translated into vulgar forms but essentially means that Poland stands by nothing (Hillar, 1992, p.187). The strategic brilliance of Catherine the Great in turning towards the West reinforced her position as an enlightened despot. The achievements of her iron rule over the dark lands convinced the Enlightenment architects of the immense power and possibilities of their universal project. These French thinkers ushered in an era of assimilation and imitation in Russia, raising concerns amongst intellectuals and clergy for the fate of so-called native sources of culture (Walicki, 1979). All versions of the new humanities attempted to understand human nature and the civilising processes that changed it. The mission of the Enlightenment, now believing humanity is devoid of mystery, could be placed under the scrutiny of the man of science, who grappled with understanding it in the hope of controlling it.

The imported anti-historical materialism fashioned Russia into a blank page, serving the enlightened despotism and assimilation programs of all Empires. Later, the same tools put to a different purpose allowed Russian revolutionaries to claim that since Russia had no past, no obstacles stood in the way of complete social revolution (*ibid*). With their historical ties eliminated and the West artificially transplanting a new culture, Russian elites became strangers to themselves. Uprooted nomads, the Russian aristocrat, held no connections to the common people, no generational ties, or traditions, except perhaps faint associations with the orthodox religion. Civilisation acquired two meanings: the road to perfection and the noble pursuit of a happier, wiser existence or else, the canyon separating the wealthy nations from the savages and barbarians

(Pagden, 2012). The following section continues this historical exploration as I speculate on the content of several of Korczak's Last Lectures, specifically related to the Enlightenment.

4.2 Nationality. Nation. Cosmopolitanism.

This section explores how Korczak may have explained the emerging tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism during his Last Lectures. I begin with historians warning that the English usage of “nationalism” requires more discrimination and an understanding of Polish history to eliminate unjustified associations with patriotism (Wandycz, 2006). Potter (2017) advises about generalisations in historical writing, with non-historians ‘mistaking the nation as a people for the nation as a state’ with a nationalistic impulse (p.124). According to Dann and Donwiddy (1988), the French Revolution precipitated two different phenomena of nationalism: firstly, the pursuit of an existing State’s interests, and secondly, the claim or desire for a state by a group of people who do not have one. French expansion and influence ensured its revolutionary model prevailed, requiring populations to unite in political and military efforts to suppress internal dissent or conquer new ground.

The French Revolution precipitated a shift in the political discourse shaping revolutionary expansionism under the guise of modern-State nationalism (*ibid*). The impact of this shift diffused across neighbours even before the Napoleonic wars. However, systematic analysis often overlooks the local conditions giving rise to different forms of nationalism, the modern-State and patriotism. Historians generally credit the move away from the classical republican conception of patriotism towards greater nationalism or political fatherland to Rousseau’s book, *Considerations on the Government of Poland*. However, their assessment perhaps overlooks this publication

responded to foreign hostility, oppression, and forced assimilation by aiming to preserve a unique people and the desire to secure the nation's long-term survival.

The question of why the Enlightenment still matters, Pagden (2012) answers with a notably one-sided argument centred upon cosmopolitanism. He notes that European intellectuals excused themselves from the lowly hordes and feudal lords to serve as the revolutionary vanguard. His exploration of emerging globalism suggests that the European promises of liberty, equality and fraternity for the world's citizens did not materialise. Implementation of the rights of man remains threadbare under the weight of two centuries of imperialism, racism, and intolerance towards anyone refusing or unable to live within preconceived legal and moral codes. The intellectual elite targeted anyone clinging with foolish loyalty to idiotic rulers or notions of divine power by diagnosing permanent blindness and prescribing a life of darkness. On a quest for secularisation, the intellectuals targeted Poland as a repository for ignorance and superstition associated with Catholicism.

Cosmopolitanism appears most notably with Immanuel Kant as a moral ethic where all humans are of equal worth, overriding any obligations or parochial views belonging to communities of class, race, or religion (Kaufmann & Pape, 1999). In Kant's idealist philosophy, any difference between cultures caused by education and tradition had no bearing on the structural quality of a person. Thus, all people shared equally in the universal human condition capable of joining as citizens of the world if willing to follow the rules. If asking where to find such 'rules of life', today's answer may be 'in the collective practices of humankind, regardless of condition, status, colour or belief' (Pagden, 2012, p.78). However, in the era of Empires, such conditions applied to enforce exclusions and inequality, forcing many to abandon language and culture to assimilate as citizens by following the set rules. Though Kant warned against globalised

cosmopolitanism, I would describe his notion of a League of Nations as a league table. Kant held onto a hierarchy of nations and celebrated the Empires' quashing the Poles.

The citizen of the world is an admirable concept but applied quite differently than imagined. The intention here is to examine claims of equality that celebrate the Enlightenment and cosmopolitanism uncritically with limited historical exploration. Kant's liberal cosmopolitanism did not recognise shared humanity but established rules of engagement between the host and stranger, which did the least harm between potential enemies. He intended a degree of hospitality towards the stranger or guest but ensured the visitor held no land rights or intention to settle (Baban & Rygiel, 2017). This exercise into hidden histories presents a Polish perspective to the Enlightenment era and explains Korczak's radical resistance to cosmopolitanism because of its enforced rational sweep over all people. As the Kantian basis for Western morality eliminated protest and challenge to oppression, Korczak turned to subversive educational strategies developed by Poles to disrupt existing hierarchies and power relations.

Concerning education, Starkey (2012) believes the cosmopolitan perspective beginning from such humanist principles has much to offer in culturally diverse societies. He adopts the educational philosophy of John Dewey, who judged 19th-century nationalist education as obliterating the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment (*ibid*). My earlier warning of the term *nationalism* shows this is not wholly correct, as what Dewey perceived as nationalist states were actually empires with expansionist aims colonising the nations of other people. The Enlightenment thinkers envisioned a predetermined utopia to replace the backward elements, appealing to Western and Russian rulers who actively competed to create and control society. This issue might explain the criticism levelled at Colin Ward by Gordon (2006) for adhering to the assumptions of 19th-century anarchists. What I find troubling about Bakunin was that he

simultaneously acknowledged and denounced an idealist philosophical basis by saying, 'Idealism is the banner of bloody and brutal material force, of shameless material exploitation'. Meanwhile, the imperial world from Napoleon, Prussian Emperor William I, Russian Tsar, and the Jesuits, he found to be 'all the butchers and pious converters of Poland' (Maximoff, 1964, p.63). The universalism of rational philosophy became the justification for demanding loyalty to centralised power, eliminating the perceived enemies of the state adhering to local governance and regional patriotism. Therefore, an unexpected product of cosmopolitanism is the close link between citizenship education and the nationalist paradigm. Within prestigious universities, cosmopolitanism strongly influences studies in citizenship education. For example, the Institute of Education embraces cosmopolitanism as offering a utopian vision as potentially disrupting existing hierarchies, power dynamics and granting freedom (Starkey, 2012). Likewise, the European Union funds children's programs such as the PEACE project, where the acronym represents Philosophical Enquiry Advancing Cosmopolitan Engagement. The program organisers describe their reflective cosmopolitanism as serving democracy and multiculturalism. Neither party has given due consideration to how this worldview historically facilitated Imperial loyalty, conformity, and commerce. Cosmopolitan visionaries such as Kant and Voltaire merely espoused tolerance and equality, offering little more than sympathy for the welfare of the primitive (Pagden, 2012). Education was the preferred Western method of showing the light by assimilating the masses towards a designated rational worldview, and the liberators of the world would free those resisting by force (*ibid*). Dedicated to science divulging the universal nature of the human, the science of man produced the humanities disciplines recognisable today.

For comparison, many still question the logic of Korczak's 19th-century declaration of pedagogy as the science of man and his extension of rationality to

children as people. On multiple occasions, Korczak (1991/1993) referred to himself as ‘living under the slavery of national partition, as a subject, not a citizen’ (§6, HTLAC – Family). He professed a commitment to human rights but rejected the cosmopolitan strategies of philanthropy or transplanting foreign ideas as solutions for Eastern Europeans. In one article, Korczak (1911/1994) derided England, France and Germany for their colonialist policies and attitudes to foreigners, warning that Poles were yet to understand the cold-hearted nature of the West.

Another feature of the Enlightenment period had nations lose or reject national identities favouring blended European characteristics. Such cosmopolitanism can serve as the ideal, but never the rule, as its proponents centralise their theoretical edifice and with the centre in place around themselves radiate outwards, a shrunken cosmos attempting a universal empire (Pagden, 2012). As one of the few travelling philosophers, Rousseau noted, ‘your Frenchman, your Englishman, your Spaniard, your Italian, your Russian, are all pretty much the same man’ (Petersen, 1995, p.258). Thus, the cosmopolitan ideal resembled a philosophical regime of Thomas More’s Utopia, proposing universal happiness and pain to define humanity. This singularity was unacceptable to Rousseau and Korczak, with both favouring diversity and *patria*. Polish Anarchism rejected any singular, static, and unified worldview built upon certainty and universal knowledge, whether through science, religion or superstition. Rousseau discovered uniqueness and robustness in the Poles, resisting both the coercion and inducements of their rich and powerful neighbours, as he enthused ‘roots so deep, unable to be smothered’ (Wolff, 1994, p.239). Perhaps this provides an enhanced explanation for the commonly used term “grassroots” as difficult to tear up or completely eradicate?

Evoking botanical metaphors, Rousseau’s conception of national identity existed in the dialectic between nature and nurture, the balance of wild and cultivated

states. Giving only one reason to force cultivation, he located it in Poland's people subjected to the unethical machinations orchestrated by the Empires seeking to wipe out any elements resisting control. He directed all institutions into this political purpose of building a nation within the people. Designed to foster 'genius, the character, the tastes and the manners of a people; that make it itself and not another; that inspire in it that ardent love of country founded on habits impossible to uproot' (*ibid*). Rousseau believed that the Poles' marked differences and barbaric attributes held a superior potential for change, acting as a reservoir of power by living in closer harmony to their origins. The folk customs, language, art, and religious traditions formed the people themselves as a product of a collective past. The geographic barriers of mountains and rivers established physical and mental borders between people, where crossing became unfathomable for almost all.

In Russia, Slavophiles adopted a counterargument to the West that the diversity amongst the lower class posed no impediment for the power and advancement of their Empire. The absorption of diverse people forming a protected repository banking traditional values and virtues already destroyed by progress in the West. This Russian interpretation of Slavic ideas of *patria* still enforced the superiority of Russia in the hierarchy of nations, 'as leading the universal progress of humanity' (Rabow-Edling, 2012, p.7).

A misapprehension of Rousseau's political ideas, Petersen (1995) attributes to the superficial treatment of his engagement with Poland. Simply relating *Emile* as Rousseau's definitive educational text overlooks the effects of later work, which had a significantly different character. *Emile* suffers from a type of historical nihilism, but Rousseau burdened the Poles with what he thought of as preparation and protection of the citizenry. Rousseau had initially stated that the study of national literature or history was unnecessary in education but retracted this in his work on Poland. Devoid of the

carefree, liberal opportunities in his earlier philosophy, he aimed to educate the *savage*. Instead of natural knowledge, the Polish child was to be disciplined and endowed with patriotism as Rousseau (1985) wrote:

Here we have the important topic: it is education that you must count on to shape the souls of the citizens in a national pattern, and so to direct their opinions, their likes, and dislikes that they shall be patriotic by inclination, passionately, of necessity. [...]

When the Pole reaches the age of twenty, he must be a Pole and not some other kind of man. I should wish him to learn to read by reading literature written in his own country; I should wish him, at ten, to be familiar with everything Poland has produced; and at twelve, to know all its provinces, all its roads, all its towns; at fifteen, to have mastered his country's entire history; and at sixteen, all its laws [...]

p.20

This love of 'laws and liberty' was not to be confused with blind obedience and stifling morals, as Pagden (2012) defends Rousseau's vision as 'modern civic patriotism', both benign and outwardly generous (p.261). Indeed, Rousseau contrasted his newer curriculum as liberating versus the French and Russian systems schooling children into servitude.

Early anarchists attacked Rousseau's civilisation efforts, declaring the law as the 'mighty bulwark of mankind against barbarism' and their bastion of torture and enslavement (Kinna, 2019a, p.62). Despite their desperate circumstances, the opposition seems to hold an unsympathetic position towards the fate of the Poles. It was precisely the barbarians that are excluded in historical discussions on the flaws of law making. Often scholars perceive national borders as firm rather than fluid, judging pre-political conditions by French history without a cursory glance at Polish failures. As colonisation and assimilation threatened minorities, Rousseau's hopes for a civil society based upon liberty and equality read less fanciful.

By reading in historical context, I suggest placing Rousseau's directive of 'let us supersede the empire of stern discipline and oppressive restriction' as mirroring the

punishments dictated by real Empires. With Poles refusing to implement harsh regimes in homes and institutions, they formed a resistance that began the child's emancipation and freedom of the nation. Perhaps sensing his own demise, Rousseau (1985) challenged that if you can make sure a Pole never becomes a Russian, he guaranteed that Russia would never subjugate Poland. That Russia and others completely swallowed Poland only a few decades later gives Hanczewski (2019) reason to consider Rousseau's enthusiasm as a mark of a 'poor thinker in the time of freedom, but a great thinker in the time of slavery'. The Polish national anthem still declares that the nation could never die if hidden in their beating hearts. After several military attempts at regaining freedom, the Poles understood they lacked the military resources to win on the battlefield, but neither could they live in peace if enslaved. Social reform would come through mastery in the cultural stadium, with others and within themselves, as mutual self-aid.

Countering Rousseau's view of human nature as innocent was Proudhon's view of it as flawed and evil, proclaiming a much-needed return to a natural, universal state of morality, essentially based upon Christian ethics (Vincent, 2017). The anarchist predecessors emerging from rationalism also adopted science as revealing the truth on human nature and society. In 1839, Proudhon wrote, 'all that which is the material of legislation and of politics is an object of science, not opinion [...] Justice and legality are two things as independent of our assent as mathematical truth'. Not long after, he declared his vision for creating a new epoch of humanity where 'the new science must replace religion in everything' (*ibid*, p.257). However, I find myself questioning Vincent's (2017) assessment that Proudhon was a social pluralist horrified by encroaching authoritarianism he found in Rousseau's political theories. Proudhon's social contracts relied upon 'agreement freely made between equals' (*ibid*). Equality here referred to the virtuous worker, and with his disdain for sentiment, it is unlikely

Proudhon would include the passionate Polish revolutionaries mixing in his Parisian circles. Following one of their failures, Proudhon recorded his understanding of the detrimental ‘drama of history’ and perhaps commented on the Polish ability to ‘reason correctly, recognise what is moral’ (*ibid*). He echoed very rationalist ideals as he wrote, ‘the passions of men cause perturbations, the drama of history. One will know that society arrives at order, and above all at intelligence, when history ceases to be dramatic’ (*ibid*). Replacing Proudhon into the historical context, his comments likely address the repeated doomed uprisings of ignorant and passionate Poland.

As mentioned previously, Korczak favoured conflict over notions of conformity, harmony, and universal laws or knowledge. Emphasising the importance of pluralism and diversity in maintaining the necessary conflict and struggle to create change, Korczak (1927) wrote, ‘each provocation is different, everyone who provokes is different, each who is provoked is different’ (*Mały Przegląd*). Here are the repeated provocations against domination on a micro-scale, which Woodcock (1968) envisioned cumulating to demask authorities and precipitate social revolution. Usually, anarchists name predecessors such as Godwin and Proudhon, who denounced religion favouring rationality and progress (Woodcock, 1989). Meanwhile, Korczak stands in contrast to the classical anarchists’ vision. This chapter shows that rather than simply a product of the time, such views were often carefully orchestrated strategies aimed at minorities resisting the rule of enlightened cosmopolitanism aiming for monoculture or at least sanctioned society.

In contrast to Starkey’s assessment earlier, neither cosmopolitanism, rationality, nor Kantian philosophy ushered in greater tolerance, human rights, or freedoms for all. On the contrary, first the French and later the Germans required conformity where the guise of religious tolerance allowed swift and harsh responses to resistance in their quest for unification. Such authorities severely curbed freedom of association and

expression, as seen with the Germanic standardisation of most aspects of society under the *Kulturkampf* (Culture Wars) program, which I discuss in later chapters. The following section examines the relationship between France and Poland as I resume the trail of Korczak's Last Lectures. I interrogate the Enlightenment thinkers weaponising history and knowledge to eradicate ignorance **and** the ignorant.

4.3 *The Encyclopaedists*

The contributors to the French Encyclopédie (28 vols., 1751–72), edited by D. Diderot and (initially) J. Le R. D'Alembert. The Encyclopédie sets out to review the full extent of human achievement in the arts and sciences from a secular standpoint. The tone is that of rationalist humanism and scepticism about the claims of revealed religion; pleas for religious and political liberty are insinuated into a mass of accurate information. It became a rallying point for opponents of established beliefs and practices in the political and social as well as the religious spheres.¹³

Scholars like Bauman (2000) have traced a genealogy between the Enlightenment and the Holocaust. Similarly, Korczak explicitly targeted the French philosophers known as The Encyclopaedists, who ushered in a new secular worldview. This section explores the views of these historical figures on Poland. In his book, *The Anarchists*, Joll (1979) holds up the French Revolution to illustrate the anarchist desire for violence and freedom as carried into the next century. The revolutionaries believed the subjugated poor could not be liberated by peaceful means, as legal and political institutions serve only the wealthy and powerful. Joll quotes the French philosopher, Marat, who is not averse to using force, as 'the great point is to enlighten them and make them aware of their rights, and the revolution will function infallibly without any human power being able to oppose it' (*ibid*, p.44). Classical anarchist tradition via Kropotkin also adopts Marat's warnings of subversive elements amongst revolutionary

¹³ Livingstone, E. A. (2005). *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Kiribati: Oxford University Press. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095750871> accessed 06.03.2021

movements appropriating the victory of peasants and proletariats but now for the elite intellectuals (*ibid*). Though France led in its promotion of progress and perfection of society, in Britain, Godwin published his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* in 1793 to address a small circle of Utopians. Reliant on progress and reason, he brings a conviction that proper upbringing and education could enact a new era of moral laws and socialism. However, Godwin (1798) questioned whether future generations would judge the history recorded by the Encyclopaedist Voltaire as the ‘stain on his species or their most generous benefactor’ (p.722). The question remains as to why Godwin singled out Voltaire as awaiting his judgement day?

The Encyclopaedia Britannica¹⁴ gives the following entry on Voltaire:

*Pseudonym of François-Marie Arouet (born November 21, 1694, Paris, France—died May 30, 1778, Paris), one of the greatest of all French writers. Although **only a few** of his works are still read, he continues to be held in **worldwide repute** as a courageous crusader against tyranny, bigotry, and cruelty. Through its critical capacity, wit, and satire, Voltaire's work vigorously propagates **an ideal of progress** to which people of all nations have remained responsive.*¹⁵

According to this excerpt, few still read Voltaire’s works though he enjoys an unshakable reputation, while an anarchist approach warrants teasing out elements Godwin considered dubious. This aspect is critical for Voltaire, who defined the modern discipline of history itself (Sakmann, 1971). So, yes, he wrote the book, so to speak, which would become the intellectual weapon against the Poles.

The downfall of the Polish Kingdom and retaliation by the Russian Empress, Catherine the Great, against her former lover, the Polish King, provided fodder for French writers as the Great European Comedy. The dramatic atmosphere of Central Europe became farcical, as rival philosophers played a political chess game in Parisian salons. Intellectuals were thoroughly engaged in the military campaign of Mother Russia, bestowing her newly found enlightened rule upon neighbouring people by force

¹⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Voltaire> accessed 03.03.2021

¹⁵ Bold emphasis added

if necessary. Dealing with federalism, democracy, and general political theory, Petersen (1995) finds ‘the 18th-century debate about Poland between Rousseau and Voltaire is still alive’ (p.254). Fiercely anti-Catholic, Voltaire applauded the Russian invasion for freeing the ‘slaves and satellites from the Church’s empire’ (Wolff, 1994, p. 263). Voltaire’s propaganda written anonymously, as romantic fiction or under the names of Polish counts, clergy, and soldiers convinced Parisians of the Polish people’s will and gratitude for ending their ‘miserable government’ (*ibid*). Voltaire could barely contain his glee as the Empress employed his historical and geographic sketches in her strategies to subjugate the Poles (Pagden, 2012). He solidly supported the Russian Empire while mocking Polish illiteracy and medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary, declaring the Poles worship the ‘goddess of stupidity’ (Wolff, 1994, p.264).¹⁶ Ironically, in gaining favour from a powerful female ruler, the men of reason effectively bound women in the Russian Empire within a cult of motherhood and isolated domesticity by eliminating mystical and cultural knowledge considered feminine and irrational (Nash, 1981). Their involvement in this historical thread hints as to why Korczak began his Lectures series with a title dedicated to the emancipation of women.

Ignorance remains the defining feature of barbarism, says Scott (2009), discussing how elites leveraged the stigma of illiteracy to justify state programs of civilisation and education. Utilising the new Encyclopaedia, Voltaire defined a lower species of human requiring rational guardianship, while Rousseau responded by declaring the savage category as not signifying weakness but strength. Curiously, Petersen (1995) cannot find the “noble savage” concept in Rousseau’s writing as he focused on European anthropology rather than distant lands. Indeed, some now regard it

¹⁶ Historically, the Marian Cult emerged out of the Piarist order, founded by a young priest who wrote a pedagogical textbook, *Prodromus reginae artium* (The Messenger of the Queen of Arts). Highly popular, it criticised the status enjoyed by the aristocracy and proposed the equality of all citizens before the law. Mariology or the worship of Mary venerates her cooperation in the salvation of humanity, while the Madonna and Child remains the most pervasive iconography in either the Western or Eastern Churches.

as a 19th-century hoax, fuelling political and racist agendas geared towards colonialist ambitions (Ellingson, 2002).

The professed outcome of the Enlightenment is pride in shedding the religious evils, superstitions, and hierarchies of the past for a rational, universal worldview. By no longer needing to subordinate to a higher being, philosophers replaced divine law with a common good determined by the laws of nature and the general will. Speaking on behalf of the Encyclopaedists, Diderot explained that natural human rights serve ‘to ensure your happiness and theirs [...] the measure of your conformity [...] determines when you transgress the borders of your species’ (Pagden, 2012). His definitions of rights and equality specify criteria acceptable to gaining membership as a human. What of the obstacles to enlightened cosmopolitanism, such as lingering Catholic beliefs? Here, French philosophers employed Locke as the underlabourer ‘to dispose of the Rubbish, that lies in the way to Knowledge’ (Pagden, 2012, p.78). To replace the so-called rubbish of myth and religious scriptures, they touted the *Encyclopédie* as the complete truth on all subjects.

In his intellectual history, Wolff (1994) details how Paris claimed itself as the cultural pinnacle of Western Europe and civilisation. The image of uncivilised Eastern European barbarians entered the scientific debate to describe a people who failed to evolve to the same extent as those in the West. Stereotypes and myths about Eastern Europe as a frontier of civilisation became pervasive and entrenched. It is little wonder that Korczak issued a stark rejection of Western ideals as those in his monologue, *Euthanasia*. Along with cosmopolitanism, he questioned the rapid secularisation of Europe. Centred upon the symbol of progress and rationality, the Eiffel Tower, which Korczak (1942/1978) denounced as a contemporary tower of Babel, alluding to the biblical tale where everyone shared singular beliefs and spoke in a universal language.¹⁷

¹⁷ Much like the Esperanto project by Ludwik Zamnhof, admired by anarchists.

The Church has guided birth, marriage, and death. The ritual in mass focused Man's entire spiritual life, even regulating the economic life of his sheep. When people rejected (why so abruptly) the childish, ill-fitting clothes – naive and patched repeatedly – the flock – the Church expanded into many institutions.

Now in construction are not only places of worship. The first, you understand, is France and Paris, here is erected the modern Tower of Babel. It bears the name, Eiffel Tower.

(pp.61-62)

Complicated histories and hierarchies aside, Korczak explained that different religious traditions served people by providing symbols of love and hope (the Star of David, suffering Christ, compassionate Buddha, or Mother Earth). In contrast, the capitalist system honoured only symbols of status, wealth, and domination. Criticising the West, Korczak (1919/1993) clarified that Man might have matured and replaced the Church with hospitals, art galleries and universities but had not become wiser or gentler. He described how secular institutions and services had merely replaced those formerly in the realm of the Church;

Against hail, fire, illness, and death – insurance schemes and companies [...] The stock exchange controls prices, not the square in front of the Church [...] International meetings of learned specialists and countless periodicals, not the exchange of private letters and mutual social calls, discussions and feasts of the Levites.

The penal, civil and commercial codes are the equivalent of the old decalogue and its commentaries.

Prisons are former cloisters. Court verdicts - ex-communications. [...]

§64 HTLAC – Family

In his opinion, at least the Church had held sanctity within, declaring that the new institutions leave nothing outside, only the ‘beasts of burden, numbed, exploited, helpless’ (*ibid*). This reference is a direct barb against the racist policies and segregation of the labouring human-animals unable to achieve fundamental rights and dignity. So naturally, Marxists are quick to claim the quote emphasises the workers' class struggle. However, what is evident is that Korczak also blamed such materialism for stripping away rationality and any sacred dignity from his “dark” people.

When the Warsaw intelligentsia revived the national education projects of the 18th and 19th-centuries, Brzozowski (1904) described them as passionately striving ‘to absorb knowledge, to spread it, to work on one's own culture, to become an employee of the culture, become light, so that light can be carried with us everywhere’ in erecting a ‘temple of truth’ so that all could worship (pp.21-22). Fascinated with the original architects of these ideas, Korczak employed their metaphors as he dreamt of becoming ‘the dictator of light’ and described his family as the ‘bringers of light’. As Korczak (1942/2012) wrote years later in the *Diary*:

*In life, I pursue that which (my father) strove for and that for which my grandfather tortured himself for many years.
And my mother. I will talk about that later.
I am both my mother and father.
Knowing that helps me to understand a great deal.
My great-grandfather was a glazier. I am glad: glass gives warmth and light.*

p.74

He does not argue for a return to superstition or dogmatic scriptures but attempts to shield the population from the stark glare. Instead, he conceived gentler enlightenment beginning with the lowest and in solidarity with the ignorant masses.

4.4 *Evil and Malice*

The Korczak Lecture series explored emancipation and nationality in an increasingly cosmopolitan Europe and concluded with *Evil and Malice*. That Korczak devised the Lectures while in the Warsaw Ghetto presumes, he made certain connections between modernity and the Holocaust. Hannah Arendt's conclusions sparked a similar controversy that Nazi leaders were not evil but relinquished questioning, indeed all moral authority, as compelled to obey (Benhabib, 1996). Another Polish Jew, Zygmunt Bauman (2000), stated ‘the Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilization and the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason, it is a problem of that society,

civilization and culture' (p.22). He further laments that 20th-century sociologists like himself neglected such scholarship by divorcing Nazism as a horrific anomaly detached from Western civilisation's usual rationality and progress. Bauman accuses himself and other academics of avoiding the Holocaust by forcing it into a specialised set of disciplines associated with Holocaust and Jewish studies, thereby absolving mainstream scholarship from engagement or analysis (*ibid*).

Utilitarian strategies fostered and legitimised racism through rational calculation by employing a scientific backbone, which European institutions have yet to acknowledge, let alone heal. Herbert (1994) defines racism as a self-contained and consistent worldview, claiming to offer a cogent and all-embracing explanation for developments, contradictions, and problems in human society. Moreover, it proposes to elucidate events not based on myths or superstition but the postulates of natural science. In essence, racism is the 'biologizing of society' (Connelly, 1999, p.1). Thus, the unquestioning commitment to a one-sided view of the Enlightenment exalting its history of science should be a concern to educators. Embarking upon such philosophical arguments is beyond the scope, though a few remarks are necessary. For example, Starkey (2012) is a powerful influence in citizenship education and remains committed to cosmopolitanism, even citing Nazi Germany as the unwanted alternative and an outcome of patriotic nationalism. Such philosophers and educators are adamant that any Nazi connection to the Enlightenment is erroneous, revering Kant as a moral authority.

In the trial of Kant, it is foolhardy to oppose the numerous appraisals of his outstanding achievement in separating morality from religion. Western philosophers and liberal political theorists equally credit Kant for his views on universality, anticipating both the United Nations and modern human rights. If Kant (1794) had clear intentions in writing the *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, he excused himself from the unpleasant consequences upon his Polish neighbours. Imperial

rulers recognised the expertise of this German thinker, rewarding him with a rector position at a prestigious university. Furthermore, he gained honorary membership to the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences for services to Russia.

It is challenging to present much evidence to the contrary in such a company. However, Baughan and Fiori (2015) succinctly stated that the Kantian basis for Western morality has allowed for a depoliticised discourse on humanitarian action by eliminating protest and closing possibilities to challenge existing oppression. The Kantian principles seemingly reject blind obedience, yet key Nazi figures like Kaltenbrunner and Eichmann claimed to be faithful students living by his moral precepts. Lawyers in the Nuremberg trials argued that perpetrators were victims of ‘a deeply misguided historical process which had begun with the French Enlightenment’ (Laws, 2013). The usual defence of such contradictions is denial or that the Nazis misunderstood Kant. What cannot be so easily dismissed is that both perpetrators and victims use this explanation for the Holocaust.

As I demonstrate, Korczak recorded his history of ideas in his Last Lectures, presented to his fellow prisoners and smuggled out of the Ghetto within his memoirs. Elsewhere, when war crimes trials commenced, two German Jews, Adorno and Horkheimer (1947), published *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a genealogy tracing rationalism as conquering Western Europe, replacing cultural knowledge with a new Encyclopaedia. They argued that any resistance articulated as sentiment or historical precedents easily crumbled under the Enlightenment’s new weapons, such as Kant’s principle of free science (Pagden, 2012). This purely humanist mythology enshrined man, reason, and progress above all other myths. Thus, reason became a ‘specifically European form of tyranny’ where Empire, Reich or even international aid agency employed the language and methods of universal civilisation (*ibid*, p. 15).

Revision is necessary since scholars craft Korczak from Kant’s proposition, with

his work with children fashioned as a humanist response following the Enlightenment tradition. In his last days, Korczak (1942/1967) sarcastically defends Germany's rational motivations and process for targeting the Jews and Poland:

We do not blame. It was the same with the Pole, and it is the same even now with Poland and Palestine, Malta and Martinique, and with the respectable proletarian, the fair sex and the orphan, with militarism and capitalism. But not all at once. There must be some order of doing things, only certain items on the agenda.

Hard for you. It's not easy for us, either. The more so since there is no buffet handy where formerly one could escape from a wearisome discussion.

Brother, you must listen to History's programmed speech on the new character.

p.499

His explanation that the Nazis blindly carried out a historical, linear program with minimal reflection foreshadows post-Holocaust arguments. Obviously, Korczak did not know the scale of the final solution against the Jews but recognised precursors. The racism generally connected to Hitler's rise to power is attributable to 'a mass mentality formed over decades and centuries, [...] a feeling of superiority became one of the major components of the mentalities of millions of Germans' which the Nazis elevated as their official doctrine and ideological justification of the eradication of millions of people (Borejsza, 1988, p.18).

In conclusion, many scholars and researchers warn against accepting human rights and international law as secular or even recent, as historical, and theological concepts persist in law and practice (Freeman, 2004; 2011; Bain, 2016; Bania-Dobyns, 2011). They argue that exploring historical precedents promote a greater understanding of contemporary universal ideas and the global system, a valuable concept for a non-Western history of rights. Suffice to say, as other sovereigns and emerging nation-States flexed their authority to develop and sharply break ties with medieval traditions in international relations and law, the oppressed Poles could only observe and suffer the consequences. To unravel the pathway from racial theory to practice, historians explore the effects of Nazi racism in their desire for racially valuable children against the

eradication of those deemed undesirable. Anti-Semitism and the destruction of European Jewry is well documented, while far fewer studies highlight the role of Hitler's anti-Slavism directed at Poland. This exercise by no means represents a comprehensive study of such ideas, in merely attempting to reconstruct the historical processes impacting upon Poland for a distinctly Korczakian perspective on rights' history.

Chapter 5. Propaganda of the Deed

5.1 Power and Language

This section justifies a significant aspect of my methodology in reading original texts in the Polish language, with sensitivity to the historical and cultural contexts. Indeed, the overall aim of the research is to produce a new reading of texts from a prolific writer. A key feature was that Korczak was multi-lingual and academically fluent in various languages but chose to only write in Polish. Furthermore, his writing style and ability to avoid censorship demanded linguistic sensitivity in the analysis. It is a fundamental aspect of my argument for understanding his texts, as language was one of the master's tools in the oppression and resistance of the Poles.

The politically turbulent era of Korczak's youth endured under the maxim that there would never be a Poland under any guise or name. Writing in Poland for cultural and political freedom was a dangerous endeavour, and choosing pseudonyms displayed the need to protect oneself. Reserving his real name, Dr Henryk Goldszmit, for his medical work, Korczak adopted aliases early in his writing career in a bid to avoid censorship and the Tsarist authorities (Falkowska, 1989). Korczak's youthful revolutionary drive is evident in early activities such as underground study groups and libraries, which may seem mundane and safe now, but young Henryk landed in jail back then. Publishing anonymously or under pseudonyms reflected the extensive use of alias names in clandestine activities, creating an intimate sense of community and purpose in Polish revolutionary circles (Ury, 2012, p. 103). For most of Korczak's early life and career, the Russian Empire had wide-ranging censorship with no legal forms of politics or assembly. Without any hint of progress, many elites had turned to revolution, attempting to agitate the vast majority of people, namely peasants.

Scholars often begin their narrative with the 1880s assassination of Tsar Alexander II as heralding an awakening of the people's will (Read, 2015). Research

shows print as a propaganda tool originated in the 18th-century in Poland, characterised as ‘every writer, grasping a pen, [...] felt he was a citizen fulfilling his patriotic duty, benefiting from his citizen rights’ (Tarnowska, 2016, p.222). There was an expectation on the literate, free citizens to publish their political reflections and opinions as an expression of rights and a duty to the Republic and the forum of public debate (*ibid*). With the censors homing in on any use of historically and geographically significant names or illegal phrases, writers replaced words such as ‘Poland’ or ‘Polish’ with ‘home’ (*dom*) or ‘ours’ (*nasz*). Later tribute to this multi-national struggle for a homeland appears in Korczak’s naming of his experimental Children’s Home, *Nasz Dom* (Our Home), emblazoned with the huge sign *Witamy* or Welcome (Vucic & Sękowska, 2020). Immersed in Polish literature during his adolescence, Korczak had the skills of an Aesopian-reader and his writing style developed to mimic the esoteric qualities of his literary heroes. Fragments that appear obscure and obsolete jump out as quite specific to the trained reader. For example, the deportations to Siberia of political dissidents became veiled through vague references of a character taking a trip to Irkutsk, living in a white land or the metaphorical ‘seeds beneath the snow’ rising in the revolutionary spring.

In his work *Nationalism and Culture*, the anarchist Rocker (1978) argued that language had a national character, not solely expressing personal thought but a reciprocal relationship between the individual and society. In some ways, Rocker’s statement falls short of Korczak’s notion that language expresses the spirit of a people, with the Polish language inherently entwined with its oppressive history. The language a child acquires during the early years is not simply bound by the rules chosen by the adults in their home, he wrote, referring to the mother tongue as the air which the collective soul of the nation breathes.

Truth and doubt, faith and custom, love’s quarrels, frivolities and seriousness, integrity and falsity, riches and poverty - all are the creation of the poet’s

inspiration, dribbled out by a drunken killer, centuries of degrading toil and dark years of slavery.

1919/1967, §94, HTLAC – Family

Polish language, history, and culture are little known or appreciated outside of Poland and its diaspora, with good reasons. Firstly, as a poor Eastern cousin on the outskirts of Europe, with a notoriously tricky language. Secondly, Poland could not influence any well-known or lasting schools of thought. Examining previous Korczak scholarship, I identified the trend of an a-cultural approach to text analysis, often showing little patience or understanding of the humour found throughout Korczak's writing. I find many scholars and translators aim for readability and impact, thus reducing his rich complexity towards something more prescriptive, analytical, and straightforward. Any declaration of a proper translation obscures reader subjectivity and the difficulty his writing style presents, much like sacred texts. More recently, Borodo (2020) published his study to show how Polish-to-English translators of Korczak's texts leave their 'linguistic fingerprints' by modifying the works in terms of 'linguistic organization, underlying ideologies, cultural references and style' (p.1).

Some translators find reading Korczak in Polish more challenging than addressing questions of syntax and grammar, which is the case for Lloyd-Jones (2012). She describes his language as ambiguous, loaded with dialogue, ellipsis, children's slang, and jargon requiring interpretation. Acknowledging the ironies and contradictions within Korczak's text makes it virtually impossible to treat his words as a strict translation exercise. Much like poetry contributes to greater complexity, Korczak's style allows multiple meanings as one expression evokes another, forming interlinked puzzles. Though words reflect the writer's intentions, he adds greater meaning with gaps, improper punctuation, and incorrect grammar that form the overall composition. Through the organic growth of a language, the anarchist thinker Gustav Landauer observed that much of what is said is unspoken; he described the meaning as living

'between the words' (Day *et al.*, 2010, p.277).

With Korczak as a classical scholar, there are further implications in that ancient Greek and Latin are polysemous, with multiple meanings for a word or phrase, further complicated with metaphor and metonym in creating expressions of meaning (Zanker, 2010). In her analysis of his children's story, *King Matt the First*, Gašiorek (2013) identified that Korczak employed more metonyms than metaphors. She explained that these served as mental shortcuts emphasising the character's emotions and building a more pictorial message to which the reader could relate. In using such intimate spokenness, events gained authenticity, giving the impression of seeing the world through the eyes of a child. This deliberate use of metonymy has dual effects in expressing the author's attitude towards children and communicating with the recipient (*ibid*).

The Symbolist literary style is defined by such multi-layered prose, incorporating onomatopoeic elements contributing to the sound or musicality of the writing (Ross, 2016). In addition, reciting aloud employs phonetic ambiguities, creating alternative meanings than the words on the page. Such directives appear within Korczak's recommendation requiring adults to read stories aloud to groups of children and repeatedly create new atmospheres, meanings, and possibilities within each performance. Korczak's enigmatic texts are perhaps not as convoluted as those of Symbolist poets, but the musicality and multiple meanings they contain have been raised by contemporary Polish scholars and readers in Korczak's time.

Beginning to read Korczak's texts is a daunting task, but there is an underlying sense of coherence. There is rhythmic repeatability in musicality where Korczak organised the text and reused motifs, events, and dialogue for a sense of continuity. By disturbing the rhythm, Korczak introduced the element of surprise. Despite his vast written output, there is a minimal repetition of phrases. Instead, the prose gives the

recipient a sense of *deja vu*; each fragment is somehow a piece to a puzzling whole. Something you once knew or heard and had forgotten until now.

Working with translations is not necessarily objective or linear; often, there is a requirement for gradually braiding seemingly disparate threads. Not only with two languages and sets of meanings, but between the past, present, and future. My aim was not to study translation or philology as such. Instead, this thesis raises awareness of the problems and warns against superficial readings or the declared 'correct' version. Unfortunately, the 'hierarchy of correctness' dominates the debate on translated literature, says Bassnett (2013), to treat the reader as a passive consumer (pp. 84 - 85). As authors claim to hold the correct translated version over another, there is the tendency for either complacency or division, often accompanied by a dismissal of each other's work on the grounds of shoddy scholarship. Instead, such conflict and debate should lead to an exploration of what sustains the errors through value-laden perspectives (*ibid*). Though my results threatened to drag me into arguments regarding who has the 'correct' version, I choose to explore how different beliefs might contribute to a misunderstanding of ideas, that is, in terms of conflict between ideologies.

Returning to texts in the original language, Bassnett sums up that the reader's role can be equivalent to that of the translator. Thus, there cannot be a correct reading, but improved versions approached with better understanding creating a new reading (*ibid*). Harnessing cross-cultural conflict led to the exposure of flaws in translation and misinterpretation of meanings. Winks (2009) finds that exploring the mechanisms causing such misunderstandings 'can rupture insular notions of identity that may be held by both the oppressed and oppressor, anchored in their binary opposition towards the Other' (p.65). The purpose of highlighting these flaws made by both experienced linguists and non-Polish speakers creates uncertainty in one's ways of knowing while demonstrating that languages are not static, nor geographically or historically

disconnected. This awareness is essential in the Polish language, which has evolved through resistance to the oppression of its neighbours, and as such, it declares an independent national identity inseparable from its historical-political struggles. Indeed, readers encountering translations of Korczak's children's stories are 'continuously reminded about the fact that the story [...] is unfolding in a specific cultural milieu (Borodo, 2020, p. 156).

According to Bassnett (2013), translating more complex literature encounters a recurring dilemma when methodological problems are explored only through an empirical lens. This issue suggests that Korczak's literary heritage and body of work requires further philosophical investigation. Playing with the tension between new and traditional methods and literary forms, he sought to reach the largest audience by democratising language. The anarchist canon celebrates a litany of writers who do not shy away from publicity or loudly declaring their doctrines (Evren & Kinna, 2015). Thus, it is challenging to imagine how threatened voiceless people could engage in such endeavours. However, my analysis reveals the provocative writing style utilised by the Poles, working to disguise their agenda, targeting the masses and their rival's followers. The best propaganda appeals to the desires of the oppressors, who, intent upon pursuing explicit goals, simultaneously adopt seditious processes that destabilise their hierarchy to secure freedoms for the oppressed long-term. Judging from this perspective, I suggest that Korczak knew how to throw a book like a bomb.

5.2 Throw a Book like a Bomb

Anarchist scholars regard the period between 1881 and 1914 as the era of terrorist action earning the label propaganda by the deed while pointing out Brousse as an originator of the term. His "propaganda of the deed" appealed to peasants and workers to move their demands into the public sphere with demonstrations and strikes,

stopping short of endorsing violent actions (Fleming, 1980). In setting the anarchist course for propaganda, Bakunin (1870) stated that ‘we must spread our principles, not with words but with deeds’. Though now perhaps deeds are associated with violent terrorism, he once described an ‘anarchistic system of revolutionary deeds and action naturally and unfailingly evokes the emergence and flowering of freedom-and-equality, without any necessity whatever for institutionalised violence or authoritarianism’. This collective action was to appear spontaneously from below once the State and its legal system were abolished (*ibid*, p.194). Though Kinna (2019a) argues for a contemporary anarchist definition to mean more artistic expressions of disruption and disobedience, historically, deeds are usually associated with a commitment to violence. The timeline of violent deeds begins with Tsar Alexander II’s assassination and culminates with the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which sparked the outbreak of WWI, followed by the Russian Revolution. However, Italian anarchists defined its violent doctrine by relying upon insurrections to inflame illiterate rural populations into action. Failing to stir an uprising, individuals attempted to reveal State vulnerability by assassinating rulers and figureheads, hoping to inspire the masses with their self-sacrifice as martyrs. Acts of violence spread, with terrorist attacks on government officials and ordinary citizens in public spaces cementing the anarchist image as destructive and dangerous.

Aside from these high-profile targets, I consider the killing of the Empress on September 11, 1898, as a milestone cementing an image of anarchists in the public mind. Targeting this elderly woman proved to be a poor choice for propaganda by the deed, as she held little political power and sympathised with democratic reformers. At the time of her death, the Empress was frail, depressed and vainly obsessed with her ageing looks, but the media capitalised on her reputation to sensationalise the ‘ruthless’ attack on the ‘most beautiful royal’, featuring pictures of the Empress as a much younger woman (Figure 7). Thus, they seeded the notion that anarchists seek to destroy

all that is good and beautiful, which proved difficult to challenge amongst the public, clinging to this example for years to come.

The Call

VOLUME LXXXIV—NO 100. SAN FRANCISCO, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1898—THIRTY-TWO PAGES. PRICE FIVE CENTS.

ELIZABETH OF AUSTRIA IS SLAIN BY AN ANARCHIST

EMPERESS IS STABBED TO THE HEART

Terrible Deed Committed by an Italian at Geneva, Switzerland.

One of the Most Popular and Beloved Women in Europe Ruthlessly Cut Down by an Assassin.

DEATH SCENE OF THE EMPRESS WAS TRAGIC

Staggers Aboard the Boat and Is Quickly Carried to a Hotel.

When the Beloved Sovereign Breathed Her Last Those Present Kneel in Prayer.



EMPERESS ELIZABETH OF AUSTRIA, THE VICTIM OF AN ANARCHIST ASSASSIN.

GENEVA, Switzerland, Sept. 10.—The Empress of Austria was assassinated near the Hotel Beauvivre this afternoon by an anarchist named Luigi Luchini, who was arrested. He stabbed her Majesty with an instrument supposed to be a triangular file.

It appears that her Majesty was walking from her hotel to the landing place of the steamer at about 1 o'clock when an Italian anarchist suddenly approached and stabbed her to the heart. The Empress fell, got up again and was carried to the steamer omnibus. The boat started, but seeing the Empress had not recovered consciousness the captain returned and the Empress was carried to the Hotel Beauvivre, where she expired.

The assassin upon which the Empress was carried to the hotel and laid to rest in the cemetery of the Empress. The Empress was carried to the hotel and laid to rest in the cemetery of the Empress.

SWISS OFFICIALS HORRIFIED BY THE FEARFUL CRIME

BERNE, Switzerland, Sept. 10.—An official account of the assassination of the Empress of Austria says: After leaving her residence here before the Empress was carried to the hotel on a stretcher. The Empress had been sleeping at the Hotel Beauvivre for several days.

The President of Switzerland and other members of the Government were shocked with horror and grief when the news reached the capital. The Empress is beloved by all Swissmen, and a nation is united in sorrow over the death of their empress.

The Empress was carried to the Hotel Beauvivre for several days. The Empress was carried to the Hotel Beauvivre for several days.

MINNLEY'S MESSAGE TENDERING SYMPATHY

WASHINGTON, Sept. 10.—The following message has been received at the State Department:

MINNLEY'S MESSAGE TENDERING SYMPATHY

WASHINGTON, Sept. 10.—The following message has been received at the State Department:

Fears for the Effect on Francis Joseph

LONDON, Sept. 10.—There have been rumors here regarding the effect which the assassination of the Empress of Austria will have upon the Emperor Francis Joseph. It is believed that the Emperor will be shocked and grieved by the news.

GREAT SENSATION AT THE FRENCH CAPITAL

PARIS, Sept. 10.—The news of the assassination of the Empress of Austria has caused a great sensation in Paris. The Emperor and Empress are believed to be shocked and grieved by the news.

Though anarchist activity subdued somewhat within their home grounds, the Italians were internationally conspicuous as terrorists, having already killed the French president in 1894 and Spanish Prime Minister in 1897 (Fleming, 1980, p.15). Italy was under immense international pressure to respond, for Italians had become virtually synonymous with terrorism (Jensen, 2013). The assassination spawned the first international conference on terrorism in Rome, attended by representatives from 20 countries (*ibid*).

During the revolutionary events of 1905-1906, Kropotkin reluctantly sanctioned the propaganda of the deed designed to awaken the ideological consciousness of the ordinary masses (Avrich, 1967). Fleming (1980) elaborates on how the terrorist strategies emerged from frustration at the lack of political change in her exploration of anarchist thinkers. She argues that even if anarchists like Kropotkin rejected terrorism, their theoretical arguments trapped them into condoning the violence aimed at authorities. Scholars categorise the difference between Kropotkin and others by the means they were prepared to adopt. By rejecting most forms of organisation as authoritarian, their fiery words stagnated without action (*ibid*).

Decades of failed revolutions convinced the Polish intelligentsia that the proletariat and peasant would not readily collaborate over conflicting agendas. Though I agree with Fleming that those strategies often changed or adapted out of frustration and opportunism, the spectrum of tactics amongst the Warsaw group meant a terrorist could also be a teacher, depending on the time and place. As Theiss (1992; 1994; 2014; 2017; 2018) recounts, such strategies were commonplace, with many male and female freedom fighters instructing illegal educational groups and developing Poland's teaching and social work professions.

Recounting Western history, Boylan (2003) described women's organisations as falling into three traditions of benevolent, reform or rights categories. Though the

emerging feminist tradition appears in societies dedicated to abolition or moral reform, she considers each as separate and distinct without linear progression towards more radical feminist views. Polish scholars describe a direct link between revolutionary activity and social work for the 20th-century Polish woman (Theiss, 1992; Małek, & Szczepaniak-Wiecha, 2005). The Polish orphanages and other welfare institutions held political aims from the outset by attracting socio-political activists under the guise of charity work. The strategies of these individuals represent all three traditions, from the traditional (benevolent) to the radical (rights), simultaneously. In making her case, Elzbieta Mażur explains that many private Polish institutions undertook nationalist political activity ‘under cover of philanthropic aid’ (Michel & Varza, 2010, p.42). Equally, after the war, orphanages claimed to have gained foreign assistance by ‘hiding our true face - working for the people - a mask of philanthropy was convenient for us’ (TGS, 1921, p.27). The period fostered an experimental relationship between education, social work, and revolutionary politics.

With Korczak's talent for propaganda, he welcomed a broad audience from the barely literate to the elite. He addressed the anarchist criticism that propagandists were obtuse theorists using scientific jargon to ‘impress, befuddle and belittle’ their audience (Kinna, 2019a, p.101). While other anarchists of this era might have shied away from outright violence, few conceived of their deeds as acts of care, compassion, and forgiveness, not only towards the weak but also the enemy. Throughout this thesis, I show Korczak related his deeds to his ideology without necessarily provoking authorities or overtly protesting. The beauty of his theories was how readily he employed propaganda to inspire even the smallest revolutionary to strive every day to translate his words into ‘hands-on, vivid and intelligible’ deeds (*ibid*). Though some scholars align with Paul Brousse’s 1877 propaganda of the deed, I find this definition still revolved around protest and taking power from others. Instead, Poles labelled

sacrifice and heroic deeds that encompassed raising consciousness and freedom through education and social work in the communities and homes. Such precedents clarify Korczak's commitment to deeds revolving around compassion and daily ethics gradually replacing violent acts, protest, and systemic domination.

5.3 Act of Revenge

In Chapter 1, my visits to the London and Warsaw orphanages and associated archives revealed Korczak's potential motivations within anti-capitalist sentiment, thus introducing an overlooked political dimension. During his London visit, Korczak (1912/1983) described his 'act of revenge' on a famous street, The Strand, by pausing to give a beggar a coin for a meal (p.59). Historians, both Polish and English, are puzzled by this so-called act of retaliation against what he had experienced at the Forest Hill orphanages, so they omit this statement from their narrative (Grindlay & Lasota, 2016). Firstly, the incongruence is two-fold in terms of giving to someone less fortunate and secondly, the dogged belief that the English orphanages presented an aspirational model for the Poles. Secondly, the next chapter details the superstitious origins of giving money to beggars and witches as holding negative connotations for the Poles even in the 20th century. Where acts of giving and philanthropy are positive from the Western standpoint, the Korczak perspective denounces pity towards children and adults, favouring their self-mastery, human rights, and citizenship. In contrast to the religious form of charity, Pagden (2012) views philanthropy as the practical manifestation of sympathy as an Enlightenment constructed remedy for capitalist guilt over commercial endeavours.

By constructing a de-historicised narrative that has over-emphasised sacrifice, not only is humour and anger stripped from Korczak's tone, it suppresses other explanations for his motives. The common reading produced by the Lifton effect denies

that Korczak (1942/2012) described himself as driven by ambition while musing whether his goals were even impetuous and false. In the following section, I retrieve Korczak's early writing, exposing his decision as political rather than philanthropic. Political consciousness and concern for children are evident years before Korczak (1904/1994) supposedly decided to run the orphanage spontaneously. At the time, other Polish orphanages, such as the *Gniazda Sieroce* (Orphan's Nests), also differentiated themselves from philanthropy, claiming subversive political aims (Jeżewski, 1910).

To compare the Polish and English orphanages, I consulted local archives historians and physically walked neighbourhoods visiting various buildings and locations. My historical approach embraced the principle of *topos*, building a sense of my historical place out of the geographical soil. The placing of biographies is hardly new to historians of education, as locations serve as data sources and use the subject's relationship with their city as an interpretative device (Rousmaniere, 1903). Examining the historical context of London and Warsaw (approximately 1910) emphasises building a geographical sense of place. By the end of 1904, over 50,000 people in Warsaw relied entirely on charitable organisations to survive the winter. Criminal gangs and vigilante groups of Poles, Jews and other minorities controlled the streets with civil servants and police unable or unwilling to act against them. Across Europe, people considered Warsaw as the wild West of Russia, damaging attempts by the diaspora seeking support for their nationalist cause. In his article, *Tandeta dobroczynna* (*Trash Charity*, 1904a/1994), Korczak was scathing of the poor standard of childcare, nurseries, shelters, and orphanages, operating under 'trash charity', describing institutions as 'stifling, dirty and dark' (pp. 16-17). Resistance by authorities to new initiatives and a general lack of available places caused overcrowding in unfit premises. The effect compounded in cities such as Łódź and Warsaw experiencing industrial pollution, an influx of migrants and devastating unemployment.

Surprisingly, instead of venting anger at the Russian government, Korczak primarily blamed the Warsaw elite for following the trends he witnessed in the West. He described the 'serious thinkers with good upbringings', who, under the guise of philanthropy and 'bleeding hearts', discussed solutions they would never entertain for their own families (*ibid*). Korczak considered conferences and meetings as propagating 'philanthropic rubbish' designed to put our collective conscience to sleep. In his view, the authorities showcased a few examples of child protection to demonstrate minimum health conditions, avoiding the legitimate demand for improvement (*ibid*). The crisis involved the two disenfranchised factions Goodman (2010) categorised as Bakunin's criminals and Kropotkin's intellectuals, whom Korczak criticised as primarily concerned with selfish aims. Much like Goodman (2010), who centres his anarchist hopes as beginning with students and youth, revolutionaries often ignored younger children living with both domination and the consequences of resistance. In a subsequent article, Korczak (1904b/1994) structured a legal argument for activists to use together with an estimated cost analysis for establishing village shelters with an ongoing annual maintenance budget. Published years before he opened the orphanage, this article demonstrates that Korczak's actions were not spontaneous, nor his ideas utopian, but grounded within the institutional logistics and accompanying legal frameworks available at the time. Finally, having connected anti-capitalist sentiment within Korczak's work, I argue for his recognition as a savvy political writer adept at propaganda and publicity.

Based on this new information, I assert that Korczak produced a sardonic account of London's care for its children. With his limited English language skills, I envision Korczak gravitating towards the radical immigrant communities. Leaving the riverside docks or railyards, the adjacent area of the East End is a natural starting point for his orientation to London. Here, a complex interplay ensued between the rates of

mortality, disease, migration, and fertility, contributing to an overcrowded slum bursting by the time of Korczak's visit (Woods *et al.*, 1988). The contrast of children's starvation, labour, neglect, and disease on the outskirts of the world's most prosperous city must have been shocking for the young doctor. The extremes of opulence and poverty often drew attention from visitors, including Kropotkin, who wrote of the stifling oppression amongst the sweat trade alleys (Adams, 2015).

The government stance and general anxiety regarding criminal activity and terrorism created the atmosphere that Korczak experienced during his visit. Anarchism thrived in London's East End, where new arrivals isolated by language and culture readily adopted the radical opinions of their compatriots. In England, the 1905 Aliens Act signalled the beginnings of modern-day immigration control, emanating from the political debates on the sheer numbers of Eastern Europeans arriving. Moral panics surrounded the foreign national activists and criminals allowed onto British soil. Politicians, newspapers, and even prominent Jewish locals fuelled concerns about the mass migration of Poles and Jews fleeing persecution in the Russian Empire to settle in the East End (Bloom, 1992). Attempts to counter-argue that the immigrant children were healthier and more intelligent than locals fuelled the flames, as Lord Balfour (1905) expressed fear of 'a substitution of Poles for Britons' producing 'children afflicted with the disease either of mind or of body, which makes the (foreigners) intrinsically undesirable citizens' (§800). This impoverished migrant population raised concerns about outbreaks of epidemics, both in terms of disease and criminal degeneracy spreading to the locals. The English public was well accustomed to racial stereotypes of the Irish as thugs and criminals, or Italian children portrayed as pickpockets and beggars (Jeyes, 1891). Lombroso's criminal man theory spread a popular image in the public imagination with lasting effects.

Public fascination with the Empress' assassination allowed political leaders and lawmakers to leverage that the Italian terrorist was abandoned at birth, grew up in an orphanage and became homeless by adolescence. Each element provided additional impetus for the growing interest in the education, care and custody of orphans and impoverished children. A year or so after the anti-terrorism conference in Rome, England responded with the Children's Charter introducing various child protection measures accompanied by increased awareness of how childhood experiences and education shaped individuals. Although protecting children from cruelty, various laws and campaigns also enabled more State intervention in family life. The desire to protect children from harm and limit exposure to the criminal element expanded the legal and educational system.

Prominent individuals disputed the association of terrorism with race, and likewise, pacifists lamented the correlation that violence and anarchism go hand in hand. Wading into the furore, Kropotkin wrote an open letter to his friend and ally of the Poles, Georg Brandes, published in London in 1898. Here, Kropotkin defended the Italian terrorist who killed the Empress as 'driven mad by horrible conditions... So long as contempt for human life shall be taught to men, and so long as they will be told that it is good to kill for what one believes to be beneficial for mankind — new and newer victims will be added, even though the rulers should guillotine all those who take sides with the poor' (Miller, 1976, p. 174).

Meanwhile, Polish child welfare policies and practices came under municipal authorities or charitable institutions, locally and privately, side-stepping a nation-state model. Religious institutions for the care of orphans predominated throughout the early 19th -century until the Tsarist authority withdrew its support as a reprisal for uprisings. Rather than suppression, the Russian decree spurred a vigorous growth of childcare agencies with nationalist ideals. Without central control, diverse populations mixed

Polish, Jewish, and German traditions with new ideas on child development. Though limited in their ability to pursue a national agenda, these organisations circumscribed government by undertaking 'patriotic activity under cover of philanthropic aid' (Schumann, 2010, pp.41-42). In the 1870s, one historian concluded that charitable institutions ushered in municipal self-governance, enabling the citizens to begin managing regional development and fate from below. He singled out the orphanages as being at 'the heart of the country full of patriotic feelings' despite the century of rule by foreigners and foreign concepts (*ibid*).

With the Poles exercising little control over education or governance, charitable organisations became centres devoted to 'raising a new generation of patriots' (Chołodecki, 1928, p.54). The pursuit of national interests without deference to the authority of the Empires stood in direct contravention of the law. Developing new social relationships at the local level is an example of revolutionary spontaneity that loosens the grip of authority 'so that the functions of life can regulate themselves, without top-down direction or external hindrance' (Goodman & Stoehr, 2010, p.60). For anarchists like Goodman, the principle of change could take such forms of direct action and bottom-up organisation. Amongst his bread-and-butter examples of anarchist success, he celebrated participatory democracy and practical revolutionary methods (*ibid*). My argument identifies similar features rendering Poland's childcare initiatives distinctly anti-state in design and readily aligned with anarchism.

5.4 The Warsaw Revolution

The anarchist canon includes 19th-century thinkers, specifically French, Russian, and German, while excluding the Polish revolutionaries engaged in direct action across Europe. To read people's experiences as written by individuals from the dominating

faction is an example of conflating the oppressed into the oppressor. To address this omission, I expand upon the terrorism in Warsaw and Korczak's writing on revolutionary action. Indeed, it is puzzling for many, even those young teachers close to Korczak, why he did not discuss these earlier years of political struggle (Newerly, 1967, p.13-14). Though scholars have documented the existence and necessity of conspirators, there appears little comprehension that such activity demands secrecy from those involved. I agree with Newerly's assessment that Korczak doubts that revolution alone solves human problems (*ibid*). However, in the following passages I show his engagement with revolutionary and military action decades before Newerly met him. Contrary to his apolitical label, Korczak held unmistakable revolutionary sympathies, and his patriotic loyalty was unwavering.

Years of revolutionary action made it clear there was little chance of success in direct competition with the power of the Empires, so Poles had to find opportunities to establish and exercise weak power by cooperating with more powerful others.¹⁸ The authorities ensured obstacles would keep the Poles weak, fragmented and without participation in formal decision-making processes or political structures. Specifically, weak power refers to the different distribution of power created by moments of change that offer the weak party alternative opportunities to leverage their position. The balance is tipped, for example, when the more powerful parties become dependent on critical resources or processes controlled by the weak, which, if maintained, boosts their power in the network or organisation (Gargiulo & Ertug, 2014). Such concepts decree conflict is creative, and the motto of *war is the father* ties into the Polish anarchistic philosophy, repeatedly appearing within their history. One such possibility opened during increasing competition between Russia and Japan for domination in the Far East, although I

¹⁸ Through his investigations of network structures with high inequality, Willer (1999) coined the term 'weak power' (Gargiulo & Ertug, 2014)

provide several examples throughout the thesis. I describe the culmination of Polish efforts in Chapter 10 by explaining how the saving the children action during World War I capitalised on the chaos and destruction to reorganise economic and governance structures to establish and sustain self-government.

In his historical study of different social structures, Kropotkin (1902) envisaged all institutions to eventually hinder progress, whether in the tribe or the city. He also foretold that the problems the revolutionaries encounter result in competing factions. At the point of revolution, the people rising against the ageing institutions choose different paths, which he described as 'self-assertion of the individual' (*ibid*, *xix*). On the one hand, there is forgiveness or compensation for restructuring the institutions. While Kropotkin described the other group as self-interested and opportunistic, seeking to tear down institutions to increase their power and wealth. The result is a triangular contest between the old guard and different revolutionaries. There is no attempt by Kropotkin to catalogue such revolutionary forces across history. However, he stated its undoubted impact upon the development of ethics, that is, the transformation of the moral order in the form of a social revolution.

With his anarchist history centred upon Russians, Avrich (1967) missed the subversive action undertaken by various Polish revolutionaries. One such example is the popular discontent at Russia's war with Japan, which he understands as a spontaneous outburst of rebellious vigour. What Avrich called Russian policy blunders masked carefully orchestrated acts of sabotage and misdirection. The war created instability in the Russian Empire and simultaneously presented an opportunity for the Poles. These spontaneous cracks in the old order that anarchists such as Colin Ward sought to capitalise upon to accelerate the new order as unimagined opportunities appeared. Thackeray (1992) described the situation as the diplomacy of a stateless people geared at returning the Polish Question to the international agenda. Though sharing goals for a

free Poland, divisions existed between the former aristocrats in the National Democrats and the socialists seeking to overthrow the Russian and Polish gentry. Like Kropotkin predicted, the war pitted the two revolutionary factions against one another as ideological differences came to the forefront (*ibid*).

While at war, rebellious agitators forced Russia into keeping almost 250,000 soldiers on Polish territory, far more than were engaged against the Japanese. Chaos and violence reigned in Warsaw streets in those years, with at least ten bombs exploding and 83 police killed (Ascher, 1988). In January 1905, authorities fired an estimated 60,000 shots at civilians in a single day (*ibid*). Fuelled by the violence against them, the protesters did not restrict themselves to syndicate action or underground meetings. Extremists utilised terrorism to bring attention to socialist and anarchist ideology (Potański, 2014). Propaganda in postcards, posters and art appeared to publicise various deeds, such as the bomb blast at a café on Miodowa Street in the Old Town (Figure 8; Figure 9). The explosion site is only metres from where Korczak once lived, but he barely wrote a word despite the bombing marking a milestone in the revolt. A week before, Korczak published a letter in the Voice newspaper under his real name, Dr Henryk Goldszmit (1905/1994), defending young Moscow arsonists in an unrelated attack. Curiously, the arson case was decades old, and Korczak sympathetically described the anarchists as impulsive and dramatic, merely seeking a monument to their youth (*ibid*). Back then, in Moscow, the crimes had caused a sensation with crowds gathering outside the court demanding the death penalty for the young offenders; but fire victims came to defend the youth from the angry mob. The court decided to send the youngsters to reform school, and Korczak concluded that it would have been a terrible mistake for the whole community if Moscow had sentenced ‘the little ones’ (p.114). He warned adults in positions of power to treat young individuals with care,

who just like volatile chemicals, the violent ones can explode. Why raise an old criminal case? In preparing the residents of Warsaw, what could he foresee or know?



Figure 8: The Bomb (Kamiński, 1907). Source: National Library of Poland



Figure 9: Bomb Blast on Miodowa St, 19th May 1905

Source: National Library of Poland

Contrary to the revolutionary upheaval across the Russian Empire, Kropotkin envisaged that the 1905 revolution could bring about a French or English style of government (Avrich, 1967). In his assessment, such anarchist groups achieved only violence by operating in isolation, affecting little in the social order. The terror peaked as rioters vented frustration and anger with senseless violence and poorly chosen targets. It was not only the Polish independence rebels who attracted ire as young zealots called for the streets to be awash with blood. As the workers and even supporters struggled to comprehend their aims, one group bombed the Hotel Bristol in Warsaw, aptly summarised by their Russian not Polish name, *bezmotiviki* or ‘those without motive’ (Avrich, 1967, p.63).

Eventually, Avrich reached a similar conclusion to that of the Poles, that following the failures of 1905, a different kind of effort was needed to ‘lay the groundwork for the true social revolution yet to come’ (*ibid*, p.71). Besides revolutionary and political activities, many people joined or returned to running orphanages, schools, or publishing houses. Abandoning heroics for the mundane demonstrates bridging the theory-practice divide despite falling outside most anarchist conceptions of deeds. Many decades earlier, Polish revolutionaries diverged on this point, having assessed anarchists such as ‘Bakunin (were) incapable of any sustained work’ (Senn, 2008, p.28). In the Polish case, the heroic claim for rights had shifted from the battlefield into subversive action necessarily embodied, repetitive, lowly, and often mundane. Women were the source of such sustainability and continuity as men were largely absent from everyday life, either killed, imprisoned or in exile.

Furthermore, ignoring the revolutionary activities of women has served to obscure both their relationship with Korczak and his political activity during this period. Again, limited historical evidence or scholarly works by and about women survived the

destruction of wars, leaving few aware of their political and social influence. Hence, I offer brief biographical sketches of two of his partners.

5.5 The Secret Agents

Though only a few scholars equate anarchist terrorism with the Polish experience, I find no coincidence that the great Polish writer Joseph Conrad [Józef Konrad Korzeniowski; 1857 – 1924] created the first piece of English literature featuring the exploits of a suicide bomber. The novel, *The Secret Agent*, published by Conrad in 1907, involves a female protagonist trapped in a loveless marriage entangling her within a revolutionary group that eventually leads to her demise. While Avrich (1977) seeks undiscovered sources for Conrad’s anarchists in the West, I relate his storyline directly with documents I located from the court trial of one of Korczak's collaborators, Wanda Krahelska. As a terrorist, she played pivotal roles in two Warsaw uprisings and associated in circles with Rosa Luxemburg and Vladimir Lenin but fails to rate a mention in *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest* (2009) and is hard to locate in Polish scholarship.

Wanda Krahelska [- Dobrodzicka -Filipowicz; 1886–1968, code name “Alinka” or “Alicja”] is perhaps best remembered from her exploits in her senior years. In her 50s, she became a leading figure in Warsaw's underground resistance movement during World War II.¹⁹ Her second marriage to a Polish diplomat afforded contacts with the Polish Underground's military and political leadership, which she later used to aid Poland’s Jewish population. Although righteous, this Holocaust legacy obscures how politically influential Krahelska was throughout her lifetime. Following WWI, she established educational and care initiatives for workers’ children. However, nowhere

¹⁹ It is important to note the organisation Krahelska founded, *Zegota* offered Korczak an escape route from the Ghetto, which he refused to accept as it required abandoning most of the children

did I find it mentioned that Krahelska is named earlier in court documents as a notorious baby-faced terrorist wanted by authorities.



Figure 10: The Trial of Wanda Krahelska (Dobrodzicka), 1908

Source: National Library of Poland

I located the original publication *Proces Wandy z Krahelskich Dobrodzickiej o zamach na Genetał-Gubernatora Warszawskiego Skalona w Warszawie d. 8 sierpnia 1906 roku* (Trial of Wanda Krahelska-Dobrodzicka for the assassination of the General-Governor of the Warsaw Region in Warsaw on August 8, 1906), from where I determined the circumstances of Krahelska's crime (Figure 10). In a plot with two other women, Krahelska rented an apartment gaining access to the route of the Governor's entourage, and on August 8, 1906, she threw dynamite laden bombs from the window in an assassination attempt. She fled from authorities and gained Austrian citizenship by

entering a sham marriage. Now protected from extradition to Russia, she was fully acquitted although she confessed to the crime. Immediately after Polish independence, Krahelska resurfaced in Warsaw, listed as one of three founders of the Our Home Society alongside Korczak (*Nasz Dom Society*, 1921). The new orphanage repatriated another revolutionary, Maria Falska and her Polish orphans from Kiev following territorial losses in the wars.

Maria Falska [Rogowska, 1877 – 1944] decided to become a teacher at age 14. She was schooled into a socialist worldview by her older brother and attended the Flying University, where sociology lectures given by Ludwik Krzywicki ‘opened a new world’ before her (*Nasz Dom*, 1931/2007, p. 283). The university network connected her with Piłsudski’s *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* (Polish Socialist Party), becoming a member at age 20. Operating under the code names of “Janina” and “Hilda”, she was active in bookselling, printing and teaching in illegal worker circles (*kołach*). However, this list is unlikely to be the full extent of her radical activity, as the authorities sent her to the Citadel rather than the less brutal Pawiak Jail. From the records of 1900 – 1906, Russian police had Falska detained, arrested, and jailed seven times in the Citadel, a prison usually reserved for the most dangerous political prisoners (Museum of Warsaw, 2018). Following this period, Falska appears to have distanced herself from the revolutionary party, becoming involved in semi-legal educational activities, including experimental elementary schools and preschools (Vucic & Sękowska, 2020).

Thus, though most read Korczak’s aphorism, ‘before revolution and war... think of children’, as a sympathetic plea for child protection, it can also be his directive to channel rebellious energy towards working for and grabbing children's rights during times of conflict and chaos. Alongside exposing his network of associates, it is equally important to ascertain Korczak's position concerning the anarchist spectrum of violence as he repeatedly called for deeds not words throughout his lifetime.

In the Preface of Korczak's (1939) last book, *Pedagogy Jokingly*, he reiterates his guiding principle that a child is a person of equal value [line 5] and a quote from a famous pacifist²⁰ playing upon the double meanings of words, 'the fact is grounded (in the soil) that the closer we get to know the peasant (boy), the less one sees of him, the less of him there is' (lines 10-12). The quote suggests the phenomenon described in Chapter 3, where abstract theories increase the oppression of distance without localised practice. It carries a similar meaning to Proudhon's conclusion that 'it takes a great deal of philosophy to observe once what we see every day', but equally, the one 'who laughs at the blind should wear spectacles' (Proudhon, 1876, p. 129-130). The reasoning follows that it is often hardest to respect the freedoms and equality of the lowest, weakest, and despised people closest and most familiar to us. Here, Korczak explains that beyond a faceless tyrant, within every community, the adults carry blind spots and prejudices that perpetuate the domination upon and within the next generation. One might see the human in the child by casting aside adherence to dogma and stereotypes, replaced with benevolence and hope.

On the eve of war, Korczak addressed a frightened population with passages akin to shaking off paralysis by acting for change in one's backyard. He reminded his audience that after the failures in 1905, many revolutionaries rejected orchestrating violent upheaval by embracing organised work, education, and compromise as the primary means of reforming society. Moreover, while pacifist anarchists refuse to engage in conflict, Polish anarchism envisioned evolution as a tension between 'tooth and claw' competition balanced by the cooperation of mutual self-aid, resulting in cycles of destruction and creation termed here as (r)evolution.

To further understand *Pedagogy Jokingly*, it is essential to note the circumstances in which Korczak wrote this book. With the looming threat of another

²⁰ Witkiewicz

war, he wrote it during his last vacation with the Freemasons at their summer colony. The informal nature of the Masonic gatherings belies their significance in popularising their pacifist mantra; ‘Help us see You (God) in the faces of our enemies and love You in them’ (Hess, 2018). Thus, it borders on the absurd that the leader of these pacifists was a high-ranking military general, attempting to change society as an insider (Puszkina, 2001).

5.6 *Liberum Conspiro*

Although the 1791 Constitution of Poland achieved little during its short lifespan, it provided the impetus for a small faction to revive the idea of *Liberum conspiro*, or the freedom to conspire, as a political movement. As per anarchist theory, these Poles embarked on the two tiers of action characteristic of their next two centuries of resistance fashioned as masonic networks, secret societies, and even religious orders. However, *liberum conspiro* by itself would be insufficient without a patient commitment to the work needed to usher in revolutionary change amongst the people themselves (Wandycz, 1980). To date, scholarship is vague on Korczak's connection with Masonic movements, as a shroud of mystery surrounds these organisations. This is not the main direction for my research, although, given Bakunin's commitment to secret societies, I wish to highlight Korczak's membership in such a masonic network. The lodge belonging to *Le Droit Humain* (The Human Law) stated its purpose as:

- To group under a banner of people of all races, religions and nationalities.
 - to always and collectively seek means to provide everyone with the highest possible material well-being and personal happiness.
 - to reconcile all people who share the barriers of religion.
- (Hess, 2015, pp. 59-61)

Historically, Masonic organisations were often involved in political struggles and included membership of independence leaders and revolutionaries, such as

Garibaldi and Bakunin himself (Grand Freemason's Lodge, 2017). With a penchant for violence and conspiracy, Bakunin described his anarchist framework for action as 'the complete liberation of the people from all oppression, firmly united in a secret society and acting everywhere and always with the same goal and according to the same programme' (Joll, 1970, p.544). However, he did not have to imagine such a secret society having already contacted Polish emigres engaged in just such activity.

Masonic lodges served as clandestine channels for learning and sharing ideas, while education, free speech, religion, and association were banned (Niemojewski, 1906). Polish writers, artists, intellectuals, and the military formed an underground network dedicated to the singular goal of nation-building. The broad appeal to join was obvious, as 'everyone making history' belonged to the Masons (*ibid*, p.77). By the 1820s, a network of associations traversed Poland resulting in the Tsar officially abolishing Freemasonry (Kukiel, 1960). Significantly, Niemojewski (1906) subscribed to Kropotkin's volcano metaphor to describe these underground organisations as applying pressure, now and again opening 'volcanic craters' resulting in various uprisings against the Russian Empire (p.81). Prominent Freemasons active in the diaspora undertook fundraising and demonstrations to declare support for the Polish insurgents of 1863 openly. Immediately one is struck by the uncanny similarity of this masonic history to the much-derided fantasy of Bakunin's secret societies. Though observing from a safe distance, Bakunin believed a Polish uprising would inspire minorities and peasants across Russia to 'rise as one man when they heard of Warsaw', and indeed protests supporting the Poles appeared as far as London and Paris (Kelly, 2016, p.456). He declared the peoples' revolution would organise with the principle of liberty 'from the bottom up and from the periphery to the centre' (Guerin, 2005, p.157). Therefore, he saw his people's revolution as beginning with the lowliest people at the periphery of the Russian Empire that was Warsaw.

Historians agree that the National Democratic Party in Poland emerged from a secret organisation in the 1880s (Linch, 2009). This parallel society may have grown quietly in underground networks, but each time war loomed, their actions revealed themselves more publicly orchestrated amongst actors that Bakunin often ignored, that is, women. Moreover, the anarchist vision of an elite band of revolutionaries and spontaneous action underestimated the effort and time it took to develop the diverse levels of cooperation across vast networks sufficient to undermine the Tsar's stronghold and later defeat the Bolsheviks. The following section explores Korczak's involvement in such cooperation by summarising his membership in a Warsaw Masonic lodge under the leadership of a young woman and a military general.

Following Poland's independence, many lodges and societies joined a worldwide network loosely affiliated with the central tenets of theosophy (Hess, 2015; 2018). The success of the Polish network was in no doubt due to the organisational skills of its charismatic leader, Wanda Dynowska, ["Umadevi", 1888 – 1971]. Her inclusive style led to a successful partnership with Michał Tokarzewski [1893 – 1964], a General in the Polish Army.²¹ The unlikely partners established the *Gwiazda Morza* (Star of the Sea) Lodge in Warsaw, with Korczak listed in its membership (Hess, 2015).

In 1925, a manor house was bought by a co-operative of theosophists and freemasons through the generous donation of Józef Piłsudski's wife, Aleksandra. Located at Mężenin on the Bug river, the manor served primarily as a summer camp for families, children, and lodge gatherings and conferences. In 1939, Korczak published his last work *Moja Wakacje* (My Vacation), written about his holiday spent with the children at this summer camp in Mężenin. These are not children from his Polish or Jewish orphanages but accompanying their parents as members of the masonic movements. Korczak does not make this explicit in what would become his last book,

²¹ In a surviving photograph, Korczak appears pictured with Tokarzewski and two children at the Masonic site. Museum of Warsaw

revealing his perceived need to protect these organisations. Although his text suggests it was a regular event, there is no record of how many summers Korczak spent here. His co-director, Falska (1931), recorded that she accompanied Korczak to Mężenin in 1931. As an avowed atheist, for Falska, experiencing symbolic rituals in a spiritual atmosphere further strained her professional relationship with Korczak.

Beyond the masonic network, other secret societies appeared in unlikely forms to disguise subversive activities from authorities. For women, the absence of their male family members instigated greater political and societal involvement. The radical idea that the Church provided a feminist sanctuary to feminists appears in Waluś' (2003) aptly titled article, Look for the Woman. Her findings show women seeking freedom from paternal or marital authority providing the revolutionary impulse. Her description of Catholic women's movements in Poland focuses upon female religious orders dedicated to girls' education and orphan care. These innovative organisations offering girls autonomy and instruction often drew an accompanying backlash for crossing into male dominions, readily defined as radical education in the contemporary sense. As atheism waned in Europe, the 19th-century ushered in a period of religious revival. Although Imperial powers liquidated existing religious orders, Poland reflected this new wave of religious congregations concerned with education and emancipation. Of particular interest is the appearance of non-habit wearing female orders, sometimes known as Hearts without Habits or simply Hearts (*ibid*).

Initiated in 1878, the new communities gained the colloquial name of *Skrytki* or Hideouts. Though allowed to wear a habit, most women chose not to, citing their controversial adherence to the life and work of common people and their desire to live among them. For example, from 1885, the Hearts in Lwów (Lviv) adopted a mission to care for and educate thousands of orphans and assist political exiles in Siberia. Similar actions spread elsewhere amongst Polish emigrants with both male and female

congregations. Bound together in a secretive monastic life, the communities shared spiritual and clandestine activities.

In addition, each congregation ministered to workplaces, functioning as pseudo-union representatives for merchants, servants, journalists, and teachers. Such environments were previously inaccessible to the Church and opened a new syndicalist role for women. The offer of a radical new female identity beyond the cloister or marriage attracted more than 10,000 young Polish women to the ranks by 1907, often encountering resistance from men (*ibid*). The secretive nature and backlash from fervent Catholics and atheist feminists leave these women unrecognised despite remarkable achievements in illegal education and the organisation of workers.

In summary, I challenge whether Bakunin's covert vision of secret societies was a product of his imagination, as so often stated. Historical threads show Bakunin was privy to Polish plans hatching in exile, in lodges and under Siberian snow. My historical analysis also reinstates the subversive masonic networks and the role of women in the revolutionary movements addressing the Polish predicament. After the exile and death of many of their compatriots, such organisations promoted children's care and elevated the work and status of women. The Polish childcare initiatives were extraordinary as many women participated in the top-tier of leadership and direct action against authorities and conflict zones, which I return to again in later chapters. Meanwhile, I have demonstrated that these underground networks have clear associations with Korczak, challenging the notion that he was apolitical and working in isolation.

Chapter 6. Revolution or Evolution

Pacifist anarchism draws from the rejection of the State's armed forces and conscription, advocating for voluntary participation (Ward, 2004). The calls of pacifist anarchists akin to Tolstoy's austere asceticism reflects the degree of protection and freedom afforded the Russian writer by his aristocratic roots and fame. However, most Russian anarchists appear somewhat resigned to violence concerning State power and revolutionary weapons (Frazer & Hutchings, 2019). The anarchist Goldman clarified her position in writing, 'passive resistance is all right for some people, but I cannot see for the life of me how it would work in the face of armed resistance' (Kinna, 2019a, p.130).

For the Poles, insurrection and overt resistance had cost them dearly, but equally, a lack of action resulted in economic demise and cultural decay under oppression. The conditions faced by Poles, either in exile or at home, left Marx to declare Poland has 'no other choice but to be revolutionary or perish' (Walicki, 1980, p.7). Political theorists on all sides attempted to strengthen their arguments for or against revolutionaries by borrowing from evolutionary theory. The opposing schools of thought either favoured gradual progressive change as evolutionary or, as is the case with most anarchists, societal upheaval through revolutionary action. With few foreign ties and little results from revolutionary tactics, a new intellectual faction took a completely different approach to manipulate the scientific tools and disrupt the debate altogether. Thus, this chapter takes the lead from Korczak's role as a doctor, inspired by the bacteriologist Louis Pasteur as one of his Greats. Korczak's Lecture on Symbiosis also prompts my further exploration on how evolutionary theory and medicine became both the tools of the oppressor and liberator. Hence, I offer a brief overview of the evolutionary debate from the Polish perspective and its relevance to direct action spawning the idea of (r)evolution. Here, I draw from Kropotkin's geographic expertise

to show that his overlooked volcano metaphor illustrated the tension between *archy* and *anarchy*.

6.1 (R)evolution

Darwin's book *Origin of Species* first published in 1859, was an overwhelming success, finding many supporters, sympathisers, and no shortage of antagonists across Europe. The fierceness of defence ensured evolutionary thought became a fashionable topic for discussion as journals and newspapers published positive reviews. Western revolutionaries and capitalists alike enthusiastically declared a fight of tooth and claw as the scientific foundation of the class struggle reflecting nature. Academia tends to defend Darwin's evolutionary theory as a natural science appropriated and misconstrued into other forms such as Social Darwinism and eugenics. However, there is consensus amongst historians that Darwin knowingly used rhetorical arguments and analogies to enter established debates on society (Nicolosi, 2020). Darwin's work carried basic political assumptions related to Malthusian population pressure, raising social questions on whether birth-rate increase foster evils amongst the barbarian tribes and undesirables (Goodwin, 2010)²². Indeed, the English economist John Maynard-Keynes (1926) put Darwin in the company of Malthus and Bentham for espousing individualism and *laissez-faire*.

Conversely, the scientific tradition in Eastern Europe acknowledged that life was a struggle, but instead of competition, cooperation ensured that organisms drew from all resources to overcome difficulties. While Bakunin emphasised cooperation and harmony as the supreme laws of nature, he also elevated 'the cult of science' as the new church, claiming it to be the truth without the divine leadership of priests or God

²² The *Descent of Man* (1871) recommends 'great works' by the eugenicist, Francis Galton as offering ingenious arguments (p.171).

(Rezneck, 1927, p.293). Aware that anarchism may advocate for a new academic aristocracy, Bakunin cautioned, 'the mission of science is to enlighten life, not govern it' (*ibid*). However, removing the mystical or religious reduced the leaders, language, and logic available for counterarguments to something less tangible, emerging or irrational.

The Polish form of anarchism considers the tension of *archy* (government) and *anarchy* (no-government) existing across time, without favouring one extreme. The Poles believed that rigid organisation and static laws, no matter how progressive or revolutionary at the time, eventually impede progress. Both Bakunin and Kropotkin articulated a similar theory encouraging flexible and diverse approaches to increase sensitivity to 'currents of discontent and aspiration' (Woodcock, 1962, p.16). This anarchist current declares universal and dogmatic laws as problematic in both theory and personality, though the impulse towards freedom and change ensures the domination of such hierarchies will be short-lived.

Likewise, Polish anarchism holds this transformation process as cycles of destruction and creation over time, declaring both extremes of the dogmatic or ideological positions as undesirable. As Woodcock (1962) cautions, anarchists often struggled to adhere to their theoretical rejection of authority and domination in practice. In an era of positivism and determinism, Polish philosophy rejected rigid, forward movements by favouring the notion of an equilibrium where the world is constantly changing and never perfect or still. Concepts of flux and contradiction also underpin Western anarchism, where the interflow of balancing forces, contradictions, and imperfection is both 'a cause and consequence of its everlasting movement' (Woodcock, 1962, p.28). What Woodcock perceived as 'almost Heraclitian' underpinned the Polish philosophical view, summarised in my thesis as conflict is creative. Gradually, scientific dogma fashioned this irrational philosophy and Eastern

Europeans as an impediment to progress, while the Polish accusations of racism appeared weak in the face of scientific opinion.

Regarding Kropotkin's writing, Woodcock (1968) discredits the anarchist geographer as having a significant flaw in his lack of objectivity by applying a scientific approach to develop universal laws for his social theory. Examination of *Mutual Aid* reveals Kropotkin utilised a creative writing style to 'compensate(s) for the insufficient empirical rigour of his theory [...]' that disguise his beliefs are incompatible with Darwin's natural selection (*ibid*, p.143). It is a phenomenon, Crowder (2015) labels 'cooking the books' to skew the argument in Kropotkin's desired direction (p.147). I propose that his adoption of specific phrases acted as an epistemic tool to scaffold readers towards new learning. This flexibility allowed him to attach other beliefs to Western evolutionary theories while refuting the Malthusian competition aspects in Darwin's theory. The issue of rationalised faith in science as wholly objective did not escape Korczak (1929/1967), who warned of and questioned the politicised and commodified versions of science that claimed to be the 'truth' (p.111). What Woodcock admired is Kropotkin using his scientific stature to endorse and legitimise anarchism to a public wary of its links with terrorism but fascinated by evolutionary theories. His considerable reputation and popular personality successfully promoted the *Mutual Aid* theory and legitimised other anarchist ideas, appearing as propaganda. I make a similar argument for Korczak, both for his reason for admiring Kropotkin and following a similar publicity strategy. I also question the objectivity of the book *Mutual Aid* and propose that Kropotkin adopted scientific storytelling to orient the enthusiastic English while suggesting a significant reworking of prevalent evolutionary ideas. In this way, I view *Mutual Aid* as co-opting the evolutionary debate towards ideas already prevalent in Eastern Europe. This hypothesis might explain why Korczak admired Kropotkin as a writer without mentioning his ideas specifically. The Russian geographer provided

scientific credibility to anarchist ideas, while Korczak (1919/1993) addressed the religious Poles by infusing scientific knowledge with metaphysics, as he wrote:

This is the moment in which a child can be “won back”, and what should the teacher say? Not how flowers and hippopotami propagate, something more important than 'clean hands and clean sheets' but a spiritual concept. It is in such a moment that the child feels the 'entire sense of responsibility for his own life is being weighed in the balance'.

§113, HTLAC - Family, p.237

Positivism elevated science as objectively delivering the new truth. This state of European intellectual affairs, Kropotkin (1898) described as the masses enslaved by ‘ideas inculcated by minorities of priests, military chiefs and judges, all striving to establish their domination, and of scientists paid to perpetuate it’. Even the most renowned figures were not immune from bias, as Darwin employed specific rhetorical devices such as ‘struggle for existence’ and ‘economy of nature’ to enter a socio-political argument (Nicolosi, 2020). These figures of speech were already in play since the debate between Malthus and Godwin on the egalitarian distribution of the Earth’s resources (*ibid*).

In the 19th-century Russian Empire, all political sides rejected Malthusian ideas as ‘inhumane individualism, preaching the principle of competition in accordance with the British philosophy of liberal economics’ (Nicolosi, 2020, p.143). Both Russian and Polish scientists admired Darwin but questioned certain assumptions appearing in his works. According to Lutosławski (1909/2011), the great weakness in Darwin's theory is that of gradualism to differ significantly from the Polish viewpoint.²³ Poles argued that their transformist theories of (r)evolution offered more appropriate mechanisms of evolutionary change for non-Western societies. The (r)evolutionary theory elevated the role of protective mothers and fragile children as driving evolutionary change rather

²³ Słowacki presented transformism more than a decade before Darwin, mostly in his work *Genezis z Ducha* (Genesis from Spirit, 1840).

than a pinnacle of powerful males, which were relegated to a crucial protective role. Polish scientists emphasised how different the English environment was from theirs by addressing implications in the metaphor of a “struggle for existence”. This difference Korczak planned to highlight through his Biographies series contrasting the English life free of hardship, able to logically plan and progress, against the few such options available to Poles. The phenomena appear similarly amongst anarchists who adopt a worldview favouring an incremental position on progress, aligning with living in stable, predictable environments like England (Kinna, 1995).²⁴ Mutual Aid is characterised by an orthogenetic view of the linear, progressive view describing a hierarchy of nations, which contradicts Kropotkin’s earlier position describing catastrophism and revolution. As Woodcock (1968) elaborated, the resisting Eastern Europeans did not form anarchist movements; instead, anarchist ideas were deeply embedded within the spirit of the people. The Poles saw a complex and unpredictable world where time is in flux under a continuous tension between creation and destruction, the so-called constant of war and peace (Nałkowski, 1904).

The Darwin debate did not explicitly appear in Korczak’s texts, but he wrote an explanation for avoiding it:

I wrote a few years ago a book, The Rules of Life. This was a test. I waited for the response; silence was the reply... all I know is, with Social Darwinism and sexual-zoologism, there is an error and detriment, harm, and great danger.

(1934/1989, p.278)

His confession is somewhat misleading, as while not mentioning Darwin directly, Korczak cited the faction of Nałkowski, Kropotkin, Fabre, Ruskin and Maeterlinck, all of whom engaged in the evolutionary debate. He also guided his readers with his planned children’s book on Grzegorz Mendel, a scientist and monk (Diary, 15 May

²⁴ However, others argue that liberals traditionally favour an incremental position on progress while anarchists favour revolution (personal communication Cohn, J. 2021).

1942). The rediscovery of Mendel's laws of genetics and mutation at the turn of the century appeared to support Polish explanations of the abruptness of change. The new field of genetics diluted the public obsession with the linear march of evolution, directing concerns from the fitness of the individual to the fitness of the environment.

Briefly, Mendel accepted the primary theme of evolution by descent as occurring over geological time rather than human history. The theory of universal common descent viewed new species as arising from previous ones, but not by one-sided linear progression instead by radiating out on all sides (Fairbanks, 2020). Like other Eastern European scientists, Mendel generally agreed with Darwin's *Origins* but retained a somewhat Biblical perspective of catastrophism, the notion of spectacular change. Mendel's research articulated (r)evolutionary theory as

The period of organic formation was not infrequently interrupted by catastrophes, which threatened the life of organisms and, in part, led to their decline [...] its oldest forms disappeared in part to make way for new and more perfect ones.

(Fairbanks, 2020, p.264).

Woodcock (1962) also finds a similar hypothesis in Kropotkin's adaptation of

Darwinism:

Evolution never advances so slowly and evenly as has been asserted. Evolution and revolution alternate, and the revolutions — that is, the times of accelerated evolution — belong to the unity of nature as much as do the times when evolution takes place more slowly.

Malthusian inspired catastrophism appears as a positive force in the competition arguments of Social Darwinism, depicting the natural checking of weak individuals as inevitable. In contrast, Kropotkin believed individuals who survived such events might not have the fortuitous set of traits for the next obstacle. Thus, he argued that catastrophism 'selected against those species that lacked the sociability to overcome

them' (Goodwin, 2010, p.424). Self-preservation relies on an individual succeeding in certain situations, but a community with various traits at its disposal would be more successful in the long term.

In the Polish conception, the mechanism of natural evolution implies suffering, sacrifice and the necessity to destroy old forms. This ecological form of anarchism is an overlooked aspect in Korczak's literature and key to understanding his worldview influenced by the evolutionary theories of the radical geographer, Nałkowski. The inclusion of Nałkowski's (1904) theories acts as a foil for the dominance of Social Darwinism which states the evolutionary ideal is to increase strength. He aligns with Kropotkin's views, as Kinna (2019a) described, which criticize Western thinkers for succumbing to sheer individualism and brutal dynamism. This mistake Nałkowski identified as the naturalistic fallacy, which elevates only the biological as the natural force in humans' evolution while ignoring the cultural domain (*ibid*).

In his Ghetto Diary, Korczak (1942) described his final motivation was to respond to Nietzsche's 'deceitful book', Thus Spoke Zarathustra (p.426). Korczak blamed Nietzsche's texts as posing a great danger when coupled with the prevalent racist atmosphere justifying oppression. His group likened Nietzsche's text to propaganda exalting noble 'idleness' coupled with slavery, which resulted in the evil and selfish grab for power by subverting the strong and capable away from work in the service of weaker people.

Standing in stark contradiction to the evolutionary ideas about the fittest, Nałkowski singled out the unfit or sensitive individuals poorly adapted to their circumstances, whom he named *Forpoczty* (for-poch-te, Outposts). He cited examples of people struggling to *fit* within their environment, naming non-conforming women, impoverished artists, abandoned children, and the mentally unstable. The fundamental

notion of Outposts adheres to a broader definition of diversity as expanding the available pool of creative resources for problem-solving and crisis response.

Revolutionaries could not simply build new institutions inside the old walls or via anti-state outsiders removed from the masses (Bartelson, 2001). Practically, the Outpost theory suggests the fit and powerful sacrifice and work for the rights of others, whether deserving or not. For example, during an epidemic, healthy people might restrict their freedom of movement and association to protect the right to life and health of children or elderly neighbours.

More controversially, where formerly weak individuals gain positions of power, they forgive and even compensate their oppressors. Readers point to Korczak's (1942) description of his inability to hate the German soldiers who held him captive as evidence of saintly behaviour. However, this obscures Korczak's lifetime advocacy that everyone must work for the rights of others without exclusion to *raise* society. The process of social transformation relied on forgiveness and could be achieved by adhering to the principle of compensation, as theorised by Kropotkin (1902), thus, replacing the law of retaliation, although carrying the risk of appearing weak. This notion of bottom up evolution upheld equality and solidarity in Natkowski's (1904) concept of democracy as a force of nature. What might be lost on contemporary readers is the notion that the individuals forgiven might be tyrants, racists, bullies, and criminals, displaying the most unpleasant character and undesirable behaviours. A similar sentiment appears in Bakunin's assessment that 'the oppressors, exploiters of all kinds...are evildoers who are not guilty [...] involuntary products of the present social order' expressing concern that unfortunately, many will be severely punished (quoted in Jensen, 2013). Equally, the Poles believed the raising of society required the inclusion of all, each valuable and not persecuted for some societal purpose or expressions of a cultural phase.

By 16, Korczak began echoing Nałkowski's views, criticising writers who glorified national heroes and cemented traditional hierarchies, such as the Nobel prize winner Henryk Sienkiewicz (Falkowska, 1989). The division would also later define the schism between Korczak and Sienkiewicz in their endeavours as children's writers and sponsors of orphan care. The latter's literature reflected the increasing popularity of colonialist and ethno-nationalist movements in Europe. The trends pitted two different revolutionary factions against one another, with Korczak's movement advocating for cultural diversity failing to gain traction.

Concerning Polish and Jewish relations, Korczak evoked imagery resembling those between younger and older brothers, not always in agreement but inseparably suffering and succeeding together. In his article *Trzy Prądy* (Three Currents), rather than either solely Polish or Jewish but drawn from history, Korczak (1910/1994) labelled a third voice as follows;

We are brothers from one land. Centuries of common lowliness and misery - a long common path - one sun shines on us, one hail destroys our fields, and one earth covers the bones of our ancestors - there were more tears than smiles: neither yours nor our fault. Oh, let's work together. We are poor; let us support each other when sad to comfort each other. Maybe good fortune will shine upon us. We, your wounds, bound in our dressing - and because we have flaws, we can be raised up together. [...] together (we) are streets in the poor Polish and Jewish areas of Warsaw, respectively. Let us light a shared campfire and open our souls to the light of it; what is bad, in the fire, what is good - valuable - dignified - to the common treasury.

As a Jew-Pole, the closest to my own heart is this particular voice, but I cannot not understand the first two because it would mean I am immature, or it may be suggested that I do not have the right to understand voices as expressive as [the Polish or Jewish literary greats].

There is also a fourth voice, a fourth direction, strong, bloody hell, like a hundred devils, but that is enough of that because such behaviour we all cannot allow to be understood.

Here, though he identifies with the 'third voice', he cannot withdraw compassion and understanding towards others, whether Jewish Zionists or Polish nationalists, like

Sienkiewicz. Indeed, he was suggesting Mutual Aid, that these groups must practice critical actions to forgive and cooperate in garnering sufficient public opinion to withstand the ‘fourth voice’ already coming from hell.

6.2 Living Crystals

For the French and English enraptured by individualism and Darwinism, the theory of Mutual Aid was a revelation shaped as the crux of Kropotkin’s anarchist philosophy. Here I use particle physics instead of the usual biology or anthropology to highlight the universal element of dust where dynamic systems move through states of dissolution, decay, and reformation. The Messianist’s poetic vision of reincarnation provides a radical understanding of the position of humans in the world as merely refashioned particles of dust sharing common origins. Generally, when a Social Darwinist places humans on the evolutionary ladder, it is a humiliation to suggest that one is little better than an animal. Rather than pity lower life forms, Messianists believed people should be in solidarity with nature, proud of their united struggle and sacrifice made thus far. The notion of decay and dissolution as necessary recombination of matter in a ceaseless struggle shaped this unique Polish attitude towards suffering, death and their (r)evolutionary approach. With a vision of history as a spiritual process, these philosophers attempted to radicalise insurgent sentiment amongst the masses but overestimated the realities of making this possible until their work was revitalised decades later.

As World War I ushered in destruction and *anarchy*, Korczak reinvigorated the need for radical sacrifice and spiritual rebirth, using a Messianist quote from the poem *Anhelli*. Korczak chose to evoke this message after Poland achieved State independence, reinforcing a struggle beyond their national interests. His call for

political and economic rights for children translated to a struggle for all oppressed peoples. Summarising Korczak's views on property, justice, and equality, he extends Proudhon's (1876) reconciliation of political and social equality for 'men equal in the dignity of their persons, equal before the law, ought to be equal in their conditions' (p.33). Dividing the Earth's resources amongst the children of God, the French anarchist favoured only men of intellect while Korczak declares these as rights of all children.²⁵ Bauman (2003) explained that Korczak's claim for children's dignity was as 'a component of human dignity' and not merely preparation for the future or the sake of a happy childhood (p.93). Korczak defined children as representing one-third of humanity, stressing they deserve not what we deliver out of sympathy or goodwill but their equal rights. He doubts whether adults understand this principle of equity once applied to the economic sphere and the division of wealth, pre-empting contemporary ecological crises by asking surprising questions in 1924:

*How much is their inheritance, how should it be divided?
Have we dishonest caregivers not deprived them of it, expropriated it?*

Predating the environmental rights movements of contemporary anarchists, Korczak (1942/1967) even questioned the destruction and oppression of non-human life;

*Man of the future will be astonished to find that we used cut flowers to decorate
our apartments. [...]
And animal skin for carpets.
Scalps, scalps of flowers, our noble brothers-in-life.*

p.438

The phrase describing other species as evolutionary brothers foreshadows what is now called tree-thinking, where species are not more or less evolved and related by a

²⁵ See Proudhon response discussed earlier in Chapter 3

common ancestor. As previously stated, the predominant Western understanding of living things upon an evolutionary ladder emphasised progress and advancement.²⁶ Most scholars blame misconceptions about fitness for generating the idea that more fit for an environment is more advanced, better, or desirable. However, the earlier school of thought dominated and appeared decidedly in Kropotkin's discussion of progressive evolution.

To explain the cooperation of Mutual Aid, Kropotkin arranges his examples in a line that begins with species such as crabs and birds, followed by mammals such as elephants. His order culminates with humans suggesting progress from lower to higher organisms. Like others at the time, Kropotkin applied the same scientific framework to humans ordering different societies to exhibit increasingly successful and complex cooperative factors. He described savage tribes developing into barbarian villages, with each stage supposedly providing the embryonic instructions to the next in furthering progress (1902). Though he may have attempted to differentiate between biological and social evolutionary processes, his language delineating an order from the savage to barbarian, and finally ourselves reinforces the hierarchy of nations.

Kropotkin provided a scientific vision of anarchism to revise its reputation in the West, guiding thinkers and activists to imagine different social relations. Ideas related to Mutual Aid are well known for biological-anthropological aspects or as central to the development of anarchism as a political school of thought. However, his scientific status came via his geological research on seismic activity in Manchuria (coincidentally, where Korczak also formulated much of his school of thought while stationed in the region during the Russo-Japanese war).²⁷ I find this an oversight in contemporary

²⁶ Even though Darwin may have made some rudimentary challenges in the biological school of thought, the idea of progressive evolution persisted in various fields into the 1960s.

²⁷ Ivanova, T.K. & Markin, V. A. (2008). Piotr Alekseevich Kropotkin and his monograph *Researches on the Glacial Period* (1876) *Geological Society, London, Special Publications*, 301, 117-128, <https://doi.org/10.1144/SP301.7>

anarchist scholarship, such as Morris' (2018) monograph affording little attention to Kropotkin's scientific views in material physics and geology. Cahm (2002) points out briefly that Kropotkin set about challenging the deterministic approach of scientific materialism by offering a more holistic view of relations between humans and the material world. Using the analogy of natural scientists studying seismic activity and geological formation, he hoped to shift social sciences with new interpretations of how the past informs the present and simultaneously foretells the future. As there are few details offered in contemporary scholarship, I offer a brief overview to substantiate the relevance of the volcano metaphor used by Kropotkin (1898) to declare 'such, also, are the revolutions of mankind'.

In *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideals*, Kropotkin (1898/1904) chose a volcano to serve as his chosen metaphor for revolution, where if an imprisoned monumental force builds higher over time without release, it creates sufficient pressure shattering through the petrified old laval rock formations to pour forth as various new forms of magma, flame, gas, and ash. The violent eruption elicits many anarchist discussions, which suggest human nature, once released from bondage, spontaneously reorganises around Mutual Aid. Though the resultant structure may be completely different, the concretion process resumes as the mass hardens. Kropotkin explains that building and maintaining the hierarchy and stability of the edifice takes millions of forces, much like those at play in seismic activity (*ibid*, p.6).

Amongst the anarchist thinkers, Gordon (2007) points to multiple 'regimes of domination', explaining that any actor is 'anarchist' if resisting and acting in awareness of systemic domination (p.38). However, Korczak (1919/1993) returns to the tension between old and new to differentiate his image of the child as not desiring anarchy, as he wrote:

It is not true that the child longs for a pane of glass from the window, and a star from the sky, that he can be bribed by leniency and gratification, that he is a born anarchist.

No, the child has a sense of liberal duty, he likes planning and order, he does not repudiate rules and obligations. All he demands is that the burden may be not too heavy, not rub sores on his back, that he should meet with indulgence when he is hesitant, when he slips up. When weary he wants time to draw a breath.[...] 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.

§102, HTLAC - Family

The child knows now. He knows that not everything in this world is as it should be, that there is good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, justice and injustice, liberty and dependence. He does not understand, he does not care much anyway. He conforms, he swims with the stream.

§103, HTLAC - Family

Korczak understood anarchism as the process of societal transformation where a younger generation desires a different order and responds to the older generation with submission, conformity, resistance, or rebellion. In his assessment, not everything changes at once, and a child is acutely aware of structural constraints as much as their dependence on others. The new order attempts to maintain its structure and eventually fossilises to become obsolete and dominates a new group emerging from below. Each generation brings something new, altering rights and conditions through compromise and creative imperfection. Aside from apparent success, failure may usher in a new age for future children (Korczak, 1937).

The volcano metaphor illustrates the tension between *archy* and *anarchy*, and what few perceive is Kropotkin challenging the idea that the world exists in harmony or any possibility of a preconceived order after the so-called eruption. Far from perpetual peace, he outlined the chaotic and incoherent movements at the molecular and cellular level imperceptible to the human eye, though the disorderly and divergent hold together in equilibrium from the micro to the cosmic scale. At any one point, harmony is merely a static illusion formed by the tension produced by opposing forces within the whole.

The system is continually in motion and conflict, with forces obstructing, resisting, adjusting, and adapting. Hampering one force by preventing movement does not destroy or remove the conflict for another but increases the effect by accumulating energy and mass. While a volcano lays dormant and silent, gradual evolutionary change occurs over aeons. A catastrophic event precipitating revolutionary change occurs when a combination of factors allows the mass to gather sufficient energy from below for a redistribution of force to rupture the equilibrium.

Meanwhile, the volcano metaphor entered popular vernacular during the events of WWI and the Russian Revolution, as one historian described the Paris peace talks as occurring ‘on a thin crust of solid ground, beneath which volcanic forces of social upheaval were seething’ (Chamberlain, 1935/1995). Contemporary scholars define revolution as an explicit conflict or violence in narrow political terms. In contrast, the eruption that throws the old-order mountain into chaos and destabilises the power hierarchy can relate to struggles for survival or ideological conflicts. For example, exposure of government ineptitude may result from large-scale natural disasters such as famine, fire, or epidemic. Furthermore, the masses may lose faith in their leaders through a prophecy, miracle or scientific discovery or new trends touted by a popular figure. Such events may ignite multiple fires in only a select few but spread sufficiently to enflame the seething mass below.

Within his pamphlet, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal*, Kropotkin (1898) described the tension between individuality and social living where he did not elevate people as better than what they are, but as affirming what is already the best in them. Korczak takes the unusual stance of also affirming the worst. Korczak attempted to convince the public and educators that children are already people, and their treatment depends on being seen as such. In rejecting constitutional and democratic systems as ideological shams of self-governance, he argued that establishing and maintaining a

vision of what an ideal society may look like is repulsive, especially if ‘crystallised by law’ (*ibid*).

Like others, Korczak (1939) employed crystallography to illustrate the processes in his educational model, declaring, ‘Even crystals live! Yes, they live.’ Perhaps not in the conventional sense, however, crystals do grow, and although physical and chemical analysis can illuminate current conditions, it is impossible to predict the next stage of their development. Therefore, applying the crystal metaphor of empirical research to a complex, unpredictable living system is useful for shining a light on two core concepts of anarchism: direct action and prefiguration. Both are evident in Korczak’s work with children and his search for tools to assist in the prognosis of societal conditions.

Friction is a force of resistance caused by one object moving and encountering another and is vital in the slow evolutionary change of geological formation. The Oxford Dictionary also refers to ‘the conflict caused by a clash of wills, temperaments or opinions’. Discussing friction evokes the anarchist idea of imperfection and contradiction mentioned earlier, with the interpretation that conflict is creative. Rather than dismiss trivial matters or repetitive complaints, educators in Korczak’s Homes prioritised friction or conflicts to serve as case studies and pedagogical tools to expose pressure points, cracks, and imminent change. The conflicts brought before the Court, and resultant judgements give insight into the varying importance of different rights within the group, made possible by treating children’s involvement and opinion seriously in any matters affecting them. Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights accommodates conflicts between rights. These fall into two types explains Freeman (2011), the rights of one child may conflict with those of another or others, or one individual’s right may conflict with another right for themselves. Korczak’s ideas emerged in a setting where conflict was a fact of everyday life and fit with Epstein’s (1993) explanation that non-violence ‘can be understood as a way of

bringing conflict under control, using it to achieve the ends of social justice, rather than in any way standing aside from it' (p.31).

In advocating games, processes and institutions for children's involvement, conflict was channelled away from physical violence towards the symbolic in social, legal, and political arenas. Korczak sought to cultivate the maturing reflectiveness and problem-solving needed to enhance social relations and grow his national project. He balanced the conservative types of people with the rebellious ones within the orphanage project to enhance community life through gentle cycles of destruction and creation, blurring boundaries and changing rules. Much like politics plays a giant game, Korczak analysed the children as society's weakest, most recent players. Rather than emphasise participation or provide a different platform for children's voices to join existing structures, he researched how the children were already changing the rules of participation and even the platform itself. Certain ancient philosophies deemed the play of children as violent and unpredictable, threatening tradition to expose what is 'concealed beneath the dominant narratives of history' (Ellis, 2011, p.53). An underlying theme in Korczak's work is his elevation of the status of children to that of philosopher-historians, an idea that Ellis suggests 'resonates with the revolutionary, messianic' (*ibid*, p.55). I have stressed that Korczak believes children are sensitive to accumulated power within rituals, objects and even words. He positioned the child as in tune with injustice, both past and present, simultaneously able to prophesize and seize opportunities for change.

In short, the argument proposed here is that Korczak's complex system takes advantage of the conflict dilemma that plagues rights theory and civics education. Rather than resort to rule-based Utilitarianism or over-emphasise peaceful relations, the Homes invited transgression and disruption caused by conflict to expose the tension between preserving individual autonomy while building social relations and

community. The following section explores how this focus upon mutual aid, solidarity and struggle differs substantially from the West, revealed within a hidden history of medicine. The growing public and political interest in natural sciences became the key to the mysteries of life and brought newfound status for the scientific expert. As highlighted earlier, experts in the West had little time or use for Polish researchers, who, without professional access or status under the Empires, reluctantly adopted the position of enthusiastic amateurs.

6.3 In The Wilderness

This chapter outlines the role of medicine in the racial ostracization of the Poles by following Korczak's articles on similar topics and recent research on the history of medicine. This section explores the intellectual milieu of Korczak's formative years amongst the Eastern European scientific community, who developed distinct academia centred upon humans' relationship to the natural environment (Knight, 2017). In Korczak's era, the questions levelled against evolution were not merely aimed at natural selection nor necessarily promoting an anti-scientific creationist position. It is essential to highlight that as human evolution became the centre of debate and inquiry in Western Europe, the accompanying racial discourse, and concerns for 'pure blood' were notably absent from academia and broader society in the Russian Empire. Having experienced vastly different environmental and social conditions led Eastern Europeans to scorn Malthusian models of natural selection and Darwinist's proposed struggle (*ibid*). One Jesuit scientist, Zaborski (1886), published the mildly titled Darwinism in Consideration of Reason and Science, rightly expressing his concern that the Darwin texts posed a dangerous precursor to racial eugenics. Another critical assessment came from a Warsaw doctor, Chałupczyński (1880), raising concerns of this skewed perspective as

merely justifying existing English chauvinism towards other people. Publishing under the title *On Some Errors of Darwin's Theory*, he wrote:

It must be admitted that no one in animal and plant breeding has developed as much unbending will and persistence in making artificial selection as the English - and no nation has so ruthlessly trampled upon all human rights and has not abused all means in the struggle for existence at any price as they. [...] Darwin's [...] "struggle for existence" justifies all historical and social rape, abuse, and lawlessness by the peoples of the Anglo-Saxon race, whose principle in dealing with others is "brute force before the law".

As the West bordered on the hysterical over 'heredity and congenital crime, Lombroso [...], evolution and the struggle for existence', in Russia, anarchist thinkers such as Tolstoy (1899/2012) looked on with bemusement (p.63). The manifestation of this alternative evolutionary school of thought drew together anarchists, scientists and even the religious to build arguments against individualism, capitalism, and militarism.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, increasingly, governments banned and attempted to ostracise those orchestrating and inspiring revolutionary action, including scientists and doctors. Even before the Darwin debates, the medical discourse was divided into the contagionist and anti-contagionist camps regarding the transmission of infectious diseases. On the one hand, a medical fraternity believed that infected people, animals, or objects could spread diseases. The others adhered to miasmatic theory, eventually disproven by the germ theory of disease, though not without significant influence upon public health policy by considering environmental factors of disease control.

In her book on Polish-German relations, Valerio (2019) explores the 19th-century medical profession as politically engaged socio-political reformers. She exposes the anti-Polish and anti-Semitic views underpinning German liberalism within a quest for Imperial and racial superiority long before fascist influence. While the introduction of sanitary and hygienic conditions vastly improved European lives, many migrants and

colonies experienced adverse outcomes. A popular metaphor urged authorities to protect the soil against disease when physicians identified the Eastern borderlands as the source of contagions (Valerio, 2019). Certain physicians counterattacked draconian quarantine methods, fighting for individual and economic freedoms amongst vulnerable populations. In 1885, a scientific assembly of German bacteriologists and doctors incorporated the vocabulary of national unification and cultural struggle against foreign threats. This period constructed what Korczak (1942/1967) titled Euthanasia, labelling ‘the physician — the mighty structure of medicine’ (p.485). This period sheds a different perspective on the supposed altruism of doctors who researched cholera treatment for increased German colonisation and wealth, rather than any assistance offered to the suffering. The discussion held significant implications for overseas colonies and precipitated the deportation of undesirable Poles and Jews to free up borderlands for Prussian settlers (Valerio. 2019).

The authority of Darwin (1871) sealed the fate of the Poles as his evolutionary theory appeared to prove such connections via a high incidence of lice-borne diseases. The presence of Polish soldiers amongst many revolutionary factions appeared as a threat to local populations in terms of both disease and suspect bloodlines. As pogroms, expulsions and poverty sparked high levels of immigration amongst both Jews and Poles, masses flooded towards the West and Latin America. German, French, and English scientific findings prompted governments and experts to construct exaggerated racial arguments to discredit and demonise Poles as non-European invaders. The scientists harnessed popular opinion by claiming the inferior Slavic races suffered a plague threatening to spread their savagery, disease, and insanity into the West. Here, I must add a caveat that the Poles were not merely victims as such complicated history reveals their agency in securing their independence.

Furthermore, as Kropotkin warned, revolutionary strategies often shaped new aspiring masters. For many Poles, their oppression had created an untenable position, with immigration appearing their only solution, often accompanied by awakened fantasies of domination and colonial conquest of others. The two positions are evident in the battle over the children's book genre. In 1911, Sienkiewicz' published his best-selling adventure book *In the Desert and Wilderness*, based upon his travels in Africa. Hailed as the Polish "Robinson Crusoe", Sienkiewicz fills a similar category to British colonial apologetics with praise for colonial order, gender stereotypes, an image of African childishness, mistrust of the Arab and a clear moral directive.

Both the *Wilderness* and Korczak's *King Matt* tales envelop the standard features of fairy tales, namely cultural didactics and power relations; however, the latter proceeds in an experimental fashion. *King Matt* has no happy ending, as his colonial and military policies result in his downfall, exile, and death. Throughout Korczak's tale, there are examples of Frye's (1957) mechanisms of displacement, which suggests small details achieve adaptations of the literature to the realities of the reader's context. Korczak has built a pattern of subtle details to convey an image that modifies the archetypes and meanings. In changing the type of hero, the time and place, Korczak's conceptions of the world challenge the narrative for the young generation aiming to create a new myth (Vucic & Sękowski, 2020).

Meanwhile, European governments supported the eugenic programs of doctors claiming to cleanse their society, with one such program developed by Maria Montessori [1870-1952]. Polish doctors and researchers countered by attempting to disprove the theories, with Korczak as one example of their remarkable achievements. Their emerging (r)evolutionary action required a combination of theory, broad strategic networks, and tools for success. Developing new capacities, multi-lingual

revolutionaries concealed themselves amongst host nations to subversively capitalise on education, power, and opportunities.

6.4 The Born Criminal

Anarchism generally reverses the tooth and claw state of war to envisage a peaceful society free from government interference and misery. Social contract theory assumes people sealed the governing contract long ago, while anarchists such as Godwin required continuous and voluntary agreement between free individuals. These notions of justice and freedom within individual consent also appeared in the social theory of Proudhon, calling for an end to coercion and domination (Carter, 1971). The basic assumption here is that any analysis of society begins not with the State or groups but with some abstract individual as Godwin surmised that ‘society is nothing more than an aggregate of individuals’ (Crowder & Crowder, 1991). Though education is important in such debates, human nature is the essential element here. Thus, medicine had a significant role in researching the nature of criminology and childhood, with prominent doctors leading educational initiatives.

The common conflation of Korczak with the iconic Maria Montessori promoted by the Lifton biography manifested as a pilot study for this research investigation. My analysis yielded exciting and valuable findings published elsewhere (Vucic, 2018). I show that contemporary narratives present superficial similarities between the two doctor-educators, and the differences are of greater importance. For example, when asked directly for his opinion on Montessori, Korczak (1926) gave an unenthusiastic caveat:

I do not know how to assess the educational method of Montessori, but what is memorable is that her service has been to create a movement for the case of the child of this age, for whom previously, it was deemed enough to have just the care of a nanny – anyone's would do.

The medical training of each doctor-educator led in different directions, as Montessori's work was predominantly in university research and lecturing, while Korczak worked as a doctor in a Jewish children's hospital and on the war front in the army. She applied her Method developed with disabled children as the same formula to solve children's vagrancy, vandalism, and crime in crowded housing estates (Ross, 2012). Meanwhile, Korczak criticised the division between institutions such as orphanages and juvenile detention into custodial and correctional, thus ruling out reform in the first and a lack of proper care in the latter. His abrupt assessment appears far more potent considering Montessori's (1913) claim that her Method will eradicate degeneracy and criminality. Hence, my study exposed the two doctor-educators as opposing sides of the most critical debate of their time, which Davie (2003) identified as degeneracy and the 'born criminal' (pp.1-2).

At the turn of the century, Montessori had stated her intention to research and develop an anthropological 'method' for education to eliminate the hereditary throwbacks producing violent anarchists and criminals. In her book, *Pedagogical Anthropology* (1913), she described the sum of this work. She accumulated biological and physiological information, including anthropometry²⁸ structuring her argument about the inferiority of groups of people. Eugenicists admired her commitment but criticised her poor understanding of genetic inheritance (Keatinge, 1914). Here it should be stressed in her defence that many worked within this paradigm of criminology as eugenics dominated much of the West (Pick, 1996).

Likewise, academia has habitually missed Montessori's dedication to her professors, Cesare Lombroso and Giuseppe Sergi, the leading proponents of the

²⁸ anatomical measurements, particularly of the skull

'criminal man' theory. Within the Lombrosian line of thought, the role played by political and social circumstances in producing such criminals was considered insubstantial. On the contrary, violent actions and resistant behaviour were strongly correlated with the element of degeneracy, both in terms of hereditary factors and the vice encouraged by family life. One anarchist even eloquently rebuked these scientific findings in a public letter penned from prison (Schwab, 1891). Although Lombroso's research fell into disrepute, his ideas had spread sufficiently to provide a dangerous theoretical footing for Montessori and others.

Contrary to the image of contemporary Montessori education as alternative and transformative, this evidence positions the origins and purpose of her Method as geared towards the preservation of the existing *good* society and political *status quo*, suffocating any tiny spark of dissent. Towards this aim, her approach restricted freedom of association to ensure the plague of degeneracy did not spread amongst children. These educational aims were not unfamiliar to Korczak, as his role as 'observer-psychologist' placed him in a Montessori kindergarten where he produced a child study Helcia, published in *Momenty Wychowace* (Educational Moments, 1924/1993). His anecdotes detailed young children's interactions over several days, noting the Shakespearian dramatic quality of their interactions. He stressed that the action displayed the hallmarks of any adult performance rather than being childish or childlike. He offered the study to reinforce his mantra that children are people, imploring to take their actions and concerns seriously. In the article, Korczak also detailed the aggression and violence, both physical and emotional, in the power plays and social relations where most of the protagonists were girls aged 3 to 6 years of age. With admiration for Hana, he calls her a 'rogue' who 'might prove to be of the right stuff' (*ibid*). Quite simply, he highlighted that Montessori's Method failed in its primary purpose for preventing violence. The key to Korczak's work was prognosis based upon symptoms that may

have numerous causes. While relying on data, Korczak acknowledged the subjectivity of both the patient and doctor searching for causation. Echoing medical ethics, Korczak developed the model he transferred into his future work with children. Kamińska (2013) summarises his views with his quote, ‘the child rearranges not only our furniture but also our values’ (p. 224).

While Korczak responded with uncertainty, the Montessori Method promised a predetermined vision where a prescriptive set of rules and equipment provided teachers and schools with clarity and direction. Korczak considered that anyone peddling this Method supports domination aimed at assimilation and singularity. Primarily, he rejected the suggestion that one teacher and one environment can form equal, reciprocal, and satisfying relationships with all the children in the group, as Korczak (1920/1993) wrote:

*And then what happens to the rule of absolute equality of all children?
Why - that rule is a lie!*

§24, HTLAC – Boarding School

Korczak mocked the educator striving for a replicable method, evaluating successful results as merely the child’s release of agency under better conditions. The danger of such mythology in set solutions is to entice teachers into ensuring the method’s success with inducements and coercion replicating hierarchies of domination, as Korczak (1929/1967) warned:

There is no such thing as a pure child — everyone is contaminated to a more or less extent, but how quickly he shakes free and cleanses himself! No cure is necessary, just a good wash. The child helps eagerly, happy to have rediscovered himself. [...] Each teacher celebrates these artless triumphs, taken as it was from a tale about poor orphans. Such cases deceive uncritical moralists into believing that it all comes so easily. A bungler delights in them, while an ambitious man attributes the virtues to himself. Some strive to obtain similar results in each case by increasing the dose of persuasion, others by increasing pressure.

The Child's Right to Respect, p.372

Thus, he warned the teacher who waited, yearning for better materials, conditions, or the ordered ease of routines. The notion of a controlled and obedient group of children, Korczak (1920/1993) blamed for creating fearful teachers who, for the sake of the image of a clean and orderly classroom, were unwilling to make mistakes:

The more miserable the psychological level, the more colourless the moral make-up, the higher the teacher's concern for their own peace and comfort, the higher the number of orders and prohibitions dictated by apparent concern for the wellbeing of the children. A teacher anxious to avoid unpleasant surprises and fearful of being blamed for anything going wrong is a tyrant of children.

§51, HTLAC - Boarding School

Though rarely publicised, the opening of his first orphanage dealt Korczak a sharp and painful lesson. His first year as director was fraught with rebellion as the children's resistance manifested in property destruction. The incoming children faced the gangs, crime, and prostitution rife in the streets of Warsaw, bringing those experiences into the new *Home*. In opposition to Montessori's image of the child as innocent, Korczak (1920/1993) reminded his reader that children reflect society at large with 'just as many evil ones among children as among adults' (§69, HTLAC - Boarding School). The Home was one of the most modern buildings for children in Europe, but he lamented:

Confronted with my requirements, the children adopted a position of absolute resistance that no words could overcome.

Coercion produced resentment.

The new home they had been dreaming of for a whole year became hateful.

§3, HTLAC – Orphan's Home, 1920/1993

Even addressing defiance directly, in Korczak's experience, resistance continues in annoying, trivial, or intangible ways and, worst of all, in the conspiracy of silence. The comfort of neutrality, indifference and distance was far more dangerous than open

conflict and hatred. Referring to his 'camp of partisans', with a great deal of goodwill, time and effort, he was able to rouse the collective conscience, which consolidated a 'new order' (*ibid*). Later, Korczak explained that the old orphanage, though chaotic and miserable, had afforded the children opportunities for initiative and energetic efforts, accompanied by self-denial and heroic acts.

Looking at Montessori's model teacher, Korczak himself would have failed to meet her requirements. Likewise, Suissa (2010) explains that anarchist education employs Sennet's (1980) interpretation of Kropotkin and Bakunin as wanting to create 'the conditions of power in which it was possible for a person in authority to be made fallible' (p.188). In one famous anecdote, Korczak caught children on a midnight raid of the pantry and joined the thieving gang, resulting in his fronting the Court for the thefts alongside the children. He found solidarity with the so-called criminal type as he championed the street child's resourcefulness, resilience and rebellion as characteristics required in societal transformation. However, he expressed concern for children below-normal intellect ensnared by a life of crime, dominated and used by others cunning enough to stop short of the prison gate (Korczak, 1928/1929, p.150). With no false modesty or pretence towards role modelling, Korczak (1920/1993) reminded his readers that there are 'perverts who use refined speech and heroes of virtue with foul tongues' (§39, HTLAC - Summer Camps). He called these 'chisellers' of society', 'cheaters and usurpers' who morally undermine societal fabric (*ibid*). Such anecdotes make it problematic to use terms such as criminal, liar or sinful and expect it to have the same meaning for Korczak and Montessori.

Korczak's intermittent role as a juvenile defender, exploring themes of crime and punishment, reveals potential for further research. Indeed, Montessori (1913, *introduction*) explained that the ethical problems raised by degeneracy and the Born Criminal Theory had shaken the foundation of penal law, with jurists debating whether

the delinquent should be cured, isolated, or punished (*ibid*). However, law reform and civil morality were secondary to her interests. In contrast, such issues appear as master's tools central to Korczak's philosophical and practical endeavours as the *Home's* observational layout referenced the Panopticon, suggesting experiments in criminology. Although there is little information on this aspect, it suggests a criticism of Korczak's treatment of children as research subjects, with a lack of privacy and using surveillance without explicit permission.

Even though he was an advocate for rebellion, Korczak (1926) held the highest reservations for the violent child, whose flaws become even more dangerous as an adult. He qualified this by explaining the disproportionate nature of such violent reactions via the generational effects of oppression, trauma, and marginalisation. He writes that in the veins of some children course the 'collected agony of many painful centuries. Under the action of a slight stimulus is released the latent potential of pain, grievance, anger, and rebellion. [...] It is not a child, but the centuries weeping' (§85, HTLAC –Boarding School, 1920/1993). Acknowledging the complexity of inherited traits, Korczak reminded parents in the first volume of *How to Love a Child* that the baby is not only 'theirs', but connected to many ancestors by a moment in time (§4). The child is a link in a long series of generations that should never be forcefully cut.

6.5 *The Gordian Knot*

What did Korczak write in response to the ongoing debate on race and degeneracy? While still a university student, he sarcastically addressed an article, *Zwyrodnienie* (Degeneracy, 1904/1994), to the Warsaw journalists who had written on the 'burning issue of the evil that lurks in the deterioration of the urban proletariat' (p.9-10). In a mocking tone, he declared that after reviewing reports into 'the beast-like

behaviour and degeneration of a certain fraction of the working classes', he reached the unshakable conclusion that the media was clueless and sensationalist. By the turn of the century, Korczak pointed to scientific evidence that the pathological aetiology of criminal tendencies is exceedingly complex. He considered any doctor using the term degeneracy to relate to the 'proletariat children' of any ethnicity as racist and inviting harsh consequences (*ibid*).

Versed in the history of medicine, Korczak referred directly to the constructed degeneracy of Poles by Western scientists and doctors, which spelt death for Poland. Specifically, this is a history surrounding the notorious nervous-rheumatic disease, *gościec* (rheumatism) and *plica neuropathica*, originally called *plica polonica* or Polish Plaits by foreigners (Fałczyńska *et al.*, 2020). The condition appeared amongst many ethnic minorities living in squalor, but experts targeted the Poles and later the Jews. Encompassing a wide range of conditions, *Plica polonica* (Polish Plaits) referred to hair felting due to lice, dirt, chemical damage, dermatitis, schizophrenia, psoriasis, or scabies (Ohry & Ohana, 2018; Nieradko-Iwanicka, 2020). Eventually manifesting as dreadlock hair, the sufferer experienced multiple accumulating pathologies, including painful arthritis, migraines, epilepsy, and psychosis.

The *Weichselzopf* or Vistula Plait referred to cases in communities along the Vistula River (Marczewska, 2011; 2019). It played upon the German words *Wichtelzopf* and *Hexenzopf* from traditional names for demons and witches. The rise of racial theories also later introduced *Juden-Zopff* (Jewish Plait), with the medical fraternity linking the condition to the large visible numbers of Jews in Poland (*ibid*). Though quickly dismissing any supernatural origin of the hair matting, scientific experts maintained the link between Poland's Jews and *Plica* in the German medical discourse (*ibid*; Guesnet, 2019). Few historians appear aware of its existence, and mentions are rare in either Polish or medical history, with most research on the topic appearing in the

past two years. For example, there is no mention of *Plica* in Valerio's (2019) book on the science of race and Polishness during the German Empire between 1840 and 1920. Thus, in this chapter, I dedicate considerable space to this medical phenomenon and its role as one of the master's tools that constructed people as a perceived threat to the health and physical integrity of Europe.

Descriptions of *Plica* as a disease appeared in the 13th-century, interpreted in various ways, from superstitious to mental illness (Sakalauskaitė-Juodeikienė et al. 2018). Furthermore, in 1780 Diderot condemned the people of the Polish territories with his entry in the Encyclopaedia describing them as cursed by the disease:

The invaders, evil-minded by nature, and sorcerers and poisoners, corrupted all the water in the country using the hearts which they had ripped out of the chests of their prisoners. They threw them into the rivers after having stuffed them with venomous herbs and fixated these with skewers. The infected water killed some of those who drank it, and left the seed of this horrific disease in their blood. Later, this dangerous disposition of the humours was transmitted from father to child, which spread and multiplied the Plica.

(Guesnet, 2019)

Travel writing and medical opinions fused to produce the influential *Chirurgisch-medicinische Abhandlungen* in 1800, featuring wealthy and poor men and women, Poles and Jews pictured alongside dogs and horses all described as afflicted with *Plica* (Figure 11). The anthropological accounts produced by geographers were not entirely fictitious but biased to create a pattern of unusual or disgusting traits without mentioning encounters with the familiar or normal. As Guesnet (2019) points out, the illustrations greatly influenced academia in the early 19th-century, including Charles Darwin, who assumed *Plica* was endemic and contagious.



Figure 11: Drawing of Poles with 'Plaits', 1854 Source Wikipedia, Public Domain

According to the book *Inventing Eastern Europe*, frequent references to *Plica polonica* appeared across all Western literary genres in the late 19th-century (Wolff, 1994). Like reporting disease patterns amongst African Americans, Western medical aetiology shifted from lifestyle factors to racial theory (Kiple & Kiple, 1980). Employing physiological evidence of African inferiority justified dilemmas for slave-owning republicans. Similarly, describing and defining *Plica* contributed to the othering of the inhabitants of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, justifying public health policies and hygiene initiatives (Knott, 1917; Guesnet, 2019). Thus, experts shaped an image of a lesser-known region of Europe that was home to a peculiar condition assumed to be both contagious and monstrous. The rising authority of the expert, Guesnet (2019) argues, shaped discourse on Poland as outside of Europe by constructing the otherness of the people, thus justifying Poland's oppression as a target for colonisation. The specific distinction of *polonica* associated with schizophrenia and irrational bloodlines explained the Polish aristocrats' descent into *anarchy*, later supposedly explaining their revolutionary and violent tendencies. The Western narrative racially portrayed rebellious Poles as related to past invaders, Tartars, Mongols, and barbarians, thus constructing the border of Western Europe as the safeguard of civilisation (Wolff, 2012). From this position, any Poles seeking political reform were

easier to denounce as irrational criminals if associated with the fear and imagery of *Plica*.



Figure 12: Engraving of a woman with a Polish Plait from Thomas Salomon's (1739) work *The Present State of All Countries, and Peoples of the World, Natural, Political and Moral* (Venice).

Source: National Library of Poland

In Polish, the *koltun* or tangle-knot referred to the visible tendency of the sufferer's curly or dishevelled hair forming irreversible and unwashable dreadlocks, susceptible to lice infestations (Figure 12). The Ashkenazi Jews translated this Polish word for matted hair as *koltunish*, the Yiddish equivalent (Guesnet, 2019). Colloquially in Poland, it now refers to someone ignorant and backwards (Marczewska, 2019). In modern medicine, it took more than a century to discredit the existence of the *Plica* disease, allowing racist views about Poles to infiltrate Western political and societal discourse. Any accurate descriptions of *Plica* as hair and skin conditions were cast aside by widespread opinion favouring a contagious *plica* to mark the Poles, Jews, and others

in this region as racially inferior and degenerate (*ibid*). The Polish medical fraternity, educated predominantly in the West, warned this national plague would spell disaster, aware of the negative stereotypes it brought. Indeed, the Nazi propaganda machine would later capitalise upon these pervasive beliefs amongst the German populace. Upon invading Poland, Hitler claimed a redemptive role that ‘if Poland had gone on ruling the old German parts for a few more decades everything would have become lice-ridden and decayed’ (Connelly, 1999, p.14).

Like other cultures, hair plays a crucial role within Slavic culture and beliefs, and by WWII, Polish plaits had morphed into fashionable plaited hairstyles still worn today.²⁹ Many religious groups trace notions of power back to the Bible, and the act of cutting someone's hair symbolises punishment, humiliation, and submission. However, *Plica* carried a legitimate physical threat of death via systemic infection entering the blood; thus, people feared cutting their hair. Typhus epidemics necessitated head shaving, often of frightened children with painful scars and scabs, and it was a task for which Korczak required the utmost patience and care. His title, *The Gordian Knot* employs the knot entanglement metaphorically, symbolising the dilemma Polish and Jewish communities faced with increasing pressure to cut their children off from traditional life to modernise and assimilate.

6.6 *Symbiosis & Sparrows*

The rise of the scientific discourse is attributable to the German and French thinkers described above and driven by fervour around Darwin's publication of *The Descent of Man* in 1871. One paragraph stated that a natural scientist might take as evidence of ‘the races of man being infested by parasites, which appear to be

²⁹ More recently, Poles are reclaiming their heritage by wearing ancestral dreadlocks, see Nobel prize winner Olga Tokarczuk <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Olga-Tokarczuk>

specifically distinct, might fairly be urged as an argument that the races themselves ought to be classed as distinct species' (p.176). The Polish strain of lice having more in common with the African and Asian parasites cemented a barbaric image of Poland's races for many Western scientists and intellectuals. The public and medical professionals became convinced of the geographical variance of parasites reflecting the racial inferiority of those people (Knott, 1917). The primitive differences between the benign English lice and the invasive Polish strain became tantamount to the Polish nation, threatening to spread savagery closer. Quickly absorbed into the university curriculum, English medical students recall associating the conditions with stories of witches and demons while the scientific facts confirmed deviant races of humans (*ibid*).

The disease debated for 500 years has now disappeared from medical texts. Studies show the knot-tangle phenomena as a manifestation of a scalp condition, common amongst Slavs and Jews in the region. One physician believed the Polish practice of artificially creating dreadlocks was not merely a pagan relic but protected individuals within an act of community solidarity (Knott, 1917). Interest in natural sciences and anthropology led foreign observers to believe the knot phenomena was an endemic disease. As classification began of the Poles and Jew mixing in New York and London, it struck several astute doctors that these immigrant populations all suffered under squalid conditions, like the impoverishment in locations traversed by land armies. Research into the transmission and susceptibility to the disease led a young Polish American physician Francis Fronczak [1874 - 1955], to produce award-winning research, presenting *plica polonica* as a suite of preventable and treatable medical conditions. During World War I, Fronczak proved invaluable in the 'save the children' fight against typhus carried by lice and organising fundraising efforts.

Despite a great deal of excellent research, Korczak recognised the irrevocable damage done in the West by the supposed national plague spreading from Poland.

Intellectualising the position of different human races on the evolutionary ladder removed any sympathy or guilt towards suffering or broken promises. Much like Social Darwinism, the zoologist Ernst Haeckel applied evolutionary biology to compare the animal kingdom with human society viewed as an organism. He applied his biopolitical metaphor to the relationship of the individual and society, stating that the individual is a component to be sacrificed for the common good if required (Reynolds, 2008). In such a worldview, the individual is subordinate to society's interests, which justifies state interference. To this portrayal, Zaborski (1886) countered with a stinging attack deriding Haeckel's description of man as only 'a colony of cells'. He foretold of what he considered the obvious consequences of such arguments;

Man, not being a real individual, a person, cannot have an explicit goal of his existence; he cannot expect any future. No responsibility rests upon him. No reward or punishment can befall him. His whole task would be to live in such a way as not to be caught red-handed by the police. The police, gendarmerie, in a word the state, have the right to it, and this absolute right.

The hypothesis depriving man of personality regulates and justifies the sacrifice of individuals, the extermination of entire tribes, for the good and greatness of the state.

Comically responding to the Germanic justification that man is only a 'colony of cells', Korczak (1942/2012) claimed divine immortality by virtue of his indestructible parasites. Formulating a duty to good self-governance, he argued that every individual hosts so many organisms as to resemble a tiny society;

Immortal is an amoeba; man is a colony of sixty trillion, according to Maeterlinck. [...] There are two billion people in the world, and I am a society many millions more, so I have the right, I have a duty, to take care of my own billions, to which I have responsibilities.

p.20

Symbiosis is a title from Korczak's Last Lectures, and as outlined above, the label of parasite readily appeared in discussions about Poles living on foreign soils.

However, scientists lacked understanding of organisms living symbiotically, so most considered parasitism the lowest life form, regressive in evolution. In folk culture, parasites took the form of evil spirits enslaving people as their invisible masters. The best efforts and failures of modern science have revealed the truth in such claims. This section introduces symbiosis for later exploration of Korczak's Eulogy for the Louse, dedicated to the improbable mutual aid between parasites and doctors during the typhus epidemic to achieve (r)evolutionary goals.

Anthropological studies now ascribe a role to parasites in cultural differences by causing disease, changing people's behaviour, and inducing hallucinations. The contemporary opinion now heralds parasitic species as 'evolutionary's finest' – 'exhibiting extreme adaptations' making them the most diverse, prolific, and successful organisms on the planet (Willcox, 2012). In sheer numbers, parasitism dominates overwhelmingly as the majority, comprising close to half of all known species and involved in three-quarters of all inter-species interactions. As the apex predators, parasites can outmanoeuvre other species by developing intricate survival mechanisms against host defences. Scholarship now recognises that the reciprocal antagonism and tension between host and parasite populations create constant change, adaptation and reaction in an open-ended co-evolution (Little, 2002).

Discussing parasitism, Willcox (2012) concludes, 'if Darwin had only known how amazingly complex the barriers these creatures have to overcome and the extent to which they have affected the species he'd encountered on his travels, he would not have labelled them "degenerates"'. Believing themselves to be apex predators, Western masters competed against one other to colonise and dominate, with a remaining few woefully pleading for compassion and cooperation via Mutual Aid. Meanwhile, with little to offer and sitting at the bottom of the food chain were the parasites, Polish and Jewish pests chased out of the Russian Empire to spread and infect the West. Applying

their genetic throwback concept to these groups of people had hygienists scrambling to find remedies or prevent infiltration into their race without realising or admitting that all humans carry parasites.

To show the difference of Korczak's notion of solidarity or *symbiosis* between groups, I present an example from Kropotkin relating to another prominent biological debate of the era. Sharing the tale of a Greek orator, Kropotkin (1902/1939) explains the cooperation amongst sparrows watching through his window:

While I am speaking to you, a sparrow has come to tell other sparrows that a slave has dropped on the floor a sack of corn, and they all go there to feed upon the grain.'

p.27

Through interpretations by biologists, the point of Kropotkin's anecdote has become one of generosity within the group as a natural survival strategy. However, Korczak does not observe as a neutral spectator or objectively like the Russian prince-scientist. Since Korczak stood amongst the oppressed and ostracised, he recognised something different. The inter-species solidarity between the bonded slave and the thief sparrow changes the event from this bottom perspective. Although the slave risks punishment and has little of his own, he deliberately drops the corn to feed the sparrow thieves, as neither can reap the benefits of the surplus harvest. Here mutual aid reaches beyond the group with the less common action of assisting those perhaps undeserving and in direct competition for scarce resources when both parties suffer. As Korczak (1942/1967) explained, while starving with children in the Ghetto, he put aside precious food; 'for 20 years I fed the sparrows' (p.431).

What appears as a tiny non-consequential line relates to Korczak's position within a half-century debate known as The Sparrow Question. The sparrow is the most populous wild species on Earth and possibly the most maligned, achieving its success living as a scavenger amongst people (Callaghan *et al.*, 2021). Economic ornithology

eventually decided by siding with agricultural interests to declare the bird a pest (Holmes, 2017). There is no deliberate irony as Korczak also described the economic interests of Germany and Russia as the primary motivations for clearing the lands of Eastern Europe of other pests, namely the wild, uncivilised, and backwards people (*ibid*).

One of the last weapons available to this oppressed mass was to leverage the fear and stereotypes. Only the invisible threat of disease could stop an authority that considered itself racially superior and no longer believed in a God above them. Exploring stereotypes about the Poles, Bullivant (1999) traces Nazi policies as fanning long-term hatred evident amongst the German people in the late 19th-century mood of *Polenkoller* or anti-Polish frenzy (p.21). Coinciding with their invasion of Poland in 1939, propaganda revived the traditional stereotypes of Poles from the 19th century. In the same way, the Germans held the pervasive belief that they do not fight Poles as equals like the French or English, but as insects that need extermination for hygiene reasons, much like any vermin.

Completing a full-year paediatric specialisation in Berlin in 1907, Korczak, as a Polish Jew from Warsaw, must have encountered racist sentiments both professionally and personally. Therefore, I present this argument concerning Korczak's (1942) famous Eulogy to the Louse, where Korczak suggests solidarity and a debt owed to the tiny insect. Other writers such as Silverman (2017) are confused about why Korczak honoured the lice responsible for spreading a typhus epidemic that killed millions, including his mother. In my final chapter, the debt becomes more apparent as the disease subdued the occupying armies and neighbouring enemies sufficiently for the Poles to gain the upper hand in military offence and territorial defence, resulting in their independence. The threat of disease changed social relations and destroyed existing hierarchies. The crisis offered opportunities for leadership via Polish scientists stationed

worldwide and the many health workers willing to sacrifice themselves at the frontline of the crisis. Much like the German doctors who researched cholera to improve their chances of successful colonisation, the Poles utilised typhus in decolonisation strategies to gain an advantage and hold their ground. The unusual circumstances of the WWI humanitarian crisis found the Poles better prepared and resourced to face the epidemic than either the Germans or Russians. In other words, they presented as a better fit for the new circumstances requiring trans-national and local organisation of basic food supplies and hands-on medical care.

Scientists armed with such background knowledge redefine the notion of being more fit as not the most advanced or desirable but rather decided by random factors in widely variable environments. Criticism of survival of the fittest usually centres upon the naturalistic fallacy, conflating biological survival properties with morality or goodness. However, Spencer clarified that survival of the fittest did not necessarily mean the best or good for human society. The difference is an ‘ethical check’, which Spencer explained as the ‘equitable limits to [the individual’s] activities, and of the restraints imposed upon him’ in his interactions with others (Weinstein, 2019). He is not issuing a call to preserve society but requires all individuals to change their actions concerning others, a process of self-mastery. Adams (2016) argues Spencer appears as a crucial influence in Kropotkin's sociological theories, incorporating many of the former’s biological and political ideas into his anarchist politics.

Juxtaposed with Nałkowski’s theories, Korczak shares the concept of the ‘collective will’ as something universal as expressing the needs and wants of the mass. He explained the theory of democracy as a force of nature appears to a teacher with a group of children:

*One child alone, small and weak, is tiresome.
His isolated offences enrage.*

*How much more annoying, obtrusive, exacting, and incalculable is a crowd?
Finally, understand it - not children but a crowd (tide).
A bunch, a gang, a mob — not children.
You had grown accustomed to the notion that you are strong; suddenly, you feel
small and weak. The mob, the giant, with its vast collective weight and the sum
total of experience, now pools its forces in solidarity resistance, which splits into
dozens of pairs of legs and arms — heads, each concealing different thoughts
and unspoken demands.*

[...]

*How powerful and menacing, when they strike collectively at your will and try to
break it - not children but an elemental force.*

*How many hidden revolutions about which the educator stays silent, ashamed to
admit they are weaker than a child.*

The child's weakness may evoke tenderness.

Group power affronts and offends.

The Child's Right to Respect, 1929/1993, pp.440-441

Korczak clarifies by his book titles that powerful forces for change emanate from society's lower rather than upper echelons, from the group of 'children of the street' rather than the lonely 'child of the salon'. Here participation takes on a 'natural' form, which in Błesznowski's (2018) description of cooperativism draws upon ideas of an original democracy expressed in human nature and social relations, that is, democracy as a force of nature.³⁰

Listing Brzozowski, Krzywicki, Nałkowski and Radlińska as activists within the democratic left, Błesznowski's referred to Korczak's colleagues as culturalists. The diverse group held a profound commitment to freedom and justice, but all were characterised by 'deep empathy with the values of human dignity' (Mencwel, 2009, p.70). The painstaking generational process of enlightened citizenship required evolution in the cultural rather than natural sphere. As Mencwel explains, Korczak belonged to this current within the Polish intelligentsia that he defines as a social radicalism or culturalism, where the individual found worth through their place within

³⁰ In Herbert Hoover coming to the aid of the Poles in WWI, he expressed similar democratic ideas with Hoover (1936) - "Democracy is not static. It is a living force" (p.225).

society. Though drawing upon historical traditions which glorified fighters and patriots, a new champion emerged fashioned as the 'quiet hero and ethical reformer who is not ashamed to go down to lower levels' (Błesznowski, 2018, p.3). Here the hero overcomes dirt, disease, and death with a program of dedicated work in the service of others. This school of thought already embraced Mutual Aid but expanded beyond the linear framework that elevated progress. The Polish thinkers accepted both competitive and cooperative evolutionary factors in increasingly complex human societies alongside new questions such as the sovereignty of humanity over other species (*ibid*).

Chapter 7. School on the Moon

From the Montessori comparative, I challenge systematic attempts to describe the purpose of the Homes for moral or democratic education without investigating the philosophical underpinnings or historical context. Thinkers referenced in Korczak's texts have fallen out of favour, deemed less worthy of inclusion in educational debates. Gaps also result from the communist regime obliging Polish pedagogy to favour Marxist ideology and psychology, consequently absorbing the philosophy of education as a discipline (Jakubiak & Leppertin, 2003). Spearheading philosophical exploration of children's rights is Smolińska-Theiss (2013a), declaring Korczak's thesis that 'a child is a human being has axiological, philosophical, [...] theological dimensions' (p.119). To this list, I add the political dimension via anarchism.

7.1 Democracy from below

Usually, education is an adult managed process, thus often defining Korczak's rights as hoping for 'liberation through knowledge' for the individual (Milne, 2013, p. 188). In contrast, Polish pedagogy provides an early example of an educational philosophy emerging from within the collective goal of the emancipation of a nation of people from the State. Without a democratic political system to imagine a new reality, Korczak conceived a children's society where the culture was indistinguishable from the desired outcome and rights were inseparable from the art of living. Against such a background, notions of child participation for citizenship or democratic education are far less straightforward.

Meanwhile, Wolins (1967) described Korczak's childist lens with texts incorporating children's dialogue, opinions and complex interactions as revolving around 'a passionate, almost religious, reverence for the rights of children' (p. VIII).

Nevertheless, merely protesting injustice or demanding change does not meet the criteria for anarchism. The registrar of Oxford University once labelled Goodman's anarchist theory of conflict as extreme but acknowledged 'dissent is essential to democratic life [...] it generates, propagates, or criticises new ideas and evaluates new frontiers' (Caston, 1977, p.3). Goodman's notion that bureaucrats fashion a false harmony resonates with Korczak's institutional operation fostering many avenues for conflict. Concerning the individual freedom of children, Korczak does not smooth the path. Instead, each struggle within the available processes and institutions creates alternative ways of forging their own road. In this regard, Kinna (2019a) outlines that the relationship to domination can occur on multiple levels; institutional design, micropolitics and conquest. This chapter shows that Korczak's model is complicated to the highest degree by addressing all levels of domination, from children's internal relations and neighbourly interactions to the role of his institutions in decolonisation and national freedom.

Amongst the classic anarchist thinkers of Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Proudhon, Suissa (2010) observes few references to pedagogy or concrete educational programmes, while the few schools implementing similar principles distance themselves from the negative connotations of anarchism. The 19th-century social anarchists objected to the state as inherently hierarchical and oppressive. Their promotion of an alternative model of a decentralised, self-governing society aimed not necessarily to destroy all institutions and start again with a utopia but to reform existing schools run by church and state authorities with alternative forms of operation. The Polish history of education precisely displays such origins, with cooperative partnerships voluntarily secularising religious schools. Examining Kinna's (2016) criticism of the classical tradition identifies the issue of holding on to a materialist and scientific narrative. Polish anarchism could fit an unusual category of pre-post

anarchism operating parallel to the classical school of thought but with distinctly anti-materialist and pro-feminist sentiments.

7.2 What is Radical Education?

The origins of mass schooling are essential for understanding the rise and legitimacy of the nation-State. According to the hierarchy of nations discussed earlier, European countries in the late 18th and 19th centuries came to view education as nation-building and progressive in their competition against one another. Significantly, such a model of schooling for a national society became embedded worldwide (Ramirez & Boli, 1987). The dominant history of mass schooling centres upon the Prussian Emperor, who in the 1760s envisaged mass education as an extension of his military and economic might. In the historical exploration of mass schooling, Emperors and revolutionaries alike viewed childhood as a period of socialisation to produce the nation-State model of an ideal citizen/worker, facilitating an increase in state power and individuals' rights. Across Europe, the population appeared as a collection of disparate individuals with various allegiances and often no affiliation to their ruler. Leaders embarked upon projects of mass schooling to enhance participation in their national projects, either military or economic (Ramirez & Boli, 1987). Industrial development and military might became the measure of progress as European rivals attempted to gain and maintain power. Though some liberal ideas may have appeared intermittently, the Prussian Emperor expressed clearly that no individual or group of people was to be schooled beyond their class, fearful of awakening aspirations or rebellion (Melton, 1988).

Aside from the competitive rivalry of Prussian and Austrian rhetoric, Kinna (2019a) described the influential Prussian education system as still in its infancy up until the 1840s. Thus, historians credit Denmark as having the first state-managed

compulsory school system. Once a European power, a Grand School Commission linked the Danish state to education in 1789, attempting to regain lost European influence. The Danes finalised the legislative process in 1814 to require seven years of compulsory education, another fundamental element of its modern school system (*ibid*).

For comparison, 19th-century England experienced gradual economic demise and loss of colonial power, coupled with increased calls for political reform, especially the enfranchisement of the working-class man. A history of private education and voluntarism meant the government did not become involved in the control or education provision until the 1860s. Hence, the English demanding mass education articulated a need to ‘civilise the lower classes to “avoid anarchy”’. In terms of systemisation, the English did not create a central educational institution until 1902, which did not achieve ministerial status until 1944 (*ibid*).

Similar ideas of teaching proper conduct to the lower classes also dominated France. Despite the French making various attempts to reform education, elementary schools received little attention. The success of the Prussians eventually forced the French into following the nation-building perspective and establishing a universal, free, compulsory primary school system in 1881. Most historical accounts of mass education follow similar timelines to those above, usually beginning with 19th-century events. Such narratives leave Poland out as it no longer existed. The omission is critical as it also leaves out the Polish initiatives that formed the first national education system in the world (Wandycz, 1980; Hillar, 1992; Bartnicka, 2014). Scholars aligning Korczak’s philosophy with the deschooling movement underestimate the pride of Poles as the first to boast education for all.

Spurred on by the 1772 Partition, Polish reformers were keen on creating rapid solidarity and reducing the class divide between nobles and ordinary people. They focused their attention on the youth and the revival of civic awareness and

responsibility. In October 1773, the *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej* (Commission for National Education, or KEN) was established in Warsaw, providing a cornerstone for the Poles' aspirations for a modern education system. The historical precedents influenced Korczak and countless others upon Polish independence (Falkowska, 1989). Due to his precarious political position, the elected Polish King took a radically different approach to other absolute monarchs. Aware of the dangers of rapid change and facing powerful neighbouring hierarchies, the reform movement planned science and education for the masses as essential to save the endangered Polish Commonwealth. The King partnered with the clergy to usher in new liberties and reforms by capitalising upon the existing infrastructure of religious education. With advice from foreign and local experts, the partnership took the unusual step of secularising all schools and declaring access to education for all social classes, even women (Hillar, 1992).

Effectively, the new system achieved a miniature reformation of the Church and State governance. The King reversed the means to power, declaring the nation to be its people, no matter how weak individually, he relied upon the support of both the nobility and the masses. The KEN promoted education as essential for the enlightenment and prosperity of the people and country. The members made the case that the population's ignorance had resulted in discriminatory laws. Uniquely, they identified inequity as having undermined all classes of society, having wronged the underprivileged and demoralised the ruling or wealthy. This realisation led to an active campaign to promote the gentry, gaining an appreciation of the vital role played by peasants, workers, and artisans (Wolkowski, 1979). The KEN initiatives portrayed education as more than an intellectual endeavour but inseparable from civic education and the formation of society's moral and political character (Lewicki, 1923; Karolczak, 2014; Bartnicka, 2014).

The French and English admired the speed of the Polish educational efforts, given that most foreigners considered Poland a backwards country. The Poles attempted the difficult task of living through simultaneous reformations of Church, aristocracy, and the peasant folk culture by raising all citizens from the ground up towards *enlightenment*. The envisaged Polish schools were a novelty in Europe, planning access for all under eighteen, regardless of a family's social status or wealth (Batnicka, 2014). Intellectual cliques in Paris enthusiastically debated the first secular, national education system in Europe. The influence of education was not understated, with the modern teacher enthusiastically portrayed as the nation's saviour creating a new academic estate, the intelligentsia class (Wolkowski, 1979). Public teaching positions became highly sought after due to the supportive arrangements and attractive package offered with sponsored education, remuneration and prestige. Detailed documents on teacher training defined the model pedagogue to leave a legacy in European education. The focus on the intellectual and personal qualities of a teacher emphasised wisdom, friendliness, dignity, and creativity with an awareness of their contribution in working for the good of the nation (*ibid*).

In contrast to prevailing European attitudes, the Commission recommended that teachers treat the peasant children with respect gentleness and avoid corporal punishment as much as possible. With specific objectives of children's health and happiness, they were encouraged to move, play, and enjoy learning alongside literacy goals (Bartnicka, 2014). Prioritising the so-called gifted peasant, the Commission had to overcome both sides of the class divide, intent on rejecting equal education and employment of lay teachers, as rich and poor remained wary and suspicious of the new schools. Despite the goals of patriotism and civic education, the Commission considered the different religions and languages of the multi-national population of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The anti-materialist agenda sought the preservation of faith

by including equal provision for Jewish schools alongside parish schools. In addition, the new schools reflected ethnic diversity and tolerance by teaching the children of any sizeable Slavic minority groups in their home language.

The Commission stressed upon inspectors and experts that all contact with local officials, teachers and students was to reflect dignity, kindness, and a degree of gratitude for their participation (Bartnicka, 2014). Without forced assimilation, the approach emphasised participation for bridging the class divide and mistrust between urban, rural, and ethnically diverse communities.

With incoming Empires extinguishing their schools, the following section explores how their struggle for independence illuminates the Polish conception of education and its purpose. The institutional myths underpinning mass schooling and consolidating State power are identified by Ramirez & Boli (1987) as concentrated upon a nation made up of individuals with the state as ‘the guardian and guarantor of progress’ (p.10). Progress in this context relates to the hierarchy of nations developed by Enlightenment philosophers, not inclusive of all nations. In this fundamental premise, Dewey errs by disassociating nationalist education from cosmopolitan aims. His historical account subsequently misleads many contemporary thinkers, such as Starkey (2012), into praising the cosmopolitan perspective as supporting rather than suppressing diversity. As discussed in earlier chapters, the French precipitated a shift in the political discourse shaping State and Imperial expansionism under the guise of modern nationalism, with local resistance shaped as regressive patriotism (Dann & Dinwiddy, 1988).

The description of Korczak as a radical educator often appears, for example, with Silverman’s (2017) pedagogical exploration, while a few studies even suggest he was too radical. In asking the question of what is radical, the political definition centres on those ‘advocating thorough or far-reaching political or social reform, [...]

representing an extreme view [...] associated with revolutionary [...] departure from what is usual or traditional' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). By extrapolation, the advocates for radical education start from a position critical of education and even society as a whole. In contemporary debate, these dissenting voices provide differing perspectives on the relationship between the child, the school, and the State. However, radical education is at risk of repeating past errors by exclusively adopting cosmopolitanism without considering the roots within *patria*. Heritage is paramount to Gordon (2018), who cautions against the anarchist goals of eradicating national identity or origins of people with the justification of a quest for equality and human rights.

A similar argument appeared in the Polish-Jewish community, where modern ideological factions fiercely opposed Zionism or emigration. In describing resistance to racist totalitarianism, Grenimann (2009) highlighted 'the concept of *do-ikayt* ("hereness"), which affirmed that wherever Jews lived, there was their homeland; there they should build permanent Jewish culture, and fight to improve conditions for all people' (p.1916). He relates specifically to the Holocaust, describing a people 'defined racially and slated for extermination' (*ibid*). Korczak argued that such issues emerged earlier during Imperial expansion encompassing Poles, Jews, and other communities, where religious and ethnic loyalties became irrelevant in the shared struggle for survival.

This section addresses scholars who treat Korczak as an innovator of Polish education rather than view him as building upon work begun by others. For instance, when Korczak recovered from typhus to discover he had missed out on opportunities in newly independent Poland, he attempted to divulge wisdom from others before him. Specifically, he held a fascination for the Śniadecki brothers, two of the 18th-century architects behind Poland's early educational reforms (Falkowska, 1989). In 1920, he penned the Foreword to Jędrzej Śniadecki's republished book titled *About the Physical*

Upbringing of Children, posing a question about the Śniadecki biographies: ‘Why do two people of such stature as the brothers suddenly appear in a small town in an average family?’ (Falkowska, 1989, p.184). Most of all, Korczak is interested in how the parents and teachers first approached such children who held the latent power that would later decide the entire nation’s future. He stated that rather than write biographies to outline the deeds of Great Men in later life, he mused upon the early years of little Janki and Jędryk. As ‘the future heroes of science, work, and struggle’, they were instrumental in writing the 1791 Constitution and forming the *KEN* to initiate education for all. Inspired by such mentors, Korczak declared ‘the childhood years are mountains in which the River of Life takes its beginning, momentum and direction: how do we change them, ignore them? We do not perceive childhood, and then we dismiss adolescence with disrespectful comments’ (*ibid*).

Paradoxically, both liberal and conservative political factions claim radical advocacy, on the one hand seeking innovative change, or on the other, a return to fundamentals and tradition. The reason is that the term *radicalis* came from the Ecclesiastical Latin ‘of the root’, so for centuries appeared in figurative language to mean ‘of or relating to the origin’ as something fundamental (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2012). The impasse of opposing meanings of radical resolves within Bronisław Trentowski’s educational philosophy. His volumes *Chowanna, czyli system pedagogiki narodowej* (Concealment, or the System of National Pedagogy) appeared between 1842 and 1846. To counter the Imperial masters’ domination of education, he proposed fostering education with a return to roots related to preserving and growing culture and language while facilitating the eventual overthrow of illegitimate rule. Trentowski (1842) advised each nation that the elevation of culture must be patiently inclusive of everyone, ‘the envious, the passionate, the indolent, the drunken, the lewd - none is so savage that he cannot be tamed’. According to Trentowski, all citizens begin at the same

point regardless of status under the State, so they are worthy and created equally by God, despite complex social structures undermined by ignorance, greed and violence.

Exploring the historical threads woven within Korczak's texts allows him to be situated within a school of thought rather than sit in isolation. For example, specific reference to the liberal rights of individuals and the danger of unanimous consent may have appeared in Korczak's texts published before 1905 in a journal titled *Liberum Veto*. His opinion is apparent after returning to Warsaw in 1906 after revolutionary violence. It appears he viewed the individual's *liberum veto* (freedom to vote) as on par or worse as those inciting various protests and syndicalist actions that do little harm to the powerful in the long term. Specific implications for his views on individual dissenters and libertarians appear in a passage where he responded with creative name-calling to a child annoying him;

I do not say 'how many times do I have to tell you' [...]

Not: 'How many times' – monotonous, poor, irritating. Or 'stubborn, stubborn'.

No, better to say: 'You, sabotage, you strike, strike Italian-style, occupation, lockout, you negativist, you dissent, you Liberum Veto'.

Pedagogy Jokingly, 1939, p.46

The tension between the individual and the mass is evident as Poles respected the uniqueness of individuals but were wary of the desires and interests of a few directing outcomes for the majority, effectively mimicking other undesirable forms of government. Historically, *liberum veto* has become viewed as the right of one over the many, and its cataclysmic lessons had left Poles wary of liberal individualism serving vested interests, follies, or attention-seeking. It is cited as a significant cause of the downfall of the Kingdom of Poland as self-interested and corrupt individuals paralysed parliament and decision-making processes. In some languages, the phrase “Polish parliament” referred explicitly to chaos, disorder, and inaction amongst decision-makers

as '*liberum veto* had become the sinister symbol of old Polish anarchy' (Wandycz, 1980, p.87). This *anarchy* sufficiently weakened the Polish state economically and politically, making it vulnerable to invaders seeking its collapse. Though emphasising self-development and the uniqueness of the individual, Korczak argued again for the tension where freedom is tempered with compromise by the majority, which results in what I label *mutual self-aid*. The historical continuity of this national project appears as Korczak picks up on many currents from his predecessors. The latest edition of Trentowski's *Chowanna* appears with a caveat that the history of the development of the intellectual culture is more than merely theoretical but often emerges 'from below'. The projects of each age make available sensitivity, imagination and insight to the subsequent generation and are linked to the societal transformation that Korczak sought to study.

7.3. The Gifted Peasant

In his first book, *Dzieci Ulicy* (Children of the Street, 1901), Korczak became a champion of children living in poverty. However, his skill as a writer rather than perhaps his choice of topic won him renown, as he was hardly the first to advocate for poor children. Quickly differentiating himself from those others, he followed with a sequel, curiously advocating for wealthy children. He had experienced vastly different life conditions during his childhood, as his affluent family descended into poverty due to his father's illness. He astutely noted that some issues did not resolve or change simply according to material circumstances. The most striking element is Korczak's approach championing the orphan, peasant, or lonely child as untapped talent and worthy of respect is in the Polish government making a similar observation a century before.

One of the revolutionary principles of the 18th-century education system was the requirement that schools treat children respectfully, regardless of their social background, declaring ‘noble children, like peasants, are no different in the community, only children’ (Brzozowski, 1904, p.10). It is worth highlighting that this Polish element of respect, care, and avoidance of domination of local populations is a significant dilemma for Russian anarchist thinkers writing on educating the peasants.³¹ Abolishing archaic laws and introducing reforms did not save Poland, but Karolczak (2014) insists the initiative transformed society through the democratisation of education. Reducing class division with shared vocabulary and textbooks propagated the Polish language and culture to impact the national consciousness. The goals emanated from a chaotic century of foreign interference and noble indifference towards Poland’s citizens. Their new curriculum appears naively out-of-touch with the Polish predicament, fashioned as civic education and glorifying heroes performing great deeds. However, the purpose was to build solidarity and stability through enlightened citizenship to act in unity for the political, economic, and cultural interests of the Commonwealth. Thus, years ahead of other European countries, Poland had modern Europe’s first national education authority, influencing other governments to follow suit.

Although short-lived, the reforms preserved universal education as necessary to produce an enlightened citizenry and set a trajectory for future generations. Hence, the unique vision of Polish education lies within the principle that it was the primary means of improving governance and building a civil society. Furthermore, this government’s reforms seeded a revolutionary idea; that everyone could achieve status with their right to access education. Thus, a new national myth was born, a maxim for everyone from Masons to Marxists for centuries to come.

³¹ See for example Bakunin’s dilemma of the deep distrust held by rural peasants towards incoming educational efforts as he ridiculed these attempts (Avrich, 1967, p.100).

As defined by anarchism, the school could be a microcosm of an alternative society and at the vanguard of the social revolution, embodying non-hierarchical relationships, mutual aid, and individual autonomy. However, there will also be those uncomfortable with the interpretation of Korczak's writing through anarchism, conjuring images of violence or utopia rather than the mechanisms of conflict, creativity, and change. Perhaps they may find solace in the gentler anarchist sentiments echoed decades later by Ward (1973), who described how human life already organises in line with anarchist principles. He viewed the authoritarian level as burdened with bureaucracy, privilege, and injustice whilst another level exists hidden below the surface. Ward describes children as anarchists in action, creatively negotiating their environment and re-interpreting adult-based intentions through play and appropriation (Mills, 2010). Such ideas resonate deeply with Korczak's image of childhood, urging a deeper examination of the everyday spaces of children's lives.

In his lecture *The Educating of the Educator by the Child*, presented at a national teacher's conference, Korczak hints at his view of education and adult-child roles. Reversing closed methods and institutions, Korczak demanded an openness to the child within their environment that goes beyond the concept of child-centred education. He stressed it is adults who must grow in experience and knowledge of themselves through the education process provided amongst children;

The child gives me experience, affects my view, the world of my feelings; I get from the child orders for myself, I accuse myself, I indulge myself, or I absolve myself. The child instructs and educates.

Special School, 1925/26 (in Falkowska, 1989, p.214)

One of Korczak's most famous books, *The Child's Right to Respect*, centred on the child's right to be taken seriously in that children could illuminate causal mechanisms that we as adults do not see. The central concept of respect suggests that a better way of viewing Korczak's pedagogy is an interdisciplinary project between two

research experts operating in the two levels. One is from the adult world, and the other is the child – the expert in their own life, their culture and more in touch with possibilities of change emerging around them.

Key characteristics of anarchist education Ward identified in his rejection of state provision of mass schooling and favouring a practical skills-based approach over academic learning in a classroom model (Kinna, 2019a). For an anarchist curriculum, Ward prioritised practical skills without book learning. Here, he contradicted other classical anarchists who protested that a vocational focus denies the creativity and breadth enjoyed by elites in their education. For example, Proudhon advocated for vocational training but cautioned against the extreme of education only supplying workers for factories (Suissa, 2004). He famously envisaged ‘the industrial worker, the man of action and the intellectual will all be rolled into one’ (*ibid*, p.16). Similarly, Kropotkin viewed the inequality of industrialised societies exacerbated by separating manual and mental work. Therefore, he advocated for a holistic approach to education for all social classes (*ibid*).

Foreign scholars often present Korczak as a lone educational actor or inventing Polish education. Despite his status as a best-selling author, scholars continually describe him as ahead of his time, assuming others could not understand his philosophy and practice. For example, Stambler considers Korczak’s objection to corporal and coercive punishments as ‘too avant-garde to develop into a major movement in his lifetime’ and a better fit with contemporary ideas on human rights (Borodo, 2020, p.183). This statement is incorrect, as the new Polish government immediately prohibited corporal punishment citing its incompatibility with cultural goals (Kielski, 1930). Świdwiński’s (1928) speech celebrates the Polish school as only emerging from under ‘political slavery’, ‘building an educational square to wake up the sleeping forces in the nation’ (*ibid*, p.5). He declared political and economic freedom, secular, and

democratic for all citizens regardless of societal, racial, or religious affiliations (*ibid*). The premier journal Pedagogical Review, led with the headline ‘Reform of Discipline or Declaration of Rights’ in a comparison of different pedagogues to Korczak in terms of the status of children (Ostrowski, 1921). Indeed, the article criticises the pragmatist American ‘work-school’ influence as ‘creating a kind of vacuum, and even a serious evil’ troubled by the lack of moral reflection in civic education (*ibid*, pp.165-168).

By affording theoretical credibility to Dewey, Milne (2013) conceives pragmatic democratic education as a process of adult facilitated knowledge gained experientially by children. His omissions stem from failing to recognise the Homes as research and training centres investigating ideological approaches to collective living and citizenship in general. Contrary to Montessori, there is no Korczak method, but it would be difficult to deny his influence in children’s self-government actions across Poland.

Before establishing his Homes, Korczak must have been thrilled with the early outcomes from promoting his theories. Being hauled before the Polish Teacher's Union in 1910 would have reinforced this celebrity doctor’s view that his actions had the desired impact. The Union's Pedagogical Section had requested Korczak's presence to defend himself against charges surfacing due to the influence of his publications. Singled out was *Moški, Joski & Srule* (1908), a children's story about Jewish boys at summer camp (Falkowska, 1989). The story outlined Korczak's issues while working as a camp counsellor. It detailed how he had implemented a children's court to direct a group of 150 impoverished and unruly children, stressing that he could not have managed in the massive group without such institutions of self-governance. On the 25th of October 1910, the newspaper issued the following statement regarding the Union's discussion of the controversy surrounding Korczak and the courts:

Young readers of the novel ‘Moški, Joski i Srule’ intrigued by the idea of ‘camp-colony court’ have spontaneously taken it upon themselves to organise ‘school

courts'; shown to be a valid defence and they have issued sentences without control or mastery, as was demonstrated in the original management example. [...] it has turned out that what was a definite remedy for children in summer colonies (camps) collected negative influences on urban children from the intelligentsia sphere.

ibid, p.132

In less than two years, school children around Poland had spontaneously organised themselves and initiated Korczak's experiments to build a democratic society; the seeds that had lain dormant in the soil (Vucic & Sękowski, 2020).

Addressing a children's rights conference, Michalek (2018) described Korczak's vision for democracy as 'a task for free people; (as) freedom, courage, audacity, assertiveness, subjectivity, respect for yourself and others. It needs to be learned, created and fought for' (p.48). However, his statement that Korczak 'shows' us democracy appears interpreted through the political science approach adopted by Milne, Silverman (2017), and Tsur (2018). These authors tend to catalogue Korczak's practices that he developed a constitution, court, and other mechanisms to facilitate self-government, with the children being allocated vital roles within the institution. The significant flaw in these studies is the itemising of activities without considering each institution's historical or cultural significance in the jurisprudence process. Contrary to simultaneous educational experiments in other countries, the described political structures and social institutions did not exist or barely functioned in Polish society at the time. To evaluations by Milne and others, this study responds that criticism of the Empire or calls for freedom required disguise; thus, promotion of democracy was indeed a revolutionary act.

The common practice of extracting Korczak quotes without any historical context has incorrectly portrayed him as working in isolation cleaved from his contemporaries. For example, the National Pedagogical Association set the direction for the Polish schooling system using Korczak's 1919 address *Jest Szkoła* (There is School)

to enthuse teachers. The editor, Świdwiński (1923), opened with scathing commentary on previous life characterised by ‘ruthless egoism and brutality in everyday existence, oppression and profit in social life, imperialist possessions and Machiavellian sanctification’ (p.136). He explained that before independence, the ‘school as a political institution’ completely negated the lofty ideals of humanity’ (*ibid*). Introducing Korczak’s article, he uses the plural when speaking of great doctor-educators in the cultural and social role of diagnosis and treatment. The success of Korczak’s experimental Homes drew international visitors and copy-cats. However, few now recognise the remarkable achievements of the newly established Polish education system that, in just one decade, became the most democratic in Europe (Ferriere, 1931). The Homes are critical case studies of possibilities that reflect the fundamental connection between education and the collective consciousness.

In *To Hell with Culture*, Read (1963) returned to his exploration of themes prominent in the interwar period offering an alternative to the dominant discourse about education under capitalism or individualism. The ideal held in Read’s conception of education would create ‘collective consciousness which is the spiritual energy of a people and the only source of its art and culture’ (*ibid*, p.81). Korczak articulates this sentiment within *School of Life* (1907/1998). Here work is of becoming, of the creative act that sits intricately connected with existence and art — directing concern at the human who works as a factory automaton without meaningful activity, purpose, or mystery. Elsewhere Korczak (*Worker’s Day*, 1905c/1994) draws upon Horace’s *Philosophy of Envy* to state that the ordinary man will never be materially satisfied with more or better until spiritual issues are addressed within oneself to achieve their purpose and appease the metaphorical hunger. He criticises work that is only undertaken as a means for benefit, consumption or greed, warning of the dangers behind fashionable wants and desires rather than in service to others.

7.4 The Ghetto of Childhood

What is apparent in the historical comparisons of education is the political nature of many innovative schooling initiatives, often accompanied by scepticism towards its control by the State as an education system. As a precursor to later anarchist sentiment, William Godwin significantly revised his political theories to denounce the schooling project in its infancy. One critic highlighted the following passage;

The project of national education ought uniformly to be discouraged on account of its obvious alliance with national government. [...] Before we put so powerful a machine under the direction of so ambiguous an agent, it behoves us to consider well what it is that we do. Government will not fail to employ it, to strengthen its hands and perpetuate its institutions...” That governments will just preserve and consolidate their own power and ideology.

(Godwin, 1793, §671)

Social anarchists were not generally libertarians, believing that moral or political neutrality in education was neither possible nor desirable. While not wishing to take away school from children, Korczak (1905b/1994) also ridiculed the possibility of a politically neutral school as ‘a school on the moon’. The school as an institution could not be ‘independent of time and space, a school that would serve pure knowledge without any political colouring was impossible’. Likewise, Korczak deemed compulsory mass schooling insufficiently critical of the State as its institutional structures and bureaucratic machinery subdued and dehumanised groups. Being closely linked to complex issues, he believed the case of school reform relates directly to the general reforms of the State.

Korczak branded each State’s education system with its own distinctive trademark designed to replicate the existing social order perpetuating injustice. In his assessment, the English, German and Russian school was far too intertwined within the complex issues of class, race, and gender to be in a position to challenge the State and serve as a replicative tool of oppression. Each education system reflected the distinctive

elements of their State, with Korczak (1905b/1994) describing the contemporary school as thoroughly ‘nationalist-capitalist’ responsible for producing only ‘bureaucrats and nationalist-chauvinists’. In his thinking, the role of the school in colonisation was evident as he wrote:

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

This argument mirrors 19th-century anarchists deriding mass State education as reinforcing ‘the master-servant relationship and cultures of domination’ (Kinna, 2019a, p.89). By reserving his particularly harsh criticism for the English, Korczak laid the groundwork for his London visit a few years later.

Mistakenly, scholars sometimes align Korczak’s boarding schools with certain English institutions, for example, the experimental school, Summerhill, founded by A.S. Neill. Both appear to be associated with child libertarianism, as Korczak repeatedly declared the child’s right to voice their opinion and be taken seriously in democratic decision-making. Generally, anarchists are suspicious of such democratic education. As Suissa (2001; 2010) points out, Summerhill favours individual freedom, and its *laissez-faire* philosophy claims to be specifically apolitical. Kropotkin and Ward both favour a form of spontaneous co-operation appearing naturally from benevolent human potential (*ibid*). Hence, anarchist education faces contradictions between a *laissez-faire* approach that deemed that children will spontaneously grow, learn, and adapt to societal changes versus a somewhat predetermined direction aimed at social justice. Historically, the *laissez-faire* system is associated with economic market forces that allow nature to take its course without government restrictions. Nevertheless, though derived from opposing

streams of thought, a curious philosophical unity converged around the concept that sprang from Bentham's utilitarian socialism and Rousseau's democratic ideals (Keynes, 1926, p.18).

Many libertarians and anarchists lean towards *laissez-faire* as a spontaneous program to let nature run its course expecting it to grant liberty through natural law. An unlikely theoretical source appears in Herbert Spencer's anarchism. In considering English education, Spencer's ideas, such as making learning enjoyable through play and real-life activities, still inform schooling today (Holmes, 1994). A few now recognise Spencer as a misunderstood libertarian, somewhat revising his reputation associated with an American form of Social Darwinism. Indeed, Zwolinski (2015) observes that all of Spencer's examples 'involve the use of state power to benefit the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor and marginalized' as a critique of hierarchy and authority. He states that Spencer defiantly opposed 'military imperialism' for glorification or 'the civilization of supposedly barbaric peoples', also defending the freedoms of the poor, women and children against domination by the State and in the family (*ibid*). Delving deeper, Zwolinski (2015) finds his disdain for 'coercive charity', colonial capitalism and top-down law-making as the solution for societal ills (p.13). Reading Spencer's criticism of the English Enclosures Acts, I find it mirrors what appeared later in Kropotkin's (1902) *Mutual Aid*. However, the extraction of quotes and influential secondary sources celebrating *laissez-faire* has all but obscured Spencer's relationship with anarchism or human rights. Though Spencer articulated principles of sustainable aid, pacifism and social justice, his name remains enmeshed with Social Darwinism. Therefore, I avoid employing his theoretical work much as Korczak did after 1900. However, Spencer's conflation with *laissez-faire* is incorrect—a system he described as miserable for leaving legislation idly by while rights were assailed. A better motto for

Spencer and perhaps even Korczak's program is the less-celebrated *Pas trop gouverner* (Govern not too much).³²

Having addressed *laissez-faire*, other features of isolationism and freedom of choice characterise Summerhill, established with a distinct inward focus operating outside the anarchist principles of education (Suissa, 2001; 2010). In contrast, whether at summer camp or in the orphanages, Korczak's children were encouraged (even to their detriment) to interact within the local community openly, play with neighbours and explore their locations to understand how the geography, built environs, and social life interacted. In comparing Korczak to such educators, ideological divisions quickly appear as Neill regarded children as naturally good, much like Montessori's premise. He believed that liberating a child from the repression of their family life would allow them to develop naturally into good human beings (Darling, 1992; 1994). He viewed parents as the issue and designed his school to allow freedom from repressive home life. Neill stated that without any adult suggestion, the child would develop freely in his schools, determining their values, and no one should attempt to mould their character.

In contrast with most anarchist thinkers, Colin Ward admired the private school system for implementing reforms but envisaged parents running such initiatives (Kinna, 2019a). However, the educators who valued such socialisation into the adult world and libertarian autonomy often found themselves at odds with children's existing home life and cultural values. Likewise, many readers of Korczak adopt a Dickensian model of poor little orphans to envisage adults as the agents, overcoming authoritarian teachers, parents, or schools. Such removal of children from 'the ghetto of childhood' was desired by Ward and other anarchists (Kinna, 2019a, p.92). However, with the sheer numbers of orphans in Poland, too few 'parents' were willing to operate the schools as Ward

³² Though the motto of less government was popularised by Americans such as Thomas Jefferson, the economist John Maynard Keynes (1926, p.18) credits an earlier quote by the Marquis d'Argenson.

pictured. Meanwhile, the lack of suitable foster families volunteering for guardianship of at-risk children continues to plague highly developed economies.

Furthermore, the ghetto analogy presupposes better environments or resources to achieve them, which is impossible in war-torn or impoverished countries. Alternatively, Korczak's case, imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto, embraced the struggles to transform the ghetto from the inside. Valuing suffering, he hoped for 'a difficult but beautiful life' for himself, emphasising purpose, struggle, and service, advising teachers - 'If your life is a cemetery, make theirs a meadow' (Korczak, 1942/1967, p.488). Even under the horrendous conditions of the Ghetto, Dr Ludwik Hirzfeld described visiting the orphanage as entering 'an atmosphere on a higher plane', a lighthouse sending out a beacon of hope into the neighbourhood (Falkowska, 1989, p.357).

7.4 Back to Nature

A popular solution for freedom from the ghetto of childhood is a return to nature. Many educators such as A.S. Neill took inspiration from Nietzsche, and the *Wandervögel* youth movement gained popularity at the beginning of the 20th-century. Touting a Romantic radical turn 'back to nature' gave rise to numerous projects such as the pioneer schools, scouting and an anarchist school in Hellerau, near Dresden in Germany. The town founded a garden city in 1910 and shared urban planning principles with an English project in Letchworth.³³ Hellerau was also where Neill first came to teach in 1921, proving a forerunner to his Summerhill School in England a few years later (Readhead, 1996). His departure generally reflected English educators' stance to provide an alternative schooling model, whereas his partner Dr Elisabeth Rotten [1882 - 1964], sought to overthrow and replace traditional education entirely. Her educational

³³ Where English theosophists opened their first school and began their worldwide network, New Education Fellowship

projects built a network of prominent supporters such as the anarchist Gustav Landauer and the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. Rotten was also interested in the *Freie Schulgemeinde* (Free School) boarding schools that shaped German educational reform. Another philosophy influenced by Nietzsche, insiders described it as 'elitist, aristocratic and fiercely intellectualist'. (Brehony, 2004, p. 740). It later spread to Poland, influencing the Jewish youth movement, *Hashomer Hatzair*, and early Zionist pioneers. The 'back to nature' phenomenon strongly features contemporary interpretations of Korczak's work, as scholars readily associate it with his summer camps despite Korczak criticising these youth organisations. His rejection relates to Nałkowski's (1904) observation that those in power declared back to nature movements to dominate oppressed people, preventing their development under the guise of nostalgia. A teacher's refusal to allow children to connect with cultural tools and technology minimises disruption and unexpected challenges, ensuring adult control, comfort, and the status quo.

The back to nature educational movement traces its origins to the author of *The Social Contract* and *Emile*, with Rousseau advocating educational reform and a social revolution. His concept of childhood is incessantly described as natural and innocent, away from the adult world. Here, education appears within the moral dichotomy of good and evil and minimal interference with natural impulses. Simply relating *Emile* as Rousseau's definitive educational text overlooks the effects of later work, which had a significantly different character. To compare Rousseau's various works is an exercise in contradictions and opposing views. He had initially stated it unnecessary to have literature or history adapted into education but retracted this in his book, *Considerations for the Government of Poland* (Compayre, 1907). Without history or language, the Poles would cease to exist, so they understood society could not be peacefully reformed

amidst nature. but through battle in the cultural stadium, with others and within themselves.

Similarly, libertarians dip into the eloquent writings of Rousseau for conceptions of freedom but ignore his political theories as overly nationalistic. Rousseau refers to nation-States but was primarily interested in preserving the unique cultural diversity of different people. Primarily in the Poles, Rousseau discovered uniqueness and robustness, resisting the coercion and inducements of their rich and powerful neighbours (Wolff, 1994). Critics spurned the return to nature movement labelling it a disorder of ‘idillica peasant-mania’ or a retreat from reality (Nałkowski, 1904, p.12). Nevertheless, they were clear on the importance of contemporary science and art benefiting from folk culture, though deriding attempts to reverse to a bygone era. Questions even arose about whether the theory of return to nature was an urge. Instinctive, primordial, and simplistic, its prominence appeared in lagging civilisations like Eastern Europe. Or worse, where it was promoted deliberately to the masses or in colonies to impede the development of humanity for political and personal interests (*ibid*).

7.5 Culture Wars

The term *Kulturkampf*, meaning culture war or struggle, was first used in the Prussian parliament in 1873 by a liberal politician who was also a medical scientist. He intended the label as derogatory, characterising Bismarck's anti-Catholic stance.³⁴ An important distinction is that *Kulturkampf* reflected Western prejudices towards the peoples of Poland at the time rather than targeted anti-Semitism. Building a unified German Empire as an iron kingdom, colonisation introduced 300,000 settlers into Polish territories as part of the Germanisation strategies. Much like other enclosure movements

³⁴ World Heritage Encyclopedia http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/German_Progress_Party accessed 07.03.2021

throughout the world, the ungovernable people and lands required ‘administrative, economic and cultural standardization’ fundamental to making a modern nation-State (Scott, 2009, p.25). Discrimination and oppression during the preceding century intensified under Bismarck's hostility towards the Poles driven by their support for the Franco-Prussian war. Former Polish provinces were singled out for greater subjugation and accordingly amplified nationalist aspects of *Kulturkampf*, with anti-Polish policies in force until the end of WWI. Thus, Germanisation took on an anti-Polish character, and what began as a war against Catholicism in the 18th century morphed into a political strategy to remove the most reactionary opposition and dangerous threats (Clark, 2002).

By the late 1880s, it became clear that assimilation strategies had backfired by encouraging reorganisation as the Poles hijacked institutional vehicles, especially education, to continue building national consciousness. Where liberals sought the separation of church and state as impeding democracy and freedom, Bismarck sought to separate the Poles from the clergy accused of harbouring and supporting their national identity and aspirations for freedom. The Prussian authorities imprisoned priests, disbanded religious orders, and drove others into exile and permanent emigration, with the remainder living in secret. As religion re-organised along ethnic lines, charitable institutions and academia split into sanctioned professionals and subversive, enthusiastic amateurs, including the faithful. The crackdown barred Polish intellectuals from holding government or academic positions. Notably, this correlates with Kropotkin’s (1906/2015) subtle advocacy for the right of such groups of amateurs to work, access facilities such as libraries and laboratories and gain recognition for their achievements.

In other Polish territories, the *Kulturkampf* program of the 1880s sought to ‘strengthen the cohesion of the *Reich* against regionalist tendencies and the Catholic clergy’ (Wandycz, 1980, p.87). Most anarchists and the academic community would

applaud replacing Polish priests with lay teachers. However, the Germanisation program in Prussian Poland exhibited the critical elements of struggle as ‘state versus Church, centralism versus autonomy, authorities versus citizens’ (Wandycz, 1974, p.233). Formulating Catholicism as a pillar of Polishness became necessary to resist such political and cultural attacks, later becoming the basis of Polish ethno-nationalism. Indeed, one political agitator inciting the peasant population in Galicia was a radical priest (*ibid*).

The second more brutal attempt of Germanisation, known as *Hakata (H-K-T)*, met with unexpected, organised efforts rather than violent revolutionary conflict. Prussian Poles united to form co-operatives, learning institutes and credit unions, raising socio-economic standards, and thus differentiating themselves from other 'non-European' regions. In striving for independence, the Polish revolutionary movement created unlikely bedfellows with the clergy joining both left and right political sides and stirring latent nationalism. Continuous attacks upon the Polish language and religion culminated in the Września children's strikes in 1901–04 which saw Polish children persecuted and imprisoned for refusing to read and speak German as decreed by the government (Kulczycki, 1981). The child-led action drew international condemnation of Prussian tyranny and gained such notoriety as to appear in English propaganda during WWI (Chesterton, 1986). The harsh realities of capitalism and oppression created unbearable conditions, with 3.6 million Poles emigrating between 1870 and 1910, spreading rebellious ideas worldwide.³⁵

Scholars frequently report Kropotkin’s stance against rational totalitarianism as prejudice against Germany. Like Kinna (1995), I relate it to his disappointment at the loss of Prussian liberal tolerance in the second half of the 19th-century. Caught in a paradox between the Allies and Germany, Kropotkin favoured his Russian comrades.

³⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland/Emigration-and-revolt> accessed 07.12.2018

For Kropotkin (1899), this crisis point marked the ‘triumph of ideas in a whole generation’: the rise of German nationalism ushered in by Bismarck (Caesarism, In Freedom). Earlier, Bakunin predicted that the Polish situation paved the way for Germanic domination of Europe, including Russia (Kofman, 1968). Bakunin equated Bismarkism as creating a new police state founded upon military and economic domination (Rocker, 2005). However, more than simply implicating leaders, Kropotkin found the outcomes reliant on the ideological mood of the people created by past philosophers. Tracing the evolution of socialism through the 19th-century, Kropotkin reaffirms anarchism with greater tolerance towards religious and cultural differences. He fashioned a historical pathway for the most oppressed people, who, timid and weak, only spoke in Biblical terms to claim their rights as fellow human beings, brethren or brothers. The struggle eventually built the capacity to resist governmentalism and capitalism without recourse to religious precedents (*ibid*).

Imperial concerns revolved primarily upon economic competition; thus, commerce, companies, and railways facilitated connections between the Spanish, French, Bavarian, and Russian, relying on sharing singular understandings. For Kropotkin, the problem caused by friction in continuous encounters between diverse groups was preferable to the totalitarian rule of the Imperial sanctioned capitalist, bolstering the Bismarcks and Napoleons intent on conquering Europe (Kropotkin, 1906). Carefully, avoiding mention of the Poles, he speaks generally of racial prejudices and religious freedom, designed to reevaluate the ongoing influence of rationality in conceptions of anarchist philosophy.

Ironically, examination of liberating discourse in the educational experiments of Western anarchists reveals much in common with the disastrous Kulturkampf era and the Germanisation programs forced upon the Poles. A favourite example of anarchist education is Francisco Ferrer [1859 – 1909] and his Escuela Moderna (Modern School)

in Spain, attempting to loosen the grip of the Catholic Church upon the schooling system. Echoing the French philosophes' liberty, equality and fraternity, Ferrer defiantly proclaims the rational nature of his project (Suissa, 2001). In the Prospectus of the Modern School, he challenged any school claiming to be neutral as hypocritical instead of awakening children to the desire for a free and equal society without violence, hierarchy, or privilege (Avrich, 2006). His views advocating only scientific knowledge and secular ethics triggered attacks from the Barcelona Episcopate, the Barcelona Riots and eventually his execution in 1910 (Suissa, 2001). His death generated copious propaganda in numerous countries sympathetic to his anarchist cause, including a few Polish movements favouring secularisation (Figure 13).³⁶



Figure 13: Bilingual poster advertising a lecture on Ferrer's Modern School, 1920s

Source: National Library of Poland

³⁶ Kazimiera Bujwidowa (1867-1932), published brochures on Ferrer related to democratic and educational reforms. She was a graduate of the Flying University and connected to initiatives of elementary education and hospitals. She was the Polish representative at the 1910 Congress of Women's Affairs in Paris (Kałwa, 2005).

A period of exile in France inspired Ferrer to import modernity into his backwards nation. The children's prior experiences were disregarded and homogenised to serve a vision of cosmopolitan assimilation. Like many other reformers, he appears committed to a vision of what should be rather than begin work from what is or even was. From the outset, his school operates from a blank slate position, artificially constructing conditions to address the illiteracy problem, specifically amongst women, by mixing rich and poor, girls and boys. Under his banner of solidarity, there is little regard or respect for the children's prior experiences or family beliefs. Interestingly, the political goals of his experiment appeared far less threatening than the cultural shift required to accept co-education (Suissa, 2001). Scholars appear dismissive of protest on this aspect, reflecting the conservative values of faceless Church authorities, without exploring the disruption and consternation caused by his clashing with deeply held local beliefs.

Treating his people as the Other, Ferrer positioned himself as a saviour issuing a clear universalist message, 'I will teach them only the single truth, I will not conceal from them one single fact' (Suissa, 2019, p.511). Though acutely aware of the risk of creating new inequalities, Ferrer began with what he had judged as necessary for an atmosphere of freedom and non-domination to teach children how to think for themselves (*ibid*). To release children from the bondage of their families' superstitious or religious thinking and culture, much like Kant, he strove to remove any irrationality or sentiment from judgment. The modern schools redacted traditional knowledge, language and culture to sweep away the vestiges of religion and heritage, as Ferrer claimed to possess universal truth within a new rational dogma. The teacher had a high degree of autonomy for spontaneous learning except in drawing answers from compulsory texts, such as *A Compendium of Universal History* (*ibid*). Indeed, Ferrer relies greatly upon Reclus and *Universal Geography* as his authoritative text (Baudouin,

2003). The libertarian pedagogy compiled by Ferrer synthesised rationalism, romanticism, and cosmopolitanism into his anarchist education. Though the child may no longer be a blank slate,³⁷ Ferrer applied such treatment to the local culture, history, and language to wipe it away. He envisaged this microcosm of free children spilling out as the revolutionary vanguard peacefully creating a new rational society connected to Europe, and increasingly all people would unite as citizens of the world.

To raise people out of Catholic darkness, Ferrer brought liberal knowledge from France, ensuring they dispensed with superstition and ignorance. In a battle between the dogma of Church and Science, he held a predetermined vision prioritising the latter to exclude the other. Though claiming freedom and experimentation, if it indeed withers away other forms to become ubiquitous, it carries similar concerns of replacing one model with another secular form. As Korczak points out, society does not necessarily improve or become more compassionate merely by one hierarchy replacing another. Godwin stated that even in countries that enjoyed relative freedom, a national education system had ‘the most direct tendency to perpetuate [...] errors and formed all minds on one model’ (Ward, 1973, p.53). The oppression Ferrer associated with Catholic clergy in his country, the revolutionary Poles associated with protection and freedom.

Of tremendous significance given my earlier arguments, Ferrer proceeded to excise linguistic links to traditional thinking and ways by teaching the universal language of Esperanto (Suissa, 2001). Anarchists toyed with replacing the multitude of languages and derivatives with their official language of Esperanto in 1907 (Avrich, 1967). Therefore, it is necessary to address scholars’ historicity of this language project, as their critique of its linguistic merit fails to appreciate Esperanto's creator's motivations. Revealing that Ludwik Zamenhof [1859-1917] was a Polish-Jewish doctor acquainted with Korczak shows errors in treating this language in isolation from its

³⁷ The blank slate persisted in Western philosophies since popularised by the Enlightenment, and appeared in anarchist thought, as for example, Godwin viewed the infant as a tabula rasa on which experience writes its story (Woodcock, 1962).

context. Far from being without history, as some suggest, Zamenhof acrobatically used elements of many languages and concepts shared by Jews and Christians, hoping to eradicate growing isolationism between people and promote cosmopolitanism much like The Encyclopedists (Kiselman, 2008; Steiner, 1998). With the language extracted from the broader project, anarchists leave the mystical on the periphery. Whereas the roots of Zamenhof's fascination for biblical tales such as the Tower of Babel led him to develop Esperanto for his Messianist plan of a new pacifist religion as the Judeo-Christian successor (Berdichevsky, 1986).

Drawing enthusiastic supporters across Europe led Korczak (1942/1967) to decry Zamenhof's Esperanto experiment aiming for uniformity as betraying Polish aims and competing with his educational project. He wrote;

*Zamenhof comes to my mind. Naive, audacious, he wanted to rectify God's error or God's punishment. He wanted to fuse the confused languages into one again. Stop!
To divide, divide, divide. Not to join.
What would men have?
Time must be filled, men given activity, life must have a goal.
"He knows three languages. He is studying a language. He knows five languages".
Here two groups of children have given up amusement, easy books, chats with friends.
Voluntary study of Hebrew.
When the younger group finished their hour, one exclaimed with surprise:
"What, an hour has passed already?"
So. 'Da' in Russian, 'ja' in German, 'oui' in French, 'yes' in English, 'ken' in Hebrew.
One can fill not one but three lives.*

p.481

His struggle is against monoculture by reinforcing difference to strengthen diversity and the creativity of conflict amongst the borderlands of nations. Likewise, Scott (2009) explains the introduction of monoculture as the precursor needed to usher in the modern State.

Opposition to anarchist and libertarian imports by Poles ran two-fold. Firstly, that change must grow organically, adapting to local conditions, and secondly, Ferrer,

like others, proposed secularisation of all schools with curricula devoid of any semblances of religion. This materialism posed an untenable position for Korczak and others. As previously stated, Ferrer modelled his program of social regeneration in the belief that the children would generate an atmosphere of freedom spontaneously.

Whereas Korczak's vision of education was not for a utopian school isolating the child from their dystopian society, nor did it ignore the legacies of injustice they were born into:

What sort of preparation for life is it to convince the child that everything is all right, equitable, sensibly motivated, and unchangeable? We forget to insert in the theory of education to teach the child not only to appreciate the truth but also how to spot a lie. Not only to love but to hate; not only to respect but to reject; not only to tolerate and forgive but to be indignant and outraged; not only to surrender but to rebel.

§98, HTLAC – Family, 1919/1993

Conscious of the oppression and violence within society at large, Korczak does not mean for adults to give children complete freedom or serve whims as the 'free hand [...] would turn a bored slave into a bored tyrant' (§41, *ibid*). Korczak is wary of gratifying desires, which he stated suppressed aspirations and weakens the will. As for identifying the model child, like the model citizen, once again rejecting singularity, he said this was impossible by writing;

a hundred different hearts beat beneath exactly the same uniform and, in each case, a different difficulty, different work, different cares and concerns. A hundred children — a hundred individuals who are people — not people to be, not people of the future, not people of tomorrow, but people now... right now...today. Not a miniature world but a real-world of values, virtues, shortcomings, aspirations, and desires not trifling, but significant, not innocent but human.

§14, HTLAC – Boarding School, 1920/1993

There is more than imitation, replication, or even socialisation in Korczak's image of the child. Here, the child can create and modify the culture to teach adults (Jarosz, P. 2012). For Korczak, the child is no simpleton, innocent or imitator, but a philosopher-

poet deserving of respect and not requiring initiation as such. In a fast-moving society, the child moves in spaces often difficult for adults to access and though lacking primarily in experience, appearing as the ‘newly arrived foreigner’ said Korczak (1929/2012);

*The child is not stupid. There are no more fools amongst them than among adults.
Draped in the judicial robes of age, how often we impose silly, uncritical, impractical rules. Sometimes the wise child stops short in irritated amazement when
confronted with aggressive, insecure, offensive stupidity.*

p.28

Believing in a particular image of human nature, Ferrer disparaged the religion and culture around him as an obstacle in the way of enlightenment and truth, ironically emulating the culture wars. Specifically, he contradicts Proudhon, who advised ‘he who laughs at the blind should wear spectacles, and he who notices him is near-sighted’ (Proudhon, 1876, p.130). Proudhon even cited Rousseau to explain that ‘it takes a great deal of philosophy to observe once what we see every day’ (*ibid*, p. 129). Similarly, Korczak (1939) suggests that intellectuals despise the ignorant individuals of their own population more than the Other.

With a pacifist stance, the violence of past revolutionaries held little interest for Ferrer’s Modern School, indebted to Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy. Accordingly, Kropotkin criticised the State for colonial oppression, capitalism, and intervention in social and educational life for its gain (Morris 2018, p.176). In Kropotkin, however, I find less support for the likes of Ferrer than others allege by highlighting his warnings of a double-edged sword in educators’ motives. To illustrate his objection, Kropotkin offered historical precedents showing that its influence inevitably weakens when an ideology seeks to enforce unquestionable practises and ideas. Well-travelled, Kropotkin (1902) witnessed Imperial oppression forcing children into a universal school system taught in an official language causing ethnic minorities to

dwindle. Stripping communities of their language, religion and culture usually occurred under the auspices of a rational, religiously sanctioned, modern school. He referred to Russia and Western Europe attempting to manufacture singular unity engendered by the Enlightenment, where nations lost or rejected national identities favouring blended European characteristics.

This background clarifies Korczak's insistence that schools must grow out of the local history, cultures, and conditions to achieve the same spontaneous order and growth evident in his Children's Homes. He explains that establishing new Jewish schools in Palestine for such a purpose was a huge commitment. To achieve such an undertaking, he would require 'the sky, and the landscape, and Jordan and the sand, and many, many ruins, and artefacts' (Falkowska, 1989, p.308). The struggle he had undertaken in Poland was hard work but not daunting as Korczak operated within 'his own climate and flora, traditions, and people whom he knew well' (*ibid*). Korczak's writings on Palestine and Zionism reflect resistance to artificially transplanting his pedagogical system. Instead, he favoured embracing *patria* to organically grow an indigenous, multi-national and democratic pedagogy suited to local conditions over time.

In seeking to be universal in the name of rationality and progress, movements, and organisations, whether supporting workers or scientists, mimic church hierarchies by cementing institutions that absorb individual agency and become the conservative force against change. A standard prediction amongst anarchists such as Goodman (2011) is that institutional relations eventually hinder progress caused by the inevitable decay of organisations that once championed revolution. Though Bakunin is hardly an influence in pacifist education, it is helpful to evoke his diatribes at the First International attacked the scientific theories of change proposed by Marx and others. He charged such movements as unavoidably hierarchical 'as soon as an official truth is

pronounced – having been scientifically discovered by this great brainy head labouring all alone – a truth proclaimed and imposed on the whole world’ (Bakunin, 1971, p.302). Bakunin equates the restriction of experimentation and expression under the auspices of certain philosophies to ‘slavery’ and building a new religion (*ibid*). In conclusion, Ferrer is perhaps an appropriate example for Western anarchism but unacceptable to Bakunin, Kropotkin, or the Poles.

This chapter summarises how 18th and 19th-century educational systems became the means for the nation's regeneration, the reform of social life, the modernization of production, the improvement of life and, above all, a safeguard against the loss of national independence. Meanwhile, education also became the Poles ‘highest priority and a *raison d’etre*’ (Wolkowski, 1979, p.187). It serves to elaborate how this legacy underpins seemingly straightforward Korczak texts as if coming out of nowhere but fashioned within comprehensive socio-political debates on societal relations and political conflicts. After being wiped off the map, multiple failed uprisings held immense consequences for the Poles. The ferocious outcomes from each revolutionary attempt transformed political, cultural, and material conditions, teaching the people a painful lesson in strategic manoeuvring rather than rebellious fighting. The outcome turned away from militaristic efforts and required the revival of national pedagogy to improve material conditions, the culture, and free the spirit of the people.

Examining different positions within the broadly dissenting traditions can offer us different perspectives on the relationship between education and the state, suggesting how these positions constitute a challenge to existing beliefs while possibly overlapping with traditional or liberal values. Generally, radical and libertarian thinkers start from a critical position of either society at large or aspects of education. Anarchist education seeks to challenge the dominant paradigm of State schooling, and the libertarian views are more extreme regarding children’s freedom. The social anarchist vision of schooling

promoted explicit moral and political values, which were generally anti-State, anti-clerical, and pacifist.

It is impossible to brand Korczak as anarchist education under such criteria or find many educational initiatives holding such values in partitioned Poland. Anarchist education, explains Suissa (2010), would usually not allow any church or patriotic teachings to infiltrate the curriculum as their secularisation promotes rationality and moral progress. As anarchists generally object to the hierarchical forms of government associated with the nation-state, they overlook Polish educators and thinkers aiming for independence. Here revolutionary goals represent the people's will to overthrow the Empires, reinstating the Commonwealth or forming a new nation-State. Those indifferent or against an independent Poland split into other political factions more closely aligned with the future Soviet Union. In the past, anarchist critique of education was often motivated by a vision of a society without the state. Increasingly, contemporary political theorists assume that the nation-state is now unavoidable in some form or another (Suissa, 2010). This study better suits these views by accommodating the independence goals central to Polish education. Hence, continuing my examination of the master's tools, the following chapters investigate legal and economic instruments to situate Korczak's experiment within the Polish context.

Chapter 8: Prefigurative Practice

8.1 The Smallest Unit

Anarchists are distinguishable from other socialists through prefigurative practice (Gordon, 2018). Prefiguration is repeatedly identified as a core concept to distinguish anarchist practice and action from other movements. Instead of a revolutionary vanguard seizing the State, the means of societal change aligns with the end goals. Each movement must incorporate the type of decision-making and culture within their practice as the means towards the goal. The strategy is encapsulated in the concept ‘to build the new society in the shell of the old’ as organisations live out new values and transform participant consciousness to permeate into the culture around them (Epstein, 1991, p.267-269). Instead of destruction, anarchists attempt to prefigure the outcome of revolution by nurturing specific existing structures towards their aims of freedom.

When movements hold multiple goals, Maeckelbergh (2011) advocates for prefiguration because its basis in practice allows for experimentation in different political structures and processes. She explains that prefiguration is not a planned theory that maps the existing and sets a course for the new. Instead, it is a theory grounded in critical doing or, as Korczak (1924/1967) wrote in his Theory & Practice article, ‘Thanks to theory — I know; as a result of practice — I feel’ (p.391). While anarchist scholars debate what constitutes prefigurative or non-prefigurative action, Korczak’s anarchistic worldview does not make such delineations. He holds prefiguration as a process in every society, constantly emerging and crystallising as the younger generation resists or reinforces existing domination and hierarchy patterns.

The contemporary anarchist notion that cooperation will occur spontaneously appears with Ward (1973), summarising Kropotkin’s ideas as:

Given a common need, a collection of people will, by trial and error, by improvisation and experiment, evolve order out of the situation – this order

being more durable and more closely related to their needs than any that an externally imposed authority could provide.

p.41

Though Bakunin's description of the post-revolutionary society remained vague, he envisaged spontaneous, voluntary associations in federation together, satisfying local needs and aims. Grouping economic, academic, or artistic interests would enable better organisation and more cooperation (Rezneck, 1927). Returning to the notion of *patria*, Bakunin envisaged such organisations would maintain the cultural uniqueness of their people through local projects satisfying needs and aims. From the late 1800s until WWI, the Poles established small scale, rural experiments, electing public servants and voting on issues of community interest. These municipalities operated as democratic communes rather than villages or parishes, and Korczak's references to them appear in articles such as Trash Charity discussed earlier. However, this chapter argues against spontaneity, favouring a narrative of dedicated, compassionate, and subversive work.

In her analysis, Suissa (2010) also explains that anarchists do not reject all authority, clarifying their resistance to authoritarianism. From her examination of educational settings, it is also helpful to use the conceptions of anarchist education that concede the nation-State. Such definitions sit well with the Polish form of anarchism as not necessarily anti-state or anti-authority but anti-hierarchical, especially where centralisation limits personal interaction, increasing the oppression of distance. Here she articulates an anarchist demand that accountability rest with the 'smallest unit of social organisation' (*ibid*). Furthermore, this unit must obtain consent to be governed by any moral or legal rules. Korczak aims to awaken this smallest social unit amongst children.

8.2 Threshold of Culture

In his book *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Pettit (1997) agrees with the concept of non-interference and couples it with a positive view of freedom as self-mastery. He argues for a state where political and civil institutions outside of government foster non-domination. Similarities appear in the rules for Korczak's kindergarten, housing the littlest citizens with newcomers abiding by only two rules. Firstly, a child was free to roam the ten-acre estate whenever they wished if they informed the child monitor or educator that they were leaving. The second rule was not to be annoying to others in their work. Specifically, this meant children could spend time by themselves, with other children and various adults working on the estate, in the stables, garden and laundry but not interfere with their activities. Anarchists express the latter as 'none is able to arbitrarily interfere in the free decisions of others' (Kinna & Prichard, 2019, p.221). An anarchist no-government society may be an endpoint but imposing non-domination would be counterintuitive within this group of children who already experienced "government" through social relations and had certain expectations, values and norms. As mentioned earlier, Korczak described the child as already aware of the power and dominance of whoever is bigger, aware of injustice in the world, while simultaneously developing their knowledge, role, and independence.

Some anarchists describe the historical move from domination to liberty as centred around the law and constitutional framework acting as 'benchmarks for political agency' (Kinna & Prichard, 2019, p.221). The idea that laws can simultaneously promote and inhibit freedom, Kinna and Prichard present as problematic, but Korczak modelled centred upon this premise as a model working within an imperfect society. He did not believe centuries of injustice and slavery embedded within a culture could vanish from institutions. Furthermore, he added that generational violence also pulses in the bloodstream, passes down an individual's hereditary lineage and is absorbed from

the soil; thus, the issue of non-domination is also one of self-mastery. The laws, processes, and artefacts habitually infiltrate daily living to transfer liberty and oppression, not just between different groups. The domination that classical anarchism ascribed to the nation-state, Korczak (1919/1967) extended to every facet of life, but exceptionally oppressive and jarring at the arbitrary intersection between adult and child.

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 colours, having set up artificial national boundaries only to change them every few years.

§104, p.185

Even under the guise of a carefree childhood, he warned that the hidden roots of a new order ripened, already spreading in the soil. Although the adults fail to observe lurking dissent and growing mistrust amongst the young, the radical drive for a new order is always present in the roots. With this understanding of anarchism, the teacher becomes a participant-researcher of human nature and societal transformation. Pedagogy becomes the science of man and by understanding man-made law, differentiates the artificially imposed from that of the mysterious search for truth, so Korczak explained:

As regards man, we wage a futile struggle because, not knowing him, we cannot bring him into harmony with life. A hundred days to spring. Not yet a single blade of grass, not a single bud — but in the soil, in the very roots, the order has already gone forth from spring which, though hidden, is there, quivering, masking itself, lurking, swelling under the snow, in the bare branches, in the biting wind ready to burst on us suddenly. Even a superficial observation will reveal a want of order in the fickle weather of a March day, for deep down lies that which consequently, from hour to hour, ripens, accumulates, and builds up. Only we do not differentiate between the iron law of the astronomic year and its random and fleeting intersections by a law less-known or altogether unknown.

ibid, p.184.

An organic process appears in Korczak's practice, re-introducing and experimenting with historically significant institutional structures such as the 1791 Constitution, the *Sejm* (democratic parliament) and local judicial courts, all demolished by the Prussian, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian Empires with Poland's partitions. He

diverged from anarchist forms that opposed such structuring of politics and the political system. However, I argue Korczak did not seek to replicate the political system, nor did he intend upon a particular vision for the group. Instead, he initiated the change process with the children from historical and existing precedents acknowledging prior cultural work as the children's inheritance and tools in their role as philosophers-in-practice building the future.

Providing a list of prefigurative practices, Raekstad (2018) sees as developing 'revolutionary subjects with the powers and capacities needed to organise a radically free and democratic society' alongside the need, motivation, and consciousness to achieve it (p.359). Though Korczak would agree on the importance of such activity for radical democratic change, he would counter the claim that it needs creation by favouring release. He argued that children required an understanding of their society's legal and political history for civic function. Although individuals may have little opportunity to make policy, law or even a product themselves, the mass must evaluate what is produced by the few. Moreover, most people know how to obey the law and its consequences, though they have little 'ability to participate meaningfully in making, interpreting or enforcing law' (Kinna, 2019a, p.61). Thus, instead of asking 'what political system to introduce?', Korczak starts from the existing and observed what emerges from the 'weakest' political group; the children. Korczak's critical pedagogy would likely meet with Swain's (2019) approval as he also searches for guidance to practice. Maintaining this distinction avoids the dilemma of ends-guided prefiguration that plagued some of the earlier attempts at anarchist education.

Examining Korczak's conception reconciles both meanings of prefigurative practice from politics and theology to address strategy and practice. A political stance employs prefiguration to describe a mode of organisation, social relations, and decision-making that reflect the future society ultimately sought by the group. In comparison, the

artistic and religious depictions suggest people, objects, acts and events as prophetic announcements of hope, redemption, and new life. To the various movements, communist, syndicalist and anarchist solely focused on seizing power, Korczak advised that instead of revolution, think of the children. He sought to protect them from conflict but meant it more so as a directive for action as he believed children foretell and enact societal transformation. This notion agrees with Franks (2018), who argues in his chapter on prefiguration that it 'identifies and extends the emancipatory cracks already existing and necessarily includes goal-plurality and the possibilities of transcendence.

Reminiscent of the Messianist message, Korczak (1921/2017) explained that the child is a philosopher-poet, at the 'threshold of culture' represented as a time of revolutionary spring, as he wrote;

The child foretells the spring and foresees the moment when one person will not only arrive at an understanding with another, white with black, rich with poor, man with woman, adult with child, but he will arrive at an understanding with the sun and the moon, with the water and the air.

p.34

That the child 'foretells' suggests that the child could recognise the novel and emergent and intuitively sense what is coming as an incompetent knower. Korczak's image of the child appears in pre-figurative culture encountered in a fast-paced society driven by rapid inventiveness and new technology. In Jarosz's (2012) interpretation of this, the child, although fragile, was able to create the culture and teach the adults around them.

8.3 Pedagogy of Law

Within the Homes, numerous internal institutions and processes complemented the work of self-government. Operating as a parallel society, the children predominantly decided what behaviours were considered unsociable and what to do about them. Beginning with a basic Constitution, the Children's Parliament expanded the legal

codex with hundreds of rules, repeals, and modifications over decades. At the time of writing, Korczak admits that it was a flawed system by using adult-created codified law as its foundation (1926b/2017). The idea of an imperfect institution engaging in transformation, Korczak (1920/1967) captured in the Homes' Constitution:

The Court is not justice but should aim for justice.

The Court is not truth but should desire to seek truth.

HTLAC – Summer Camps, p.312

In revolutionary history, Kinna (2019a) details cases of anarchists citing English jurist Blackstone in their defence while refusing to submit to the law. Precisely, that an anarchist could articulate his case during trial reinforces the importance of Blackstone's book, Commentaries on the Laws of England. The publication became a cornerstone of human rights law for explaining the English criminal code, legal terminology, and structure in everyday language (Posner, 1976). Korczak's pedagogy of law achieved similar outcomes by appearing in his texts, the operation of the Homes and his history of rights as relating to the consequences of 'evolving justice' (1926b/2017, p.113).

In contemporary society, the primary legislator of the catalogue of human rights is the State, and this is generally applied so far as it is aligned or beneficial to its own interests. Conversely, however, rights are also a political instrument levied against State leadership and laws. Many socio-political movements seize upon rights as a weapon against either the weak or the powerful, usually concerning individuals outside their group. Overlooking the concept of struggle within human rights neglects the revolutionary moments in history where the weak masses have wrested power from the ruling elite or vice versa. This 'connection with agitation, protest, destabilisation, even violence has always been part of the human rights story', asserts Gearty (2014) in his elaboration on the foundation of rights in society (p.37).

The general absence of pedagogy of law in education is a criticism which converges with Korczak's study of economic and political theory and aspects of law and

jurisprudence to build the foundation of his educational model. Challenging the notion of education as ‘preparation of the child for life, where after years they will become people’, Korczak wrote of his desire to convince adults that ‘children are already people, and their treatment depends on being seen as already fully alive and already human individuals’. A non-negotiable aspect of his pedagogical thinking appears devoted towards individual will but not without the discipline of thoughts and feelings responding to the group.

During WWI, Korczak (1918/1967) declared the need for a ‘*Magna Carta* of children’s rights’, which included the right to die (p.128). To understand such a statement, I recognise his repeated motifs related to slavery and autonomy. Like Suissa (2019c), who relates domination as the right to dispose of an object as one pleased. Thus, the right to die defends a life lived according to one’s own terms but equally recognised alongside others. This appears to accept concepts that Freeman (2011) traces through John Locke’s natural rights, which stated the individual had ‘a property in himself, in his labour and the products of his labour’ (p.25). This legacy of property rights formed the basis of the right to life and liberty, also used in justifying colonialism and slavery (*ibid*).

Elsewhere, Freeman (2009) argues that children were treated as ‘objects, possessions or property’ (p.377). A view evident in Korczak’s (1919/1993) work refers to the slavehood of the ‘child-person’ who for parents ‘is my property, my slave, my little pet dog’ (§50 HTLAC – Family, p.135). Korczak explains the ‘right to a premature death’ as related to risk and action rather than a life of ‘boredom and inertia’, citing ‘liberty and freedom’. He understood ‘liberty means possession: I can dispose of my own person’ (§38, *ibid*). However, this is not quite the individualised property of self that scholars generally attribute to Locke. Indeed, Korczak’s (1907/1998) article appears to be responding to Locke by borrowing the title of the latter’s educational treatise. As

suggested in the introduction, Korczak clarifies his position by declaring to his audience that the true meaning of their children's life was to stand in solidarity and fight for the rights of others.

In calling for a *Magna Carta*, Korczak envisaged something more inclusive than the League of Nations 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The *Magna Carta* moved English society towards equality for all men before the law, whether noble or common. It can be considered a precursor of modern rights' charters formalising the concept of rights, which was 'already embedded in customary law' (Freeman, 2011). Freeman explains that the *Magna Carta* is more than a historical, political, and legal instrument, elevated to mythical status, sees its power evoked in civil and human rights struggles worldwide. Therefore, such a declaration for all children would serve to codify people's subjective status and rights, subverting the arguments labelling ethnic minorities and women as sub-human. Legal acts enshrine principles of justice, with the idea of an individual's freedom and power enshrined against the State or other authorities having lasting social and political impact as it enters the collective consciousness to become an evolutionary force.

Many anarchists would find study or defence of authority as repugnant, whether by the rule of a sovereign or democratic representation. Proudhon rejected French democracy and viewed all centralised power as unjustified and threatening freedom. Instead, he admired the Americans who 'have no police, no centralisation, no army; who have not any government in the sense attached to this term in antiquity' (*La Révolution Sociale*, 24 in Carter, 2013, p.51). His assessment was overly optimistic, perhaps even delusional in its lack of attachment to the historical.

According to Korczak's views, the historical consequences of evolving justice had the old world populating the new with fugitives, adventurers, and convicts. He described America as a 'recent asylum' where prison had become the most common and

severe punishment (1926b/2017, p.113). Rather than isolate people from past or present injustice, Korczak proposed democratising law through his texts and involving children directly in the operation of the *Homes*. Supporting Korczak's 'pedagogy of law', Stadniczeńko (2018) describes its role in making sense in 'a world of ethical, legal, economical, cognitive, religious, esthetic, and social values' (p.142). The teaching of statutory law acts as a tool within social education, which he says, is 'capable of integrating values and defining the objectives of the political community, that is – of civil society' (*ibid*). Therefore, such pedagogy of law in practical application develops a more open stance by integrating many complex issues within a messy system.

By highlighting that the anthropological interpretation of the law allows for legal comparisons between groups, it grants, on the one hand, an emphasis on cultural differences, and on the other, illuminates universal elements. Such research using legal anthropology also facilitates the discovery of 'links between elements of culture, such as political, ideological, religious, worldview, and economic factors which impact any legal system' (*ibid*, p.152). This approach is significant in that the French, German and Russian systems repeatedly treated communities as blank slates to enforce a predetermined vision that they considered improvements over existing local laws and traditions. The rules of social justice in the Republic of Poland, Stadniczeńko (2018) declares as having a heritage of over 1000 years, with the values of freedom, equality and fraternity passing down through generations and incorporated by Korczak into the Home's operational fabric. Though instruments like charters may be imperfect, without constitutions or legislature, the rule of law rests upon assumptions (Rares, 2015). Such documents, even as failures, gain mythology of their own, able to long outlive their writers and purpose by lighting a torch for human rights.

8.4 Govern Not Too Much

In viewing the Homes as sites for sociological research into criminology, Korczak's aims of prevention, reform and enlightenment in the Children's Republics incorporated an experiential pedagogy of law as children explored the traditions of their culture and experienced the struggle and possibilities for justice through democratic change. Returning to the view of law as the sovereign's will suggests it has little to do with natural law or principles of justice. In this scenario, the legitimacy of the law links directly to the legitimacy of the sovereign's rule. In Korczak's texts, he emphasized the court as the most critical structure of the community. With laws applicable to both adults and children, courtroom discussions demystified the social framework of rules, responsibilities and behaviour expected by the group. Citing the definitive Korczak quote 'the Child – already a resident, a citizen and already a person', Ciesielska (2018) writes:

[...] his calling and acting [...] was to serve the new practice of human coexistence, mature and young, strong and weak, "obtrusive" and "quiet" standing before the court, [...] equally adults and children. Korczak argued that it is the court that can become a union for equality of the child, it leads to the constitution, it forces to declare – the declaration children's rights. And he wrote about his own priceless experience of being defiant: [...] those several issues were the cornerstone of my upbringing as a new "constitutional" educator who does not harm children because he likes them or loves them, but because there is an institution that defends them before the lawlessness, arbitrariness, despotism of the educator [i.e., of authority] defends.

p. 40.

Amongst the anarchist thinkers, the common denominator is that the state exists as a coercive power. They generally held two other objections to the law from the standpoint of coercion of the individual. Firstly, that law primarily protects property and is a privilege reserved for the wealthy and powerful. The second opposition holds that courts and prisons commit larger crimes and dispense more suffering than criminals. Hence, the hierarchies of power, Rousseau famously declaring as leaving man in chains, while Hobbes symbolised that power with the sword, Tolstoy equated government with

the guillotine, and Goldman explained handcuffs and prisons were tools and machines in the service of government oppression (Carter, 2013). The belief that prisoners suffer far too greatly appears regularly in anarchist works. Of course, like Kropotkin and Goldman, many of them had experienced political persecution and prison themselves.

Here Korczak (1942/1967) is no exception as he identifies ‘the whip, the stick and the pencil’ as tools of oppression at even the lowest echelons of authority and government (p.499). However, the similarity ends as he defended old legal and punitive systems, choosing forgiveness over retaliation. He appears responsive to Kropotkin’s appraisal of a corrupt society founded on informants, judges, jailers, and executioners profiting from a brutal system. Where most activity in the criminal system aims to punish offenders, Korczak also sought to reform those enforcing the law.

In his article *Otwarte okno* (The Open Window), Korczak (1926b/2017) reminded his reader how subjectively they might judge Middle Ages torture in a time when capturing and detaining a murderer would have been a difficult enterprise. In his opinion, the system of chains, shackles and horrendous implements appeared as a necessary deterrent and fundamental component of law and order suited to the conditions of the time. Rather than elaborate on different penal systems, Korczak lists the dark cell, isolation, deprivation of exercise, visual stimulus and even the passing of time as the modern forms of punishment. He suggested the schooling system modelled itself on the prison, if only as a gentler version of torture. It is up to the ambitious teacher to achieve the best results by the least violation of human rights possible *within their specific place in history*. Even with an unjust system, the teacher must modify what is possible within the school’s closed structure. Rather than deschooling, the aim is to provide a greater possibility of freedom; if the classroom is a prison cell, leave the window open, said Korczak (*ibid*).

To ensure children become law-abiding citizens, Locke placed great importance on the correct educational model. The concept of judgement by peers weighed heavily in Locke's description of the transition from the state of nature into civil society by transferring the power of punishment from individuals to the government. However, he conceded that humans are governed by various laws, primarily the Law of Opinion, where individuals are motivated by reputation or what others thought of them. The moral standards and social norms of such groups support balance and stability in an increasingly liberal society (Tarcov, 1994). However, Locke's views on education are widely debated, with both sides arguing contradictory positions on the state having too little power or too much.

In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Locke advocates praise to encourage the child's self-discipline to control their urges of dominating others and reflecting upon impulses without necessarily acting upon them. Proponents of the Foucauldian school of thought would quickly point out that this approach forces all children to obey authority and conform. Similarly, Locke was keen to protect children from harmful influences; like Montessori, he wanted educational environments heavily regulated. However, defenders of Locke claim the risk of harm reduces when the law of nature coincides with the law of reputation - that is, when the weak individual behaves more in line with the expectation of the powerful majority. Opposing academic sides debate whether conformity increases or decreases freedom; however, both assume education and raising children occur under relatively safe conditions. A Lockean education provides a framework for understanding social norms, customs, and laws, which some accept uncritically.

On the other hand, others will develop the strategies and knowledge to reject the status quo and biases by thinking and acting differently from the previous generation. Readers may trace the idea that children purely imitate life back to Rousseau's

influence, and later Montessori's model teachers supervising children into an idealised environment. Initiating the child into social forms of knowledge provided access to the forums in which society functions, politically, professionally, and economically, to become a model citizen. Although resisting this viewpoint, Korczak (1919/1993) also disputed 'a uniform of childhood' and notions of children as 'innocent, credulous and sweet' as they 'deceive, corrupt and exploit us' (§81, HTLAC – Family). As with the model citizen, Korczak could not readily identify the model child, describing any group of children as 'a hundred varieties of submissive and mutinous slaves' (*ibid*).

Serious consideration of these miniature institutions foregrounds the sham separation of the child from the adult world, usually deemed as preparation and protection of their needs. Korczak's anecdotes highlight his interest in the types of authority and governance and the transformation of such phenomena. He highlighted the hypocrisy of adults who attempt to cleave children from society. Just as political activists campaign on issues of wealth inequality, Korczak's children charged adults with upholding blurred distinctions between private and collective ownership. A possible resolution could extend the existing rule of law to the youngest citizens. Whereas now most adults act thoughtlessly, with deceit, prohibitions, or favours, according to their whims as sovereign. About trivial crime and the importance of institutional processes such as the Lost & Found Box, Korczak (1920/1993) wrote:

The object of theft may be a pebble, a walnut, a caramel wrapper, a nail, a matchbox [...]. It happens that all children steal when there is tolerance for theft. These small, worthless objects are somewhat personal and somewhat collective property.

- Here are some rags for you to play with, have fun.

And if the players argue, what then?

- Stop arguing you have plenty, give him a few.

He found a broken pen and gives it to you

- You take it and throw it away.

He found a torn picture, string, bead.

- If it is all right to throw it away, it can be taken, hidden, and kept.

And gradually, it becomes so that the steel, needle, piece of rubber or pencil, thimble, any object lying on the window, the table, on the floor becomes common property. - If this leads to hundreds of disputes in a family, then in an institution, there will be thousands of them every day.

There are two ways: the first one - a wicked one - is not to allow children to keep "junk". The second - the correct way - is for every object to have an owner. Whatever is found should be returned, regardless of its minimal or no value. - Any misplaced item should be traced immediately [...]. In this way, the child has clear directives; there is only one, the first type of theft - they are tempted sometimes - children are not the worst.

§67, HTLAC – Boarding School

It is necessary to diverge away from contemporary anarchist thinkers who reject the judicial process or mediation as a means of minimising domination in contemporary societies (Rousselière *et al.*, 2014). For instance, Gourevitch argues that the sheer cost of court cases and administration has little impact on power relations and that addressing trivial and minor abuses is a waste of resources and time, hardly worthy of arbitration or a day in court as such (*ibid*). Indeed, expressing such views about the supposed minor concerns of adult workers, Gourevitch and colleagues would hardly deem worthy the multitude of tiny crimes committed daily by small people against even weaker people in the Children's Homes.

Thousands of incidents of lying, cheating, theft, and deceit amongst the materially impoverished children were Korczak's concern daily. Devoting many passages to explaining the significance of children's actions related to property, he likened them to the most impoverished beggar.

*A child steals because he wants it so much that he can't resist.
A child steals when there is a lot of something, so he can just take one.
He steals when he doesn't know the owner - He steals when things were stolen from him. - He steals because he needs it. He steals because someone dares him.*

§66, HTLAC – Boarding School, 1920/1993

Cautiously, Korczak admitted to signs of social change challenging exclusive adult authority but argued the child is still materially worse off than a beggar or prisoner as the child truly owns nothing. The child cannot give away, use differently, or destroy any possessions. Even a wealthy child must account to benefactors for the whereabouts of

gifts and the state of their clothing. The economic value of the child and thus their input is marginal, Korczak (1919/1993) explained:

*The market value of the very young is small.
Only in the sight of God and The Law is the apple blossom worth as much as the apple, green shoots as much as a field of ripe corn.
We rear, shield, feed, educate.
Without having to worry, the child gets all he needs.
What would he be without us to whom he owes everything?
Everything, only and exclusively - us.
We know the roads to prosperity, give directions and advice.
We develop virtues, suppress faults, guide, correct, train.*

The child - nothing. We - everything.

*We order about and demand obedience.
Morally and legally responsible, wise and far-seeing, we are the sole judges of the child's actions, movements, thoughts and plans.
We give instructions and supervise the execution.
Depending on will and understanding - our children, our property - hands off!*

§46, HTLAC – Family

In declaring ‘Property is Theft’, Proudhon (1876) intended a relatively narrow definition of property related to capital and labour. However, Korczak goes much further in conceiving how property is integral to identity and power. If property laws were a form of injustice, as anarchists suggested, then it stands that the source of crimes committed by children relate to adults having ‘everything’ while the child is destitute. The adult retains status as sole judge and executioner of transgression. Anarchists justified breaking the law as a form of rebellion if existing laws were unjust. To establish the rule of law without the possibility of change, no matter how just and radical at the point of inception, would eventually decay or serve existing authority to appear as a Leviathan to the small. Instead, aspects of the anarchist theory of justice and freedom appear in the ongoing series of revised social contracts in the Homes.

In *The Child’s Right to Respect*, Korczak (1929/1967) outlines the relationship between respect, labour and property, writing ‘a child’s property - not rubbish, but beggars’ possessions and instruments of labour - hopes and souvenirs’ (p.452). He asks

the question even of the tiniest infant - to what extent is the concept of property linked in the child's mind with the conception of enhanced power and strength? Comparing a baby holding a rattle to the primitive man with a bow, neither merely property but instruments of labour; improved hands can now deal a blow from afar. Korczak (1919/1967) disputes whether the child asserts the self or instead asserts possession differentiating between 'I' and 'Mine':

*Where is hidden the primordial thought-sensation?
Perhaps it merges into one with the notion "I"?
Perhaps it is true that when an infant protests against its hands being secured, it fights to free them as it would fight for "mine" and not for "I". If you take away from it the spoon with which it bangs the table, you deprive it not of possession but of a quality, through which the hand discharges energy, expresses itself differently - by sound. That hand is not entirely its hand, but rather Aladdin's obedient genie, holding a biscuit, a new and valuable property, and the child defends it.*

§6, HTLAC – Family

By highlighting historical issues related to labour and property rights, I hope to bring greater cohesion to Korczak's writing and enterprise with children.

Usually, the educator, concerned with his own convenience - forbids exchanges, the giving of gifts or playing anything with the intention of gain. This ban, once and for all, closes the victim's chance for complaint and redress.

Hundreds of the most vital, interesting and fascinating matters fail to reach the attention of the educator, but once vividly exposed, give him the opportunity for rhetorical display, a sermon full of untruthful life. An even stronger ban – and all is quiet again until the next fuss. Because the ban has force for only a short time because life itself undermines and rejects it.

How many ugly, depraving and harmful cases are due to promises, commitments, extorted gifts, knowingly fraudulent transactions.

A child who has lost a borrowed penknife or ball may quickly become a slave.

§68, HTLAC – Boarding School, 1920/1993

In turn, each outcome restores or abolishes faith in the rule of law; thus, the imperfect authority gains or loses consent from the individuals involved. In line with Polletta's (2002) description of critical pedagogy incorporating prefigurative practice, the Home valued children's expertise and authority in the micro-political arena (Figure 14).

Certainly, like Silverman (2017), some have criticised elements that mirror Polletta's book title that 'freedom is an endless meeting' (*ibid*). The purpose of such education mirrors those espoused by early anarchists, serving to 'demystify power and authority' and simultaneously, 'fostering autonomy' (Kinna, 2019a, p.86).



Figure 14: Children's Court in Nasz Dom Source: Nasz Dom Archives

Over the past two decades, childhood studies have introduced post-modernist arguments against the notion of one childhood to challenge the universality of the UNCRC (for example, Hartas, 2008). Likewise, Korczak agrees that there is an unambiguous relationship between the complexity of society, the plurality of childhood and individual experiences. Korczak's reference to the group of 'invisible people' existing for centuries offers a (r)evolutionary theory that 'children are people' with intergenerational relations between and within groups introducing destructive-creative conflict throughout time. Here, cultural evolution is inevitable, either by the cooperative tensions inherent in the (r)evolution cycle or through the decay of culture forced by

hegemonic stasis. His prefigurative concept understands the poetic work of the child-philosopher in the same way as the Poles revered poets for their insight and prophecies.

In his books on Summer Camps, the Homes, and schools, Korczak described active political spheres, not the creation of closed environments dedicated to some preconceived notions of freedom and justice. Instead, children immersed within the law and custom of their communities, those desiring change, battled with those dedicated to preserving tradition and existing hierarchies. His system placed children (and himself) into every societal role as offender, prosecutor, victim, and judge while the court strongly advocated for forgiveness instead of punishment.

In place of coercion and inducements by adults, formal institutional processes and peer pressure dictated conformity and social norms, not a force created but uncovered by removing the artificial government of adults. For the child-citizen, this is the school, parents, and playground gangs. Schoolyard bullies and teacher's pets who may have controlled activities and intimidated children now faced the collective, requiring different skills and self-mastery. Though precarious and chaotic, the shift did not result in complete lawlessness or the primitive rule of physical violence many children experienced on the streets. A gradual shift into new behaviours and customs of mutual aid also required broader domains of activity than just the official processes of the court or voting. A range of spheres, sometimes transient, transformed violence from the brutal physical to the more symbolic and representative. For example, banning physical violence would be coercive, and that Korczak permitted fights amongst the children seems counter-intuitive to teachers reinforcing peace education.

On the other hand, introducing a system of rules and handicaps made the process of organising a physical fight not only onerous but also elicited cooperation and organisation between the parties involved while reflecting societal acceptance of violent sports as contests. Thus, Korczak facilitated boxing matches, gambling, insults, and

other risky behaviour forms to ensure children retained ownership over the transformation and a certain degree of freedom and autonomy their previous life of poverty afforded them. Examples of children's use of force and coercion included peer disapproval, name-calling, time-consuming court prosecutions, gossip, slander, fraud and emotional bullying that gradually built the cultural history of the Homes.

The Polish experience of anarchy through *Liberum Veto* meant Korczak aimed for self-government rather than no-government. His organisational tension between freedom and justice resembled Godwin's social contract of continuous and voluntary agreement between free individuals. These notions of justice and freedom within individual consent also appeared in the social theory of Proudhon, calling for an end to coercion and domination (Carter, 2013). Unlike Montessori's prohibitions on children's behaviours, Korczak (1925/1967) erred towards forgiveness by instructing the teacher's ethics to mirror those of the doctor who treats the criminal regardless of their crimes or opinion of them:

[...] give the child all the air, sun, all the kindness that is his right, irrespective of his doing what is right or what is wrong, unrelated to his virtues and vices.

p. 396

Different children made their own decision on identifying and correcting their unsociable habits. Issues might have related to external experiences such as lateness and swearing at their other school, with the child appealing for rehabilitation support from educators. Wary of conformity, Korczak (1920/1993) criticised Montessori's image of a supervisor-teacher and passive children:

On the face, there is order. Outwardly, there is proper conduct and the display of conformity. All that is needed is a firm hand and numerous prohibitions. Children are always martyrs to alleged concerns about their well-being. The greatest wrongs stem from precisely this concern.

§15, HTLAC - Boarding School

Since adults were also the subject of democratic voting and the workings of legislature and judiciary, the relationship offered more equality as the children gained more knowledge and skills than an inexperienced teacher entering the dormitory. Therefore, inequality was mitigated by the parties' mutual dependence and their option of non-participation or by not giving consent. I cite evidence in the institution's openness facilitating children forming external social connections at school, in the neighbourhood, at summer camp and by maintaining contact with family members on weekends. The children were able to leave the Homes at any time by simply informing staff. By abolishing *liberum veto* as the source of loud tyranny by one over the many, the *Homes* offered protection for the quiet individual. The institutions offered multiple avenues of expression for dissent, including sullen silence by refusing to allow the principle of *qui tacit consentit* or who keeps silent consents.

Not only did Korczak favour property rights, but he also sought their extension to clarify that every object to have an owner, whether individually or held in common. The ability to claim ownership over the products of labour, even if merely pebbles collected off the ground, he saw as addressing propertarian views of children, and even wage-slavery. Therefore, the Court, newspaper and parliament represented avenues where an aggrieved party could appeal or seek justice and create pressure on legislative and institutional processes from below.

Studies refashion the Homes' newspapers as solely a platform for children's participation, masking how they served as a resolution tool for conflict within a democracy. Each component were sources of information, events, reports, publicising opinions, rights violations, and proposed changes. The complicated relationship between information, consent and the plebiscite is fundamental within modern political systems, as each played a role in the Homes as elements of the experimental Children's Republic as a whole. With this background, Korczak's insistence that every school have

a newspaper gains better clarity. He advised the majority of each class to form the editorial board rather than a few outstanding writers. Like libraries were democratic institutions; similarly, the newspaper is not just for information and selected content. By binding the school together through work, the paper serves as a working platform for grievances, opinions and matters relevant to the community. As the strangers become familiar with one another, Korczak (1921/1967) observed the following;

What is the benefit of a school newspaper? Immense! It teaches a conscientious discharge of voluntary commitments and to work in a planned manner, based on the combined effort of various people. It teaches courage in voicing one's opinion and how to conduct a decorous controversy based on argumentation rather than bickering. It gives honest publicity in place of rumour and gossip. It emboldens the meek, pricks the bubble of excessive cockiness, calms and guides public opinion. It is the conscience of the community.

p. 506

The newspaper supports the quiet and thoughtful ones who often protest in silence and withdrawal, as writing provides an avenue for expression lost in a verbal dispute. Here we find counteractions to those who would only criticise and destroy without possible solutions or improvements, as Korczak explained how children working on a newspaper builds collective society;

*Concordia res parvae crescent;
Discordia maximae dilabuntur³⁸ — so says an ancient Roman proverb.
So think, weigh, build one thought on another, seek the right course, and do not despair that both man and his works are flawed.*

ibid, p. 508.

Within the institutional structure, the newspaper was essential for building order as reflection without such documentation or analysis was ‘sporadic, coincidental, without tradition, without memories, without a line of development for the future’ (*ibid*). Acknowledging the children’s role as historians situates the newspaper and other

³⁸ trans. Agreement enhances small matters; disagreement destroys the greatest.

processes as creating a record of the passing of time, building a historical monument to the work undertaken.

Between the active and passive individuals, the forces of dynamic, active rebellion are tempered by honest hesitation and fertilised by the ancestral and geographic soil from which it grows.

ibid.

Here the impulsive personality of some individuals was tempered by the cautious nature of others, providing a necessary tension to form a democratic mesh. The new generation of children also challenged adult authority but as predicted by Kropotkin, brought two types of revolutionaries - those seeking altruistic change for others and the selfish seeking fame, fortune, or power for themselves. Korczak adhered to Nalkowski's evolutionary theory on Outposts. Therefore, change comes from the weakest individuals, but they must learn how to harness support from the powerful or majority, follow the common and find a way to speak to them. For example, the boy who is repeatedly late to chores still garners popular support because he makes everyone laugh with his jokes. Another isolated child never progresses beyond his status as an outsider, nor does he care as he is engrossed in other interests. Korczak warns that the lonely road is challenging to follow, requiring incredible persistence and manoeuvring under the weight of others' opinions.

Rather than empty promises of success in telling children that they could be or do anything, Korczak cautions that following their own road is a life of struggle, suffering, and failure. He cites examples of such greats in his book on the lives of Moses and Louis Pasteur. The book on the latter, *Uparty chłopiec* (The Stubborn Boy), showed that a childhood vice of stubbornness equated to the virtue of persistence in the adult world. Pasteur withstood constant attack and ridicule from the scientific fraternity but vigorously pursued truth in promoting his discoveries. Linking desire and obstacles

in the way of fulfilment bodes well with Goodman's anticipation of prefigurative politics as struggle, grief, anger, and frustration (Kinna, 2016b).

The French Revolution shifted the power of lawmaking from the ruler to the people but achieved little in terms of 'challenging the principle of lawmaking' (Kinna, 2019a, p.63). Likewise, relocating power amongst the children would do little to address tyranny and domination without studying the flaws in the practice and implementation of the law. Furthermore, Korczak blames the adults for refusing to examine themselves critically, arguing that it is counter-intuitive to learn from such interactions beyond ascertaining something about the individual child's psychology, interests, or perspectives. Returning to the notion that education is the process of educating the educator, Korczak (1929/1967) encapsulated in his paragraph from *The Right of the Child to be Himself*:

The child knows well everybody in his immediate surroundings, the humors, habits and weaknesses, and, don't forget, he can skillfully exploit this knowledge. He senses friendliness, sees through hypocrisy and brilliantly picks out any ludicrous characteristics. He reads a man's face in the same way as a farmer reads the sky to predict the weather. For the child, too, observes and studies for years; in the classroom and in the dormitory; this business of learning to sum us up goes forward with combined forces and by collective effort. But to all that we close our eyes, and until we are shaken out of our complacency, we prefer the self-deceptive belief that the child is naive, knows and understands nothing, and can easily be led to take shadow for substance. To adopt any different attitude would confront us with a dilemma: either to surrender our pose of superiority or to root out of ourselves whatever is degrading, ridiculous, lowering in the eyes of children.

p. 154

Korczak reminds us that it is false to ignore and suppress children as he defines democracy beyond the vote but as the mass where 'we are to build a secure future, cheat, and conceal the facts that children are numbers, willpower, might and law' (*ibid*).

In conclusion, conditions of freedom and the structure of the political and civil institutions ensured the Homes functioned as children's republics. By further incorporating anarchist theories on evolution, I argue Korczak's model rejects any

possibility of individualism, refashioning these ideas as Mutual Self-Aid, incorporating both cooperation and competition factors. With goals of equal freedom accompanied by individual rights, a child begins to systematise their moral intuitions by developing skills and subtlety in the struggle over internal desires in conflict with others. Here, human rights are only natural because of appearance and use in custom and tradition.

Meanwhile, the ethical check structures the resultant social conflict leading to more successful societies. Using a (r)evolutionary approach, Korczak relied upon both gradual evolution and moments of catastrophic revolution to seize power and change hierarchical structures. The mere involvement and consideration of the weakest or persecuted members of society challenges the status quo. He did not necessarily remove coercion or force but sought spontaneous transformation into a new expression, an imperfect organisation with a gentler form of torture. By including more individuals, consensus and democracy grow from below, unpredictable, and beautiful as crystals.

Chapter 9: Little People

As Polish researchers point out, the asymmetric power structures of Our Home facilitated children taking on economic and social roles often reserved for adults (Sękowska, 2019). Eichsteller (2009) regards Korczak's demand to value even the most destitute street child as a unique societal extension beyond the family unit or their ability to work. However, earlier chapters demonstrate that the mandate to care for every child is not new, evident in the National Education Commission and Trentowski's national pedagogy. I propose that Korczak capitalised on the precedent of orphanages evolving into cooperative centres of voluntary action (Domańska, 2011). Perhaps if it were not for political interference, the novel conclusion is that Korczak prepared to scale up his model by capitalising upon the established cooperative networks.

Indeed, the description of Polish cooperativism provided by Cwynar (2015, p. 239) of 'a grassroots system built up within associations arising from the needs of the interested parties themselves' is easily applied to the Children's Homes and summer colonies established or inspired by Korczak. For example, Polish co-operatives enacted 'the desired world of social justice, the world of fraternity and community is not hidden in the obscurity of a distant future, but is among us, is for the taking' (Błesznowski, 2018, p.46). This concept Korczak understood to mean every member of the community, no matter how weak or small, participates in that world. He created spaces where new acts and experiences opened possibilities for children to improve social relations, self-government, and the division of material resources. As described in the previous chapter, the inclusion of equal economic rights for women and children is a unique distinction in Korczak's thought and Polish cooperativism, generally. This legacy in conceptualising the child-citizen across economic, social, and political categories certainly influenced committee members drafting the UNCRC (Balcerek, 1986).

9.1 Cooperative Commonwealths

The republican concept of freedom in contemporary circles is that non-domination prioritises rejecting arbitrary interference over non-interference. Much like the argument Kinna and Prichard (2019) make for the language of classical anarchism, Gourevitch (2014) explores a theory of freedom based on the non-domination of labour republicanism by tracing American history. He describes the American Civil War as a fight to end chattel slavery but notes it did not award workers the freedom of self-government as many had hoped, as new labour arrangements and other forms of servitude remained. The vision of a cooperative commonwealth sought to interpret free labour in an increasingly industrial age. The main thrust of Gourevitch's wage-labour debate articulates that only an elite group gained independence unreservedly. Thus, newly included groups such as African Americans and women pressured the republican ideas to be universal. Instead, a more subtle form of wage-slavery continued under poor conditions, and with little choice, employers could exert arbitrary power over their workers (*ibid*).

Clearly, Kropotkin now influences participatory economics and cooperativism, and his book, *Conquest of Bread* (1892), elicits the following key elements. Firstly, the right to wellbeing is based on an argument for common ownership but not by the State. In contrast to others, he does not claim that workers own the products of their labour. Instead, he argued that individuals draw upon the collective work of others, both physically and intellectually, and historically from their predecessors. In this way, multiple people contribute to the collective social product or culture. His vision for production would see people working in areas of their interest with increased leisure time, as he predicted mechanisation would ensure sufficient production of essential goods and services. Responding to critics, Kropotkin remained convinced that bread and freedom would ensure wellbeing, nurture creativity, and quash laziness.

The above concept that outstanding individuals draw upon the collective work of others is strongly evident in the Polish economic blueprint continually revised and implemented over generations. However, Kropotkin's goal of leisure hints at his aristocratic origins within the idle class, while the Poles favoured the philosophy of work. Much in the way Gourevitch (2014) defends the cooperative worker movements, he says their problems lay in the organisation of power and authority in citizens' daily lives, where they spend most of their waking hours developing and exercising their capacities. Curiously, Gourevitch routinely excludes consumer-driven cooperative movements from his studies, perhaps in line with the Marxist view that capitalism would withstand any cooperative challenge drawing upon voluntary participation (Rousselière *et al.*, 2014). Or that he cannot imagine any town ever placed under martial law seems to exclude the experiences of Poles in the 1980s or foretell such events occurring during the pandemic. As a result, he provides no serious examination of the Rochdale principles that attempted to solve this problem with cooperatives incorporating producers and consumers, which could have denaturalised these very events. This absence is regretful both theoretically and historically, as Rousselière and colleagues declare the consumer cooperatives in the 19th-century as a strategic instrument of workers' emancipation' (*ibid*). Likewise, she is dubious that wage labour's re-organisation alone could deal with racial and gender inequities. Here, Rousselière requests stretching of the emancipatory strategy that Gourevitch was convinced would herald the universalisation of freedom. The cooperation between consumer and worker negotiates production and consumption, relying on an economy organised according to effort and sacrifice. Repeated oppression and migration fostered alternative strategies through consumption rather than solely production to cultivate shared ethnic identity or class solidarity (Luce, 2013).

From the early 20th-century Western standpoint, the chaos and violence accompanying uprisings and revolutions were synonymous with Anarchism and Bolshevism. Indeed, post-war Central Europe abounded with failed attempts to establish regimes connected to Lenin's Marxists in Berlin, Munich, Budapest, and Vienna (Patenaude, 2007). Meanwhile, almost unnoticed amongst the events of 1920 and the red terror, Poland passed the most progressive co-operative laws in Europe (Piechowski, 2013; Kordjak, 2018). This chapter presents how grassroots action created pressure upwards for the newly formed State, unfortunately, crushed by a backlash. Extrapolated to the orphanages, these exhibited all the features of society, especially out of the public eye.

9.2 The Polish Rockefeller³⁹

An outstanding political activist appears amongst Korczak's Greats, Stanisław Szczepanowski [1846-1900], who implemented cooperativism to decolonise the Austro-Hungarian controlled region of Galicia (Łętocha, 2012). A self-made millionaire, economist and oil industry pioneer, Szczepanowski, at first glance, seems an odd inclusion alongside Kropotkin. The social anarchist rejects such efforts as simply aiding free markets due to the interrelated nature of State and capitalism. Instead of *laissez-faire*, it is valuable to consider the *pas trop gouverner* (govern not too much) in response to the hostility against the use of State mechanisms to achieve revolutionary goals. The anarchists fear using the 'masters tools' because, as Lorde (2003) warns, though it may prove a winning strategy at first, it will fail to usher in genuine change. However, rejection of participation in conventional politics leads anti-capitalists to underestimate prefiguration and the co-optation of capitalism for realising goals of justice and equality. Such is the case with several successful outcomes involving

³⁹ Adopted from Szczerbiński, J. (2012). 'he could have been Europe's Rockefeller' Blog Post

wealthy individuals such as Herbert Hoover and J.D. Rockefeller in the Polish cause. This tactic Szczepanowski pioneered by using resource wealth to leverage political influence and facilitate regional development and autonomy.

With business profits and a parliamentary seat, Szczepanowski galvanised a political group called the Polish Circle to fight against what he described as the treatment of Galicia as a peripheral colony providing raw materials and labour (workers and soldiers) for the central metropolis (Łętocha, 2012). Placed in the context of world affairs at the time, Galicia occupied a status similar to India (Kaps, 2014). As one of the foremost economic experts in England, Szczepanowski brought his insider knowledge of the workings of the British Empire and colonisation strategies to turn the master's tools against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His campaign fought for greater regional autonomy, decentralisation and subsidies for education, industry, and agriculture in Poland. He understood the Imperial policy of building a broad, hierarchical bureaucracy to increase the efficiency of the State machine but also to incapacitate the population. His network distribution implemented the ideas advocated by various Polish thinkers and expanded upon an 1868 report on Britain's successful Rochdale food cooperatives. He drew upon Rousseau's work on Poland by recognising the significance of the *sejmiki* (local and regional assemblies) as representing the will of the nation. Historically, the control of the *sejmiki* was more critical for the survival of people than the *Sejm* (parliament), subjected to foreign influence and unbridled corruption (Lukowski, 2012).

Cooperativism was neither the direct cause nor reaction to changes in the 1880s, but Fairbairn (2004) describes it as an 'attempt by people to steer and guide, to influence developments, and to shape their own futures within a changing world' (p.23). Encroaching urbanisation and industrialisation provided both a crisis and opportunity for social transformation. Historians of political thought like Hoyt (2004) identify the features of cooperative movements as mutual ownership of economic resources,

division of profits and democratic control. However, none were evident in Szczepanowski's regional project, as he criticised the socialist postulate of equal distribution of national income as a solution for poverty. Szczepanowski (1888) viewed the socialist trend in the West as a necessary provocation for protest against capitalism, which had subsumed ethical conduct in the civic sense amongst the emerging middle and wealthy classes.

The division reflects the famous split between Marx and Bakunin, with the former centred upon the maturation of the proletariat, while the anarchist impulse of the latter thrived amongst backward regions where people had 'nothing to lose but their chains' (Avrich, 1967, p.23). Strengthening the social capital within the community without clashing against existing civic traditions is a crucial aspect of cooperatives. Hoyt (2004) presents a political rationale that cooperatives promote social interactions by building trust and bolstering local governance. This awakening of regional citizenship, Szczepanowski conceived of as a program with tensions but without contradictions from economic development and moral virtues. Unlike the German *Bürger*, French *citoyen* or English citizen, the Polish aetiology of *obywatel* reflected a spirit of citizenship, civic duty and acting civilly. Deeply philosophical and perfectly timed, Szczepanowski (1888) reminded every Pole (he included the Polish Jews) of a universal idea of citizenship.

Furthermore, he criticised the Poles and their cultivation of heroic virtues producing a population willing to die in battle for the homeland but unable to live and work for it. There is also the overlooked but interesting observation 'we have a lot of needy people in the country, but need alone does not create a consumer, it is not a financial force'. From this position, Szczepanowski demands change not only in law, administration, and policy but also in terms of changing attitudes, and it seems even the people themselves. The blame for Galician misery he placed upon its people, without

mincing his words, that ‘the aristocrat, the rebel, the townsman, the soldier, the peasant and the leech stick together’ symptomatic of ‘a rotten and gagged society’ (*ibid*, p.125). Enduring a century of oppressive conditions, cultural stagnation, and material poverty, Szczepanowski (1888) proposed a comprehensive reconstruction of society via a long development process. His new paradigm to achieve national freedom required organic work to lay foundations without reverting to apathy, revolutions or strikes and eliminating inequality and domination in social relations.

This cynical assessment of the Poles and optimistic solution of *mutual self-help* embodies the Rochdale cooperative mythology, which Fairbain (1994) interprets as standing for ‘development in the long-term interests of people and communities — development controlled by the people it affects. [...] a vision of participation in social change’ (p.2). Similarly, Proudhon’s theory of mutualism suggested the right of any group to self-assertion was not natural, but the result of social processes and relations and awareness of such origins was essential for the group. Labour republicans advocate replacing the authoritarian stance by suggesting that the oppressed individual can extend liberty having been deprived of it. However, resistance to systems of oppression is inherently difficult and risky, claims Gourevitch (2014), as active participants are usually the exception, not the norm. Going against the grain attracts detractors, but on the flip side, such individuals are likely to criticise those not willing or able to express similar virtues or levels of self-sacrifice, calling them traitors and cowards. The risk of failure looms in either direction, thus, the road to emancipation must be viewed not as unachievable but as work that remains unfinished.

Generally, anarchists differentiate themselves from social democrats by developing clear alternatives to parliamentary strategies. The types of revolutionary action identified by Kropotkin appear as either individual, small group activity or large-scale collective action (Cahm, 2002). In this Polish case study, Szczepanowski

remarkably adopted all avenues simultaneously by leveraging his wealth and influence to gain a parliamentary seat and seize any opportunity to improve housing, education, and cooperatives. Tracing this historical figure reveals a grand design of the Polish idea of *solidarność* (solidarity), based upon shared resources, regional economic development, and ethnic diversity (Brzozowski, 1989). Thus, it is no wonder that Korczak and other ambitious youth reference this plan for non-violent decolonisation because it offered a genuine map to navigate dangerous territories.

9.3 *Worker's Day*

Following the failed 1905 Warsaw Revolution, violent revolution lost its backing as the vehicle for change. Instead, building the new world order came through work and transformation of consciousness (Blesznowski, 2018). With a shortage of Polish-speaking teachers, qualified professionals such as engineers and health workers took on educational roles to build the movement. The process of becoming an educator is explained clearly by Theiss (1992), who traces the different eras of Polish social pedagogy as 'fighter-instructor-professional'. Theiss marks the transition of the educator from a political protester or 'freedom fighter', moving towards instructing illegal educational groups and eventually developing into the role of a professional in independent Poland (Theiss & Bron, 2014). The interaction between intellectual and manual workers echoes some elements of Kropotkin's 'knowledge exchange', calling for engineers and poets to build solidarity between urban and rural communities for the sake of social transformation (Kinna, 2019a). Continuity was maintained in this societal education when students remained as instructors for their organisations. These circles were crucial in producing at least two generations of highly educated and engaged socio-political actors working secretly and without celebration. Willing to serve the

masses, rather than using them for their ambitions, these were the political actors Kropotkin lamented he could not find (Avrich, 1967, p.234).

The change in the ideological guard brought a much-needed revival to the *Społem* Cooperative Society, attracting leaders such as the anarcho-syndicalist Edward Abramowski and future President Stanisław Wojciechowski (Figure 15). Abramowski signalled his suspicion that the will of the majority within a democracy can lead to despotism; ‘a dictatorship of the proletariat’ (Cwynar, 2015, p.250). He sought transformation of society’s moral order, declaring that ‘freed institutions cannot arise out of slave nature. From robbers and social parasites cannot arise democracy. For people chasing social justice cannot be born after profit or excess’ (Abramowski, 1920, p.247).

Figure 15: Społem logo, 1906
Source: Społem PSS



In Proudhon’s assessment of the Swiss economic system, he coined the phrase *Reform forever. Utopias never*, to summarise his position that neither violent revolution nor isolated experiments could replace society (Langlois, 1876). Here he used the English term ‘self-government’, proposing the relationship where the individual needed the pressure and restriction of group customs and norms to realise their unique individuality, that is, to know oneself amongst others. Though it is tempting to adopt French syndicalism, this would be an error. Their strike action strategies and the trade union as an organ of struggle appeared useful for pacifist anarchists attempting to

achieve Tolstoy's utopian vision. However, Polish strikes and protests were rarely peaceful (Figure 16; Figure 17).



Figure 16: Anarcho-communist group 'Internationals', 1905
Source: Watman, L. (1906), *Dzieje narodu i państwa polskiego* t. III, Warsaw: Wyd. KAW.



Figure 17: Łódź worker's strike, 1905. Source: East News

In appropriating the old catch cry Worker's Day, Korczak (1905c/1994) attempted to draw protesters' attention away from strike action and violence into these cooperative ventures. Replacing protest and riot, *Spolem* was an active federation coordinating nationwide wholesale, purchasing, and marketing activities of over 80 regional associations (*Spolem* PSS, 2019). Their emphasis on independence and self-help enabled individuals and communities to meet their purchasing needs within a fairer consumer-producer relationship. Dividing the co-operative shares gave all members equal rights without capital advantage, which the cooperative stressed as crucial in its aim of democratisation, wrote Abramowski (1920). The group predicted there would come a time where cooperatives would dominate in one form or another, warning against leaving the other form of cooperation solely in the hands of capitalist entrepreneurs after Polish independence. The syndicates, unions, trusts, and cartels would bring back unemployment, ignorance, misery, and poverty, they warned, unless the central authority and municipalities ensured the success of the cooperatives for the fall of the last vestiges of the old-world order.

The ideological arguments of cooperativism differentiated it from socialism by explaining that the latter sought to socialise the means of production and reforms dispensed from above by abolishing private property and through political struggles over law and regulations. Without seeking to nationalise production, Abramowski (1920) argued that the social reform of cooperativism could only come from below, gradually encroaching on more extensive fields of industry, agriculture, and commerce. The degree of expansion is not reliant on the legal order but depends on the people's autonomy and enlightenment in understanding new life principles based on mutual aid and solidarity. Russification and their exclusion from political participation necessitated that these elites create an alternative social reality and other spheres of influence. Though centred around economic activities, the cooperative's leadership deemed it

fulfilling a simultaneous social function in citizenship by contributing to educational, material, and spiritual development (*ibid*). Somewhat ignorant of the complex organisation and scope of activities, Avrich (1967) assumed a spontaneous reaction with the 'remarkable growth of peasant co-operatives' after the failed 1905 revolution (p.112).

The *Spolem* weekly magazine described itself as devoted to the 'theory and practice of cooperation' with their propaganda cleverly avoiding censorship by dropping Polish references from all materials.⁴⁰ A 1917 headline from *Spolem* read What is Co-operation? - a question answered with mutual aid, co-working, and bringing together common interests meeting professional and personal needs (Radziwiłłowicz, 1917). Accompanying the newsletter's economic messages were quotes from philosophers, snapshots of innovative foreign projects, and utmost importance to the Peace Treaty, a summary of the coalfields dispute between Germany and Poland. The masthead Ode to Youth is taken directly from Mickiewicz's revolutionary poem. The verse compares the action of young people to Hercules in battle, where the strength of the young generation was to destroy what was barbaric in the past and exceed current horizons by uniting their efforts. By employing such mythology, leaders attempted to dissuade youngsters from individual heroics and violence redirected into less attractive long-term work programs. The motto that a heroic death is easier than living, suffering, and working for a cause repeatedly appears, used by Korczak and others to describe Poles saving the children during WWI. The *Spolem* cooperative celebrated its 150th anniversary and is still active across Poland today. Its existence and mode of operation clarify the spontaneity of Polish civil society during a crisis due to the preparation and cultivation of local governance amongst the secret underground groups mentioned earlier.

⁴⁰ National Library of Poland

9.4 The Bees

In his book *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin (1902/1939) proposed that sociability is the decisive factor in the struggle for survival as many animals live in societies. Mutual Aid forms the kernel of the various anarchist schools of thought with its presumption of society's natural and pre-human origins. Kropotkin argued that society is not governed by 'man-made' laws but 'by a sum of social customs and habits – not petrified by law, routine or superstition', but continually evolving (Woodcock 1963, pp.20-21). The explanation for human behaviour appears as instinct-driven, with selection based upon success determined by desirable traits and norms in a given community. Rather than competition, social groups banded together to struggle against the forces of nature, such as climate and predators. The associated habits range from hunting in packs, raising the young and grooming. For Kropotkin (1902), such practices cultivate a sense of solidarity beyond sympathy, writing:

the unconscious recognition of the force that is borrowed by each man from the practice of mutual aid; of the close dependency of every one's happiness upon the happiness of all; and of the sense of justice or equity which brings the individual to consider the rights of every other individual as equal to his own.
pp. xiii-xiv.

Repeatedly, Korczak's motivations appear described as love or sympathy for children, narrowly defining his ethics, whereas I understand his position better within Kropotkin's ideas on sociability. The dominant theoretical position of survival of the fittest left little room for discussions around ethics, so the beehive became a common analogy for an ordered natural society. The features of a beehive draw comparisons with an orphanage. All bees are offspring of the single queen (or nation); thus, workers and soldiers forgo their reproduction to raise her children on behalf of the colony. Though overly optimistic regarding evolution towards co-operation, the animal models of society provide meaning to Korczak's nicknames of beehive and anthill for his orphanages

during different periods. Hence, his Homes and aptly named summer colonies function as sites of prefigurative practice, promoting cooperative laws and sociability factors.

The beehive metaphor as replicating human society has many precedents influencing political thinkers under consideration here. I trace the model back to the influential *Fable of the Bees*, first published anonymously in 1714 as a philosophical exploration of English society. *Fable* introduces a new social theory challenging the idea that only the unselfish are virtuous by suggesting that individual self-interest and undesirable behaviours could create public benefit. The book implied that despite the English preaching on virtue, they benefited from the wealth created by vices such as gambling, greed and crime. Though controversial, *The Fable* influenced many thinkers and their ideas on the division of labour, free-market principles, and the justice system. More than a century later, debates on the hive and its organisation of society can trace their roots to this defence of individualism. In modern economic terms, John Maynard Keynes renewed *Fable's* notion that individuals saving to enjoy leisure and comfort might be deleterious to society in his paradox of thrift.

Similarly, Mutual Aid emerged as a central principle of cooperation within the species through observation of complex societies, such as beehives. Bakunin also wrote of individuals 'born into society as an ant is born into its ant-hill and as the bee into its hive' with a teleological view of humanity continuously progressing to the highest forms of liberty (Reznek, 1927, p.284). The mutualism associated with Proudhon similarly relied on the hive as a collective, with all bees sharing in the means of production, exchange and decision making. He used the metaphor to explain his vision of workers organising themselves into a harmonious society through job rotation and sharing of tasks (Dupuis-Déri, 2012). Paradoxically, bees are hierarchical but also the Queen experiences domination by the mass, even exile and death at their displeasure.

Another influential example is the *Life of Bees*, penned by the Nobel prize winner Maurice Maeterlinck [1862-1949]. Though one of Korczak's *Greats*, Maeterlinck is virtually unknown amongst English speakers. His treatise on the bee is today incorrectly classified as a work of natural science.⁴¹ Although an excellent work on insect ethology, *Life of Bees* delivers a philosophical lesson for humanity, with Maeterlinck drawing a line in the sand between the different evolutionary theories. Maintaining personal affiliation with Ferrer, anarchist schools often featured Maeterlinck's works in their curriculum (Avrich, 1980, p.30). Maeterlinck's storylines illuminated a 'hidden inner life common to all of humanity' shaping social and political movements (*ibid*). Maeterlinck's dramatic method was a critical element in anarchist education, helpful in shaping a school atmosphere. In her assessment of Maeterlinck, prominent anarchist Emma Goldman (1914) praises his creative genius and quotes from his *Social Revolution* treatise.

The swarming phenomenon is a feature of the beehive that seems to escape most who employ the model. Maeterlinck (1901/1914) described the impetus for the swarm as 'a restlessness seizing the people', which heralds the time when the old queen must obey her young subjects abdicating in favour of their chosen successor (p.9). The driving force behind this event he labelled the 'spirit of the hive', not instinctive nor mechanistic, but 'like an alert and quick-witted slave, who is able to derive advantage even from his master's most dangerous orders' (*ibid*). Step by step, a new generation is raised until the impending sacrifice of the old, who choose to abandon their wealth at the 'pinnacle of prosperity and power' by migrating to distant lands and inevitable poverty (*ibid*, p.10).

This exploration of beehive society is Korczak's preferred version and is immensely complex in confronting the reader with questions of fate, will and purpose.

⁴¹ Skoob Books (2016) Academic Bookstore in London, UK

The study of nature as a vehicle to better understand humanity was fashionable, and Maeterlinck chastised assumptions and vague observations taken from a great height. The implications of the swarm move beyond the class, gender and status struggle discussed by the other political thinkers Bakunin, Kropotkin, and others mentioned earlier. It uses beehive metaphors to focus on generational tension and dominating-disruptive forces between the young and old. Within their tiny republic, Maeterlinck (*ibid*) described the god which the bees obey as the future, an ideal they pursue with striking conviction. It is no wonder that Korczak recommended to teachers to research young children in the same way the bee enthral the entomologist, a tiny microcosm from which we learn about ourselves and our place in the universe. Understanding the beehive metaphor better explains the turn towards co-operatives, work and 'little republics' as a means of building small government. The notion of democracy as a living force was perhaps once more widely accepted, even articulated by US President Herbert Hoover (1936) following his Polish experience;

Democracy is not static. It is a living force. Every new idea, every new invention offers opportunity for both good and evil.

p.225

By the turn of the 20th-century, Korczak's colleagues, Abramowski and Krzywicki, formalised their political traditions by exploring possible alternatives for social organisation. At the Flying University, Ludwik Krzywicki [1859 – 1941] lectured mainly to girls sharing his surprisingly modern views about women and social norms. Analysing his anthropological works, Zawiszewska (2016) finds his conception of womanhood 'as an anarchic phenomenon coming into play in the breakthrough for primitive communities' moments of political changes' (p.157). Convergence between socialism and feminism drew activists into engaging with cooperatives and educational initiatives involving girls, workers, and peasants. The new ideas of evolutionist sociology brought several implications for early Polish feminism. Firstly, suggesting

greater gender equality in the future, while on the other hand, impeding the possibility of ushering in changes artificially. Aware of the link between systems, namely the political and economic within the family, feminists paid attention to emerging anthropological research on different societies (Zawieszewska, 2010). Such studies, coupled with new feminist ideals, idolised the matriarchal structure found in tribes and built upon the Marian legacy of religious orders. The intelligentsia and, perhaps surprisingly, the clergy touted concepts of mutual aid, sharing goods and working together as *szlachetny* or noble. In addition, the initiatives reached out to teachers to cultivate cooperativism amongst the younger generation.

In 1900, the movement inspired Jadwiga Dziubińska [1874 – 1937] to establish the first student cooperative for girls (later she included boys) near Warsaw; she fondly called it *Pszczelin* (The Bees). Her political goals are evident as she is also among the first women elected to parliament following independence in 1918.⁴² Like other Poles, Dziubińska's motivation for engaging in such grassroots politics targeted what Rowbotham (1979) labelled as the politics of deferment; dealing with problems or organisation continually postponed until after a future revolution. Beginning from the local and using knowledge-practice strategies, the cooperative action meets the criteria for feminist prefigurative politics, and the possibilities of spectacular outcomes offered by the mundane (Rowbotham, 1989). The design of The Bees centred upon an agricultural business school for village girls to encourage rural innovation, facilitate industrial espionage, and simultaneously dissuade permanent emigration. Her work inspired numerous cooperative experiments and fostered an image of children, rural and urban, as citizens capable of working for independence.

⁴² https://biblioteka.sejm.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Poslanki_i_senatorki_IIRP_preview.pdf accessed 06.03.2021

9.5 Women's Hands

Dialectic exercises and theoretical debates aside, Korczak sought to witness and experience societal issues for himself. Thus, he lived in urban slums, rural villages and the Ghetto while experiencing institutional life in hospitals, prisons, orphanages, and camps. Participating in various occupations sometimes exposed Korczak's interference, ineptitude, or inefficiency. In his old age and ill-health, younger workers attempted to excuse him as too famous for such tasks while secretly annoyed by his disruption. Within his last Ghetto workplace, Korczak (1942/1978) explained his work as action research implementing reforms and monitoring results. His description of clearing the plates works on two levels; one is a realistic assessment of the task, and the other, a metaphor for his educational work examining the chipped and bent of society;

When I collect the dishes myself, I can see the cracked plates, the bent spoons, the scratches on the bowls. I expedite the clearing of the tables and the side table used for the little shop so that the orderlies can tidy up sooner. I can see how the careless diners throw about, partly in a quasi-aristocratic and partly in a churlish manner, the spoons, knives, the salt shakers and cups, instead of putting them in the right place. Sometimes I watch how the distribution of extra servings or who sits next to whom. And I get some ideas. For if I do something, I never do it thoughtlessly. This waiter's job is of great use to me; it's pleasant and interesting.

pp.74-75

From director to cleaner, adapting to various roles facilitated his understanding of the change process and the impacts of his decision-making on others. Furthermore, Korczak claimed his motivation came from what he was 'fighting against for the past thirty years since the inception of the Children's Home, fighting without a hope of victory, without visible effect, but I don't want to and cannot abandon that fight' (*ibid*). His agenda is not strictly related to children or education, and I liken it to Thomas More's rejection of idleness. Here, Korczak dedicated himself to a philosophy of work exploring the division of labour, and such findings suggest why he expanded the idle class beyond wealthy capitalists and aristocrats to include beggars, protestors, and intellectuals.

Integrating mental and manual work is characteristic of anarchist education, as Suissa (2010) highlights in various educational experiments. Problem-solving skills and practical scientific knowledge emerged from the manual training programs. The Polish reasoning behind visits to factories and farms complemented academic subjects to address inequality and poor governance. For theoretical justification, Kropotkin (1902/1939) states that integrated co-educational programs serve more than economic benefits. He aims to eliminate the social inequality fostered by capitalist division of labour through education based upon cooperation and fraternity. It was up to Kropotkin (1880) to modify the propaganda of the deed concept away from insurrection by providing step-by-step instructions:

Indifference from this point on is impossible. [...] One such act may, in a few days, make more propaganda than thousands of pamphlets. [...] The government resists, it is savage in its repressions. [...] It produces the opposite result. It provokes new acts of revolt, individual and collective, it drives the rebels to heroism.

Kropotkin continues to describe how one deed elicits another, with former rivals joining the movement and fracturing government loyalty, sufficiently weakened when the revolution breaks out. For the anarchist image and values of the activist as both an intellectual and worker striving to improve society, Suissa (2010) quotes Smith as ‘the work a man did was something to be proud of, it was what gave interest, value and dignity to his life’ (p.105). What emerges is a commitment to political and moral education accompanied by a set of values related to paid work for personal satisfaction and wellbeing. Framed in a world of factories and fields, schools, and strikes, however, little attention is given to the private sphere of home and family.

As stated in the introductory chapter, the Polish conception of children’s rights reserved an entire section related to economic and social law, including the right to work, remuneration, personal property, and the right to use cultural achievements. The latter embraces laws and discoveries enshrined legally, in custom, or relations, which

have served justice and freedom within communities for centuries. Rather than focusing solely upon legislation and declarations, a lowly perspective identifies the rituals and routine work that historically created greater human dignity and care. Such concepts are readily identifiable throughout Korczak's Homes. His plural frameworks recognised the diverse community, understanding the history and development of laws from differing perspectives of both Poles and Jews.

Demarcation of the worker class appeared in its application as a domestic pedagogy, beginning with the low-status work of women and girls. Translated into contemporary education, the mental work of teaching enjoys far greater status than the physical work of childcare. Adept at making the familiar strange, Korczak turns the repetitive, thankless tasks of changing and washing nappies, peeling buckets of potatoes and endless hours of caring for children into his battleground for human rights. The horizontal nature of the Home's hierarchy saw the washerwoman and janitor attending governance meetings alongside children, teachers, and Board members. More impressively, a five-year-old successfully prosecuted a new staff member for smacking a toddler, securing their dismissal by the Court. Korczak saw this presence as not merely tokenistic democracy but relied on 'their advice and benefit from their assistance as specialists in matters which would otherwise be left unresolved, i.e., be placed under paragraph 3' (*ibid*). This last reference relates to the Court Code used in the Homes. His paragraph joked that those complaints with insufficient or contradictory evidence are difficult to elicit the facts and usually find courts refusing to consider such cases altogether. Again, this finds that trivial matters affect the weakest members of society and persist without change unless afforded greater importance and attention from those in power. Goodman (1960) realized that by examining and questioning efficiency, he could observe the sources of different standards (*Communitas*, 160). He identified that adherence to routines and regulations narrows the choice of one process over another

for the sake of convenience, comfort, or profit. Furthermore, Goodman probed whether it was worth pursuing by asking, ‘efficient for what? For the way of life as a whole’ (*Communitas* 172).

From here, I ask the provocative question, The Washroom or the Courtroom? To question whether law reform can succeed without the physical work, to refer to the organisational army necessary for implementing human rights. Of all reforms, Korczak (1907/1998) stated kitchens, bathrooms, and laundries were ‘the brightest examples of our spiritual Middle Ages and the chaos of the social economy’ where thousands of women’s hands worked in service to create the moral and intellectual resources for humanity (p.65). He insisted his concept of domestic pedagogy recognises the dignified work of the kitchen and laundry as sociological and microbiological experiments (Korczak, 1938/2017). Dirt and smell are central in the world of work; as Korczak compares, the hospital orderly changing dirty sheets, the medical student cutting open corpses and the school inspector visiting lice-infested classrooms. Rather than regarding dirty laundry as degrading, humiliating, or lowering aesthetics, the school laundry and kitchen used mixed methods in giving hands-on lessons superior to any textbook as it ‘tied together with invisible threads the scientific laboratory and the isolated office of the sociologist’ in how to recognise and treat societal issues such as bed bugs or food spoilage (*ibid*).

In his text, *School of Life*, Korczak (1907/1998) described the laundry as a resource used by the boarding house, local tenants, and charitable institutions, providing children with much more than vocational training. Adjacent laboratories would carry out bacteriological tests ensuring the health of local people, where a chemist, biologist, electrician, and mechanic would share management for the programs, each role necessary for one another. The washroom as a physical sphere of human rights’ activity achieves elevated status during epidemics and famine, as discussed in the final analysis

of this thesis. Understanding the relationship of infection control to human rights during epidemics, especially quarantine restricting freedom of association and movement, clarifies how Korczak's role as a doctor shaped his ideas.

Rather than the narrower vocational conception of preparing children for domestic service and housework, Korczak conceived laundries and kitchens in orphanages and schools as field stations connecting everyday tasks with health science, researching the local community to improve health and lives. His Biblical references outlined the history of law and custom fashioned by different religions, centring upon practical aspects of food, hygiene, and rest. As an old man, Korczak (1942/1967) reflected upon his father's work with the words, 'I pursue in life what he strove for', referring to bringing people towards greater understanding, as Korczak's father and uncle devoted much effort to writing. The Goldzmit brothers, both lawyers, wrote in similar genres focused on moral tales, almanacks, and life stories, emphasising similarities in Christian and Jewish traditions, serving both communities' aspirations.

Celebrating traditional holidays and legends marked progress or transitions when societal practices were overturned or changed to accommodate new knowledge and the desires of younger generations. For example, in the Homes, the newly invented 'No Baths' and 'Stay in Bed' holidays recognised the discomfort and difficulty that washing and getting out of bed presented for many children, particularly during freezing winters. However, the required laws for close living conditions solved the conflict between individual rights and the health of the group by introducing personal days off. The concept behind Korczak's system was that everyone worked for health and economic production while gaining respect for laws governing social relations enhancing civil society. This example of prefigurative practice showcases the anarchist belief that a revolution emerges and grows organically via attempts to prefigure the future in the present on a smaller scale (Raekstad, 2018).

During outbreaks of disease, the simple act of covering one's cough or avoiding physical contact could save another's life. Hence, the strongest members of any group can resolve the rights conflict by standing in solidarity and service for the rights of others. Those less likely to succumb to illness gave up personal freedoms and comforts to endure inconvenience and hardship in their daily routines as a sacrifice for weaker individuals. Of course, Warsaw's rapidly changing environment meant the tables could quickly turn. The robust child suffering an injury or illness may have limited experience and skills in coping with confinement and isolation while bedridden, perhaps even requiring the assistance and forgiveness of children formerly tormented and bullied. Without the glory afforded to heroes, such tasks for either personality type were unpleasant, mundane, and even disgusting. However, one can easily imagine that a combination of such behavioural and character traits would be more likely to allow a group to adapt and survive living in the shadows and secret hideouts during the Russian and German occupations.

In bridging the mental-menial divide, Korczak (1942/1978) strove to elevate the status of those who worked with their hands from those with a pen, stating 'I fight that there is no delicate or crude work in the Orphan's House, no wise or stupid, clean or dirty. Some work for nice young ladies and the rest for the mob' (pp.67-68). Similarly, anarchists who criticised the division of labour blamed education for producing workers without scientific knowledge and scientists without the skills to fully develop projects they envisage, unable to handle even basic tools. The anarchist idea that capitalism breeds parasites fuelled several educational experiments, including a Ferrer inspired The Modern School in New York. The modern school declared that no lazy and useless people would live on the production of others. The school held that all children are workers and required them to learn vocational and housekeeping skills to ensure self-reliance (Suissa, 2010).

The issue of balanced work appeared in Proudhon's declaration that the capitalist system divorced manual from mental work creating inequalities in social status by suggesting one is more valuable than the other. His solution to break down such division was to educate the worker as an intellectual man of action (*ibid*). His influential 1861 meeting with Tolstoy resulted in the Russian author adopting Proudhon's text, *La Guerre et la Paix* (War and Peace in French), as the title for his masterpiece. With admiration, Tolstoy wrote, [Proudhon] was the only man who understood in our time the significance of public education and of the printing press in our time' (Treadgold, 1973, p.193).⁴³

First, however, I examine what new elitism and hierarchies appeared amongst these anarchists. In a minor entry in the Encyclopædia Britannica, Kropotkin (1911) named Tolstoy as an anarchist for his position on property rights, the Church, and the State and how elites benefited from the existing hierarchies. Though Korczak also denounced the hypocrisy of the institutionalized church, he warns against Tolstoy's path of non-resistance as passively waiting for redemption in the afterlife. Both were deeply spiritual thinkers adhering to ascetic lifestyles; however, Korczak's views differed on mental and menial work. Tolstoy's literary career benefited greatly from the organisational skills of his wife, who acted as both his editor and manager, ensuring works progressed through to publication. Likewise, it appears prominent organisers of anarchist schools were celebrated as 'longing to translate [...] desire into deeds' and to 'act at every opportunity as speaker, organizer or writer' (Havel, 1921). Nevertheless, I must wonder, when away from the limelight, did they ever peel a potato?

Anarchist thinkers often struggled with the practicalities of their ideas, as seen with Godwin, who in later life tried his hand at children's publishing. He attempted to influence cultural trends and fashion a rational intelligence amongst ordinary people.

⁴³ It is revealing that during this period, Tolstoy also visited members of Froebel's family, associated with kindergartens (*ibid*).

Although, he was acutely aware that on its own, writing literature was inadequate ‘to all purposes of human improvement’ (Godwin, 1797, p.22). This lesson on work that Korczak experienced early in his literary career, recalled in Jadwiga Dawid’s eulogy, as get your hands dirty (Falkowska, 1989). Emphasising the physicality of rights and local geographic experiences such as weather, mud, and germs, Korczak’s view of interdependence is deeply ingrained within communities of propinquity, rather than abstract notions of shared interests, class, religion, or ethnicity. In addressing the dirty, trivial, and ignored, Korczak’s micro-model of social renewal differs from those found in Marxist and liberal education. Although anarchist education engages with educational and economic goals, fundamentally changing the moral and social order, it rarely includes the work surrounding young children and babies.

In the meantime, the Polish hands-on approach bridged the theory-practice divide to implement rights, beginning with the right to health, dignity, and respect within our daily lives. Seeking to prepare children to enter the world of work obscures that children are already people undertaking the difficult reproductive labour of growth, unrecognised yet vital to society. Indeed, children caring for themselves, siblings and family members represent the mutual aid and self-governance promoted by the likes of Kropotkin and Ward at the smallest possible level. Perhaps not the open-ended model promoted by liberal radicals envisioning innocent children creating a utopia, Korczak’s version is radical *topian* education where seeds and dormant cultural-historic roots unchecked in spring may sprout wildly and spontaneously in place.

9.6 Bankruptcy

Rather than limit themselves to worker initiatives, cooperativism drove political, economic, and social development. The cooperative concept spread to secondary and

primary schools, further promoted by the publication in 1914 of a guide for establishing such school cooperatives. Curtailed by operating in secret, the network finally exploded after Poland gained independence. From archival records, one cooperative association *Promień* (Radius), opened next door to a factory school for workers' children and served as a community cultural centre run by the school children. In 1917, the first year of membership listed 195 boys and girls with activities and dividends funded by shop sales of school supplies, stationery, magazines, and chewing gum (Głuchowski, 1917). Each child referred to as a shareholder received an Association newsletter, access to the library, recreation facilities and subscriptions to the magazines where Korczak and his associates were regular contributors. The children's participation was treated seriously but also conditional on patronage. Active attendance was a requirement and missing two months in a row could lose status, dividends, or membership. The governing council rotated through age groups voted in by ballot. During the period examined, six boys and girls from Grades 4 and 5 appeared as the elected representatives (*ibid*, p.275).

One observer from 1916, Edward Taylor (1916/2017), noted the distinguishing feature of such associations was an adaptation to the needs of 'the economically weak social strata and is thus conducted with small amounts of capital. Therefore, its social importance lies precisely in enabling "little people" to make advantageous use of their capital, their talents, and their personal prowess' (p.226). Scholars write on these movements from a feminist perspective, but remarkably the connection with Korczak is only now made here. Examining the Polish Idea, Cwynar (2015) likens the philosophical trend to participatory democracy organised as a 'Cooperative Republic' offering an alternative to capitalism and socialism (p.239). The cooperatives aimed to extend the economic and political sphere to every member of society, with the consumer rather than the worker viewed as - the universal figure, synonymous with citizen

(Błesznowski, 2018). To such action seeking solidarity between the worker, peasant, and intellectual, Korczak added the child.

The history of these children's movements is strongly associated with Poland's highs and lows as a country and the developing cooperative movement generally (Babis, 2020). Under the sponsorship of the Polish Teacher's Union, the movement flourished with cooperatives active in a third of all schools and approximately 800,000 members by WWII. The interwar period saw writers enthusiastically publishing in the popular magazine, *Young Cooperative*. Supporters included Janusz Korczak, who dedicated his novel *Bankruptcy of Little Jack* (1924) to the cooperative cause. Although WWII decimated the cooperatives followed by the communist era suppressing much of their activity, by the 1970s, the dynamic Polish student cooperatives rivalled the French, British and Danes. Ironically, the fall of communism in 1989 brought a virtual collapse to the cooperative movement as students, and board members lacked interest in supposed communist-era activities. Private operators absorbed the school shops during the liquidation of student cooperatives, though some managed to survive by espousing entrepreneurial attitudes. The recent patronage of the Ministry of National Education has secured the future of student cooperatives with current projects aimed at graduate employment and new legislation regarding Cooperative Law (Babis, 2020). Despite their demise, the estimated number operating today is 6000, with at least 1300 schools also operating the cooperative banks suggested by Korczak in his book *Little Jack*. Though school cooperatives celebrate his book, curiously, my literature review found the reverse is not the case, as Korczak scholarship pays little attention to the cooperative movement or even his book.

Popular with audiences and reflecting the Polish economic reality of the time, Korczak's children's book *Bankruptcy of Little Jack* deserves accolades. Gaining celebrity status outside of Poland, translations of *Little Jack* appeared for almost two

decades, first in Russian (1929), followed by Czech and German (1935), Lithuanian (1936) and English (1939).⁴⁴ One glowing review in 1924 stated the storybook contained 'golden lessons, beautiful principles and wise ideas', achieving true artistry in presenting the ethics of the child (Falkowska, 1989, p.206). True to Korczak's philosophy of examining the world within a microcosm, Little Jack tackles the questions of economic reform facing independent Poland. Regarding the inclusion of economics and financial issues within children's books and education, much like today, Ługowska (2010) found the messages usually a broader reflection of the adult hierarchy with the child as a recipient of values and didactic instruction. She differentiates Korczak's approach as regularly incorporating the 'mechanics of money' and the realities of children's exclusion from discussions on such matters (*ibid*, p.130).

Encountering everyday injustices, Korczak reminded his readers that as a 5-year old, he wondered how to abolish money. Recording common questions children ask, Korczak (1930/2003) wrote in *The Rules of Life*:

*"Why don't they print more paper money?"
"What is tax?"
"What does the Minister of Finance do when one country lends to another?"
I would like to explain, but I do not know myself.
Anyway, a little consolation to know if nothing can be done, because it does not depend on us.*

p. 55.

Reaching beyond the sum of present morality, the child creates intuitively in their playground without imposition by adults but with the same passion and suffering. Philosophers working with young children also claim they are born immersed in the political and economic system. Thus, children muse on such profound questions, but adults rarely take them seriously (Cassidy, 2016). Many Polish families treated money as a taboo topic, and the myriad of problems encountered by the interwar population led

⁴⁴ British Library

authors to introduce financial literacy. Such children's stories fell into two main categories: fairy-tale heroes or naive stereotypes (Ługowska, 2010).

On the one hand, characters solve economic problems with a benevolent patron or surprise inheritance. Alternatively, positivist didactics favoured work ethics as the path from poverty to riches, with an anti-hero suffering due to laziness (*ibid*). Amongst this company, Korczak is a standout by introducing the basic concepts of economic activity. Little Jack demonstrated what skills and qualities commercial endeavours need, with money bringing positive and negative consequences. The duo of Beksiak and Papuzińska (2009) consider the lessons contained in Little Jack should grant it status as one of the leading economic textbooks of the era. Their partnership as an economist and children's book writer insightfully muses upon threads in Little Jack and King Matt as drawn from Keynes' book, *Economic Consequences of the Peace* (*ibid*, p.49).

As the newly independent Polish government struggled with hyperinflation and introduced its economic reform agenda, the general population was predominately illiterate on financial management issues. Little Jack's economic enterprise establishing his school cooperative introduces the reader in practical terms to such concepts as risk, cost, profit, and credit. It is not solely an illustration of capitalist mechanisms, as Jack's business functions like a cooperative, with shared decision-making and resources. However, outside the paper trail of business, there is the impression that Korczak produced an anti-economics textbook (Ługowska, 2010).

Indeed, the fictional characters answer questions on accounting, assurance, and the role of a notary and demonstrate that honesty, hard work, and aptitude provide no guarantee for success. With realism, the book's plotlines of whispered rumours, unrelenting tasks and Jack's suffering led one reviewer in 1924 to label it a poetic work full of comedy and tragedy (Falkowska, 1989). From the behaviour of characters, the reader may recognise certain archetypes and evaluate the risks associated with different

ventures, as Korczak (1924/2012) reminds us that ‘the world is incredibly diverse, and people are very different’, even the same people at different times and settings (p.49). Beyond lessons on the free market, Korczak reveals his philosophical principles where everything and everyone is changeable to assist children (and adults) in understanding the world and in making better judgements:

Mister Taft is completely different when someone does not know him and just comes in to buy something, and completely different when he’s with his old mother. And completely different is the janitor when he calls down the stairs or walks down the boys’ corridor and completely different inside his apartment. Each individual version like entirely different people, unlike each other.

pp. 148-149.

Social relations underpin the course of Jack’s business and centre upon his taking responsibility for the unpredictable effects of his activities. Though the boy could blame others or harsh economic realities for the outcomes, eventually, Jack must directly face the consequences of his decisions and actions, no matter how well-intended. Rather than abstract economics, the characters involved themselves in authentic relationships between friends, classmates, and the broader community. Much of Korczak’s plot follows Jack in negotiations, attempting to explain misunderstandings or correct mistakes, persuade partners and generally communicate with others to demonstrate ethical behaviours (Vucic & Sękowski, 2020).

One could readily find the various motivations and heterogeneity of decision-makers in a contemporary textbook on behavioural economics or psychology. A footnote in Ługowska’s (2010) article also highlights the discovery of the Korczak-Keynesian connection. While Chrobak (2012) discovers the resourcefulness of Jack as a socialist, unfortunately, neither sufficiently follow through or else might have recovered more economic insights. Influential Korczak scholars repeatedly omit Little Jack and any economic phenomena from consideration altogether (see Michalek, 2018; Śliwerski, 2018; Liebel, 2018; Silverman, 2017; Smolińska-Theiss, 2018b). Similarly, the micro-foundations present in King Matt is of interest to those studying international

relations theory or war studies. Unfortunately, the marginalisation of children's literature as a genre leaves both books and Korczak's philosophy rigidly fixed within the educational canon.

In summary, from an anarchist perspective, the cooperative networks represent the destruction of the old order as a new generation contracts different relationships and behaviour. Korczak did not fashion a pre-determined order; instead, external oppression influenced the experiences children brought to the institutions. He aimed to study processes of societal change in how the children themselves modify coercion and force within their institutional constraints. Korczak experimented with sociability by mitigating external power and addressing artificial factors, especially the material circumstances.

Taking cues from the *Chowanna* national pedagogy, concealment meant a child acquired self-discipline to avoid speaking Polish in public and learn to deceive adults about their identity to survive these harsh environments. His research examined the case of spontaneous mutual self-aid, as individual children acted differently by entering various social relations via new rules and processes consented to by increasing numbers. Conflict and crisis exposed the domination and dissatisfaction experienced by individuals caused by others and within the institutional processes themselves. Just as a politically weak individual has a limited chance of manufacturing change, Polish children learned strategic manoeuvring and diplomacy to engineer cooperation. The cooperative movement showcased mutual aid as the evolutionary strength of the weak. As the cooperative movement gains greater prominence in Poland and abroad, I hope to restore its connection with Korczak.

Chapter 10: Saving the Children

The 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child is formally acknowledged as the work of Eglantyne Jebb, the founder of the Saving the Children Fund in London established after World War I. However, Balinska (1991; 1996; 1998; 2018), Taouk (2003), Mahood (2009), Baughan and Fiori (2015) and Dunstan (2018) all suggest 'hidden histories' within this sphere of 20th-century international development. According to Baughan & Fiori (2015), the geopolitics of wartime required humanitarian action to be 'depoliticised' (p.130). Concerns about saving the 'enemy' abated with a newly constructed narrative centred on 'the innocent, pre-political child' (*ibid*). The historical inaccuracies continue due to the success of the functional rhetoric and propaganda used to obscure 'politics and ideology as the imagined driving force of humanitarian action' (*ibid*).

Similarly, Polish scholars leave the health and social revolutions overshadowed by geopolitical machinations and military strategies. Therefore, this chapter fills in the gaps in knowledge and integrates different disciplinary accounts by exploring little known Polish sources such as newspaper and committee reports published at the time. Behind the scenes of bloody violence, the elites sought opportunities via deeds in medicine, education, law, and commerce. That is, by co-optation of these 'master's tools' to increase their influence and ability to satisfy local needs. War and conflict introduced *anarchy*, sufficiently undermining power structures for a revolutionary vanguard to seize control and resources, freeing ordinary people into action within a new social order. Paving the way to non-domination, Graeber listed kitchens, libraries and clinics amongst a range of mutual aid-based, self-help institutions (Kinna, 2016b). Through a network of such institutions, Polish revolutionary movements harnessed the contributions of women and children by fostering the anarchist principles of 'direct action, illegalism and the rejection of hierarchy' necessary for challenging the

legitimacy of the state in everyday life and building a new society (*ibid*). This final chapter presents a hidden history of how orphanages, kitchens, and clinics cooperated to save the children and secure freedom and rights for the Poles and others. The following section outlines the circumstances in WWI that brought foreigners to the aid of the Poles and how international narratives intersect with Korczak. Thus, I recommend that anarchist history embrace Korczak's work as I show how he fits within this hidden (r)evolution.

10.1 *War is the Father*

The outbreak of World War I brought Korczak's new summer camp project to a halt, with his conscription into the Russian army in June 1914 (Falkowska, 1989). At the time, Korczak lived on Wielka Street, not the Children's Home (*ibid*). However, he was sorely missed once gone, as food shortages worsened, and the children's health deteriorated. Donations from former children and Jewish emigres supported the *Home*. Polish child mortality rose sharply from the outset of the war, especially for institutions. With the liquidation of Russian and Prussian authorities, aid organisations filled voids by providing food and shelter for children, the elderly and the disabled. Hampered by a lack of provisions and funds, the Poles worked feverishly to assist their homeland. The patriotism of the *Polonia* diaspora and in-country action took the form of 'struggle and persistence', a motto readily embraced by men and women from all walks of life (Przeniosło, 2016). This country-wide action is unified under *Ratujcie Dzieci!* or Save the Children laying the foundation for the future international organisation associated with Jebb (Figure 18).

Marking an anniversary, Korczak's children's newspaper *Mały Przegląd*, The Little Review, published on the unique relationship of Korczak's children with US President Herbert Hoover (Kaliszer, 1937). Before becoming President, Hoover visited

Warsaw as the American Relief Administration (ARA) founder. In 1916, Hoover's masterstroke was to break a diplomatic stalemate between Britain and occupying Germany by securing funds from the Rockefeller Foundation to help feed the starving Polish children.



Figure 18: Poster Ratujcie Dzieci! (Save the Children!), 1916
Source: National Library of Poland

As Polish orphanages were targets of save the children actions during WWI, Korczak's publications provide a unique ground-level insight into the origins of international humanitarian aid, usually told from the perspective of the donor countries and financiers. The juxtaposition of Korczak's activities against reports concludes that he shaped the orphanages as a self-governing model to spread via cooperative networks, preparing for the inevitable crisis affording such opportunity. The POLIN museum exhibition includes a chapter that overviews this tumultuous period well by cataloguing the peace treaty process, political movements, the reformation of the *Sejm* (Parliament) and the increase of ethnic tensions and anti-Semitism.

In addition to war casualties, this chapter provides statistics on the hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths and millions of displaced persons, victims, refugees, and fugitives across Polish lands. The summary of the destruction of industry highlights how agriculture was of greatest concern for the new Polish State with no friendly or reliable trading partners and facing a considerable challenge rebuilding its economy. However, these elements disappear in further analysis, as curator Tamara Sztyma (2018) insists the historical context for Korczak serves merely as a 'backdrop of grand events' (p.27). She justifies the disconnect of international and national activities from the life and work of Korczak by declaring him apolitical and as centred only on his children 'in (his) own backyard' (*ibid*). Korczak's reports from the war front quickly refute such views. In one example, he witnessed the utter devastation experienced by the 'Krupie' people in the borderlands to level criticism at the Jewish infighting with a scathing indictment;

Enough! Not only Jews suffer – the whole world is in blood and fire, in groans, in tears and in mourning.

(Falkowska, 1989, p.170)

Thus, I challenge the notion of Korczak as working in isolation, by demonstrating Korczak's connection to grand events and attribute his absence to his political failures.

Generally, accounts underestimate the role of the international aid program in shaping and being shaped by the political agenda. The General Relief Committee for the Victims of the War in Poland was established on January 9, 1915, to organise outside assistance. Working from headquarters in Switzerland and led by honorary presidents, Nobel laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz and world-renowned pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski [1860 – 1941] (Biskupski, 1986). The *Polonia* plan relied on perceived American neutrality, resources, and relative situational naivety (Paderewski, 1915; Paderewska, 2015). Thanks mainly to Paderewski's fame and concert fundraisers raising vast sums of money, he became a symbolic hero to unify over 4 million American Poles (*ibid*). London's elite clamoured to assist the internationally famous musician and Nobel laureates in ways other fundraisers could not have dreamt of (Herter, 2000). Leveraging her husband's fame, Helena Paderewska (2015) campaigned tirelessly in London, Paris, and New York, successfully recruiting 20000 members to her Polish White Cross.

The continuing aim of this chapter is to show how individuals and groups seized the masters' tools to influence nation-building. The Polish appeals for assistance piggybacked on those for Belgium with the American Relief Administration (ARA) overseen by American businessman Herbert Hoover, who partnered with Paderewski directly, supposedly returning an earlier debt (*ibid*). The campaign relied on propaganda, with musicians, artists, and writers well-versed in capturing hearts and minds (Figure 19). Tongue in cheek, Sienkiewicz (1915) addressed his plea to the West, as *Do Ludów Ucywilizowanych* [To Civilised Peoples]. Approximately 174 international organisations co-operated with Paderewski's Relief Committee. Only Germans failed/unable to join, which Balińska (1996) explains as 'understandable' given the sentiments generated against them by the Allies (p.430).



STRICKEN POLAND

(From the Appeal published in December 1914)

¶ The beautiful plains and forest lands of Poland are overrun at this hour with huge conflicting armies; towns and villages have been laid waste, industry and agriculture ruined. The Polish peasant, faithful lover of his soil, has seen his timber homestead burn, his children, his women-folk, driven from the home their gilded hands and inborn grace had beautified; ancestral foes have trampled anew the proudly-beloved fields by which he lives; his horses are gone, nothing remains to him but barren earth which Spring must find unploughed, unown.

¶ It is perhaps not exactly Great Britain's duty to feel so distant a calamity when other cries of distress are at her very door. But charity is neither in deed nor in effect wholly material. If England knew how great and deep-rooted are Poland's admiration and respect, how eagerly every expression of British sympathy is recorded, she would understand the moral value, out of all proportion to the actual sum, of every hundred pounds sent by her to the Polish sufferers.

Laurence Alma Tadema

POLISH VICTIMS RELIEF FUND

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chairman I. J. PADEREWSKI.
 MAJ-GEN. SIR IVOR HERBERT, Bt., C.B., C.M.G., M.P.
 FATHER BERNARD VAUGHAN, S.J. JOHN BUCHAN. H. E. MORGAN.
 THE RIGHT HON. CHARLES B. STUART WORTLEY, M.P., Hon. Treasurer.
 MISS LAURENCE ALMA TADEMA, Hon. Secretary.

11 HAYMARKET, LONDON, S.W.

JUL 24 1915

When answering their advertisements please mention WITTE'S FIVE.

Figure 19: Polish Victims' Relief Fund Poster, London 1914. Source: National Library of Poland

Under the branding of ARA, the quasi-private organisation enjoyed US government endorsement while operating outside its official mandate and serving American commercial interests. One explanation of the commitment to the program by US President Woodrow Wilson is ideological (Pease, 1986). Wilson announced ‘Bolshevism is steadily advancing westward; it is poisoning Germany. It cannot be stopped by force, but it can be stopped by food’ (Foster, 1981, p.221). Food distribution extended beyond Poland, with ARA delivering more than \$US1 billion in aid in less than a year, translating into millions of tons of food and other supplies across Europe (Kellogg, 1920). When one combines Hoover’s ‘Food Will Win the War’ slogan with his sentiment that food shortage caused the Russian Revolution, food becomes the mechanism with which the Poles will win the war against the Bolshevik threat and buffer the rest of Europe (Kellogg, 1920; Buschman, 2013). For this pioneering humanitarian approach, Little (2015) uses the term ‘contagion theory’ as a metaphor for stamping out the underlying dissent which produces radicalism and undermines attempts at stable democratic government. Interestingly, Little uses the metaphor of the aid program as an inoculation against the spread of communism without linking the project to the simultaneous health battle against the typhus epidemic.

In his book *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, Keynes (1920) attributes Hoover’s relief efforts as having ‘not only saved an immense amount of human suffering but averted a widespread breakdown of the European system’ (p.271). Sitting on the Paris Councils alongside Hoover and Wilson gave Keynes a unique position to assess the peace process, noting several critical factors necessary to stabilise Central Europe. He prioritised restoring economic production in areas affected by war and famine to export levels, rebuilding a comprehensive rail and communication network, supporting the scientific capacity of populations, the economic management of immature governments such as Poland and creating an entrepreneur class to counter

profiteering (*ibid*). The following section shows how Polish cooperative networks capitalised upon incoming support to achieve these goals.

In Buschman's (2013) dissertation, he discusses the philosophical underpinnings of the American relief efforts at length. Like others, his study claims that the few short years that Hoover's administration controlled the food production and distribution system influenced the war's outcome transforming economic systems along the way. He criticises Nash's conclusion from *Master of Emergencies* that Hoover used the war as an opportunity 'to justify a rapid transition to socialism in order to save the free market system during emergency conditions'. Instead, in what Buschman calls a 'national great experiment', Hoover's strategies aimed at cooperation but did not translate to a communist form of socialism (*ibid*, p.68-70). In both Buschman's assessment and Hoover's statements, certain vital elements are interesting concerning Hoover's Quaker heritage and their comparison to anarchist theories. Such findings support Guérard's (2017) label of Hoover's democratic libertarianism as a form of anarchism.

Firstly, most Western scholars misunderstand anti-State collectivism to misinterpret the autonomy conferred to local branches. The 1917 US Food Control Act introduced an attitude of '*govern not too much*', freeing the organisation from top-down oversight. Bias towards another form of control curbed the *laissez-faire* principles of the free market in favour of actively pursuing social and economic justice. Rather than symptomatic of the donor country's attitudes, this decentralised approach reflected the Eastern European mistrust of authorities and elevation of the economic values of cooperativism. Without state control or interference, the struggle over food production and distribution could change the nation's fabric from below. The political implications of these Weissman (1969) described as momentous.

Operating with unprecedented international power and immune to bureaucratic delay, these quasi-private, non-governmental organisations and networks welcomed

crisis to broaden their mandate (Horwitz, 2011). Though not explicitly articulating anarchist arguments, Borowy's (2008) article *Crisis as Opportunity* explains that these mechanisms serve as a motor of human progress as emergencies forced governments and the public to be more receptive to new ideas than usual. In other words, collectivist revolutionaries rely upon the anarchy created by conflict and emergency to reorganise society and seize greater power (Hoover, 1952). The ARA personnel comprised mostly veterans of US armed forces, harnessing the expertise of deployed railway engineers and agricultural and medical experts. During the next two years, Hoover's relief agency seized control of Central and Eastern Europe's means of production and communication channels while continuing to deliver \$150 million of food to children in 21 countries. The program encompassed Finland, the Balkans, Turkey and pressed against the Bolshevik controlled borders of Russia (*ibid*). The international community defined the scope for ARA and Herbert Hoover as primarily saving the children from famine by supplying the famed Hoover Meals.

The archives of the Hoover Institution confirm that food relief was only one aspect of the ARA agenda that helped fuel the economic reconstruction of Europe. In 1919, Hoover was not reporting on children's nutrition to the Allied Council but estimating the unemployment and coal output of Europe (Vucic & Sękowski, 2020). I calculated that of the \$US55 billion allocated to Poland, only 12% went to child feeding programs. In his report to the US Congress, Hoover (1920a) stated his primary purpose as 'protecting Poland from collapse' (p.65). He viewed the reinstated country as a buffer against the 'Bolshevik invasion' threatening the 'whole stability of Europe' (*ibid*). Likewise, I credit the Polish networks for protecting vulnerable, diverse populations from starvation, bread riots or violent revolutions to create a unified and independent Poland.

Censorship and war conditions complicate access to sources of Polish information, but earlier editions of newspapers provide insight into the political factions and their preparations for looming war (Perl, 1912). Aside from following developments in geopolitics, the gazette also demonstrates the Poles were acutely aware of the economic requirements for achieving and maintaining an independent nation-State. They assessed the distribution of industries, tabling production statistics for agriculture, textiles, mills, and factories. Thus, by 1912, revolutionaries had supplemented their political agenda with a proper economic evaluation regarding production shortfalls and unemployment in the event of successful independence (*ibid*). This preparation for self-government and organising society for life after revolution reveals the stark difference between the Poles and the Russian revolutionaries (Roszkowski, 1992).

Coinciding with his involvement in Poland, Hoover (1917) employs similar ideological phrasing to the cooperatives, in his address to US Congress, that ‘bread is the fetish of food; that without the loaf, [...] you could not preserve public tranquillity [...] That is the price of peace’ (p.375). The Bolsheviks only coined the slogan *Land, Peace, Bread* after the Russian Revolution, attempting to secure victory without prolonging the war internally (Breen, 1994). As Mandel (2009) writes, the Bolsheviks also encouraged peasants into cooperative ventures but had little preparation or tangible success. Similarly, for Russian anarchists during the same period, Copp (1993) attributed failures to their lack of efficient organisation at even a regional level. In February 1917, angry workers and housewives demonstrated on the streets of Petrograd (Engel, 1997). While Avrich (1967) described the unrest as a ‘dream coming true’ for the Russian anarchists, he also admitted these were not ideological protests but ‘bread riots’ as people starved (p.123). There may be a case arguing that such riots were not directly food shortage related but protesting the moral order of the economy and

inequality (Thompson, 1971). This phenomenon is well suited to my description earlier of democracy as a force of nature. However, the lack of compassion for ordinary people's suffering is evident when elites view starvation and desperation as their revolutionary spark.⁴⁵

Unfortunately, the armistice in the West meant little to Eastern Europe, as new governments such as Finland floundered, and Poland continued fighting active regional wars 'with four different adversaries, one at each corner of her land' (Kellogg, 1920, p.275). The ingenious grassroots strategies of *saving the children* established kitchens, orphanages, and clinics won tentatively by the Peace Treaty and Piłsudski's army. Therefore, in anarcho-cooperative terms, an apolitical façade allowed existing illegal networks to surface across unstable and dangerous territories to establish a new civil society.

The revolutionary change in microeconomics mirrors Kropotkin's (1898) advice in *The Conquest of Bread*, as the war had obliterated supply chains and production. However, to restructure the economy as quickly as possible, the Poles introduced distribution based upon Hoover's business and logistical efficiency. Bringing in American expertise still satisfies Kropotkin's conditions and Woodcock's (1942) observation that 'a Revolution without bread is doomed' (p.3). Furthermore, the existing network of co-operatives provided the foundation to decentralise the American aid program. Fortunately, the Polish cooperative movement had experimented with food distribution and control for more than 50 years, proving the cornerstone of the post-war rebuild. Although the *Spolem* cooperatives began amongst left-wing revolutionaries, strategic appropriation by the right-wing National Democrats expanded the network rapidly. Their apparent cooperation with the occupying German forces swelled the

⁴⁵ Dean, S. (2016, December 31). The communist cannibals: Shocking images reveal the depravation suffered by peasants forced to eat HUMANS during the 1920s Russian famine. Daily Mail. Retrieved from: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4076244/Distressing-photos-1920s-Russian-famine-turned-hopeless-peasants-cannibals-five-million-people-starved-death.html>

organisation to over 500 committees at district and municipal levels by the summer of 1915, fully operational by the time foreign organisations arrived (Przeniosło, 2016). The Americans described the Polish distribution network they encountered as remarkable (Palmer Fuller, 1920).

Out of the misery of war, cooperativism touted work as the path forward for a new future that gathered strength from the bottom up to become the basis for their new world order. Hence, the emphasis was on developing the economy overall with the equal participation of disadvantaged and oppressed regions and people. Moreover, the argument relies upon cooperative action beyond major cities, as the economic program aimed for industrial and sector diversification across all social strata. The democratic strategy appeared simultaneously with the Polish military action to mirror Rosa Luxemburg's insistence on using revolutionary tactics to gain a majority. She based her socialist vision upon the realities she experienced living in Warsaw. She articulated the viewpoint to scorn sole leadership by a revolutionary vanguard, understanding that all people must take part to transform life oppressed for centuries (Le Blanc, 2009).

The proviso for official US aid arriving in 1918 was to hand over relief operations into Polish hands. The following year, the activities of the American relief program transferred to a new organisation under the auspices of the Polish Ministry of Health, the *Polsko-Amerykański Komitet Pomocy Dzieciom* (PAKPD, Polish-American Children's Relief Committee). To orchestrate the transnational action on disease and child mortality, Hoover co-operated with a fellow American millionaire, J.D. Rockefeller. The latter funded efforts by the League of Nations' newly appointed health director, a medical colleague of Korczak's, Ludwik Rajchman [1881 – 1965]. Hoover selected Maurice Pate as the executive director of PAKPD to lead his Polish operations in Warsaw, working closely with Rajchman's health programs. Based on their experiences in Poland, the trio would later establish UNICEF after WWII. The solid

public stance orchestrated by Korczak immediately upon his return to Warsaw secured PAKPD membership, his role in the campaign, albeit a late one, representing the Jewish Institute of Aid for Children (PAKPD, 1922).

Research on these initiatives from English-speaking scholars obscures the hidden history obtained from Polish perspectives and sources. For example, there is a stark difference between the PAKPD and organisations in other countries undertaking similar work, such as the Czech-Slovak Red Cross. I located the original reports from both to find the PAKPD (1922) boldly portraying the American and Polish eagles as symbolising their (unofficial) alliance (Figure 20). The Poles also name many personnel, including the volunteers, alongside the leaders to flatten the hierarchy (Pate, 1923). Efficient, logical arguments were imbued with emotional human stories and motifs of innocent children to overcome the animosity between enemies and make widespread relief action possible post-war.

The Polish government organised the transport infrastructure for donated foodstuffs, entrusting local PAKPD committees with oversight of the kitchens to supply the food. At the height of the action in May 1920, it operated over 6000 aid points across 3,200 towns and villages with 20,000 local staff and volunteers. The scale of the war had resulted in many orphans, with PAKPD (1923) supporting 1,361 orphanages over the three years. Beyond providing direct material aid, the organisation also supported childcare centres, youth clubs and summer camps valued for children's health, development, and general wellbeing. The PAKPD central administration created work departments for accounting, medical, hygiene, statistics, transport, legal, media and a regional network for the operation. The structure prioritised handover for the governance of an independent Poland, with local staff and volunteers undertaking most of the work rather than foreigners (*ibid*).

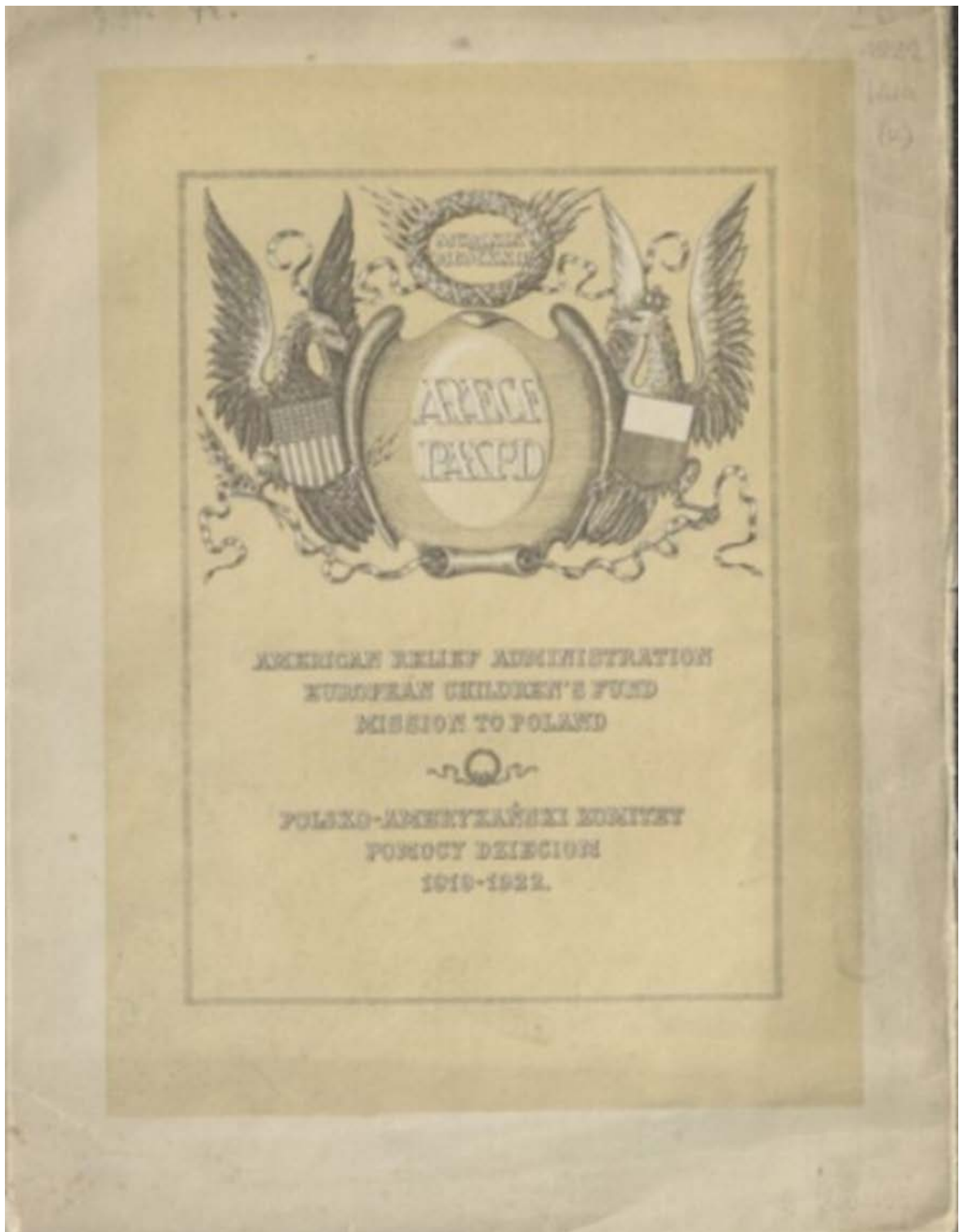


Figure 20: American Relief Administration European Children's Fund Mission to Poland PAKPD Report, 1923.

Source: National Library of Poland

My analysis of the PAKPD operation from 1919 to 1922 finds that it incorporated all the Keynesian economic factors into its aims and operation. The foreigners entrusted the Polish government with the transport infrastructure for donated foodstuffs, with local committees overseeing the kitchens and equipment to supply the food to children (Figure 21; Figure 22; Figure 23). Drawing volunteers and staff from within the communities ensured dedicated workers with local knowledge. The presence of foreign experts was sparing as local inspectors ensured the maintenance of nutrition and hygiene standards across regions. The premise appeared strictly apolitical, designed unilaterally to supply food to children assisting Christian and Jewish (approximately 70% and 29%) and a small proportion of Muslim communities. The PAKPD quickly transformed the model of caring for orphans, the sick and the hungry into a broad network of collaborators and sympathisers.



Figure 21: Feeding orphans in an outdoor PAKPD kitchen. Source: National Library of Poland



Figure 22: PAKPD Storefront for distribution of essential goods. Source: National Library of Poland



Figure 23: Jewish aid packages dispensed at the Warsaw office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee as part of ARA program, 1920. Source: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

By examining the features of the relief program, the rapid decision-making process, avoidance of restrictive organisational structures and willingness to dissolve the hierarchies, networks, and most importantly, trade unions, I identify the cooperative movement required anarchist rather than socialist elements. Hence, the Polish-American partnership facilitated self-government while meeting the criteria of an anarchist organisation being voluntary, functional and temporary. Firstly, the inner circle comprised international volunteers whose roles retained the temporary quality needed to build local capacity. The PAKPD report reveals a flat organisational structure in naming volunteers on the ground alongside the leaders at the top, flattening the hierarchy. I note influential women and minority interests as key in garnering broader public support. Their strategies mirror Bakunin's rejection of control via a centralised government and insistence that the people gain voluntary experience in governance at a community level. For example, one Korczak associate secured the presidency of her city by governing the local aid program. In 1918, Maria Kelles-Krauz (1882-1969) stated her goal in volunteering with PAKPD was not food distribution or helping orphans but ensuring equal political and economic citizenship rights for women in newly independent Poland. She wrote;

at this critical moment of action when the old forced the world order into collapse, and the snowmen of superstition are falling apart, at that moment there should also be a firm autumn voice of women'

(Wyborcza Radom, 2019).

The individuals of these revolutionary circles, historian Snyder (2017), described as engaging 'in the politics of urgent moments' (p.xviii). Decades of co-optation of the master's tools prepared the Poles to seize the instability of a crisis as their opportunity for direct action and mutual aid, this time resulting in successful independence. Loosely affiliated cooperative institutions dedicated to medicine, education, and commerce, assisted sick and starving populations, often in dangerous and isolated locations.

In line with anarchist predictions, Kinna (2016b) points out that building a new society must address everyday needs through direct action without domination or hierarchy. It also satisfies Frank's (2013) conception of prefiguration, anti-capitalism, and fluid identities, where the oppressed controlled their path to liberation. Where medicine, railways and commerce had once served oppression, profit, and war, this network of doctors, educators, and workers refashioned the tools into serving humanity. The paradigm of decentralisation accompanied by solidarity mimics Kropotkin's admiration for the Swiss system rather than the French. The French favoured meticulous geometric planning revealing a bias where every region looks towards Paris with little concern for the rural. The capital provides a lifeline for the economy, transport, communication, and culture. Thus, the prosperity of a centralised state and provinces depends upon links with the capital. Modelling their networks on Switzerland instead, the aid distribution could guard against the fragmentation of the new Polish State by serving the tiniest commune and reaching geographically, politically, and culturally isolated groups. Evidence of the significance attached to the rail distribution network appears within the campaign's infographic, representing food tonnage as a railcar (Figure 24). The railway networks facilitated the sheer scale of the Great War, symbolised in Hoover's description as the train of the war-god. The American and Polish relief efforts reasserted the train as a constructive innovation.

Success hinged on the organisational plan creating three regional city centres governing all regions across the network. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the diverse ideological positions at play in the various actions across Eastern and Central Europe, it is sufficient to note the existence of different views held by politicians, scientists and professionals transcending national, ethnic and religious boundaries. Funding for the campaign also came via non-governmental organisations,

churches and individuals. The relief operations were strategically complex, instrumental in reducing child mortality and reforming social practices in the care of children.

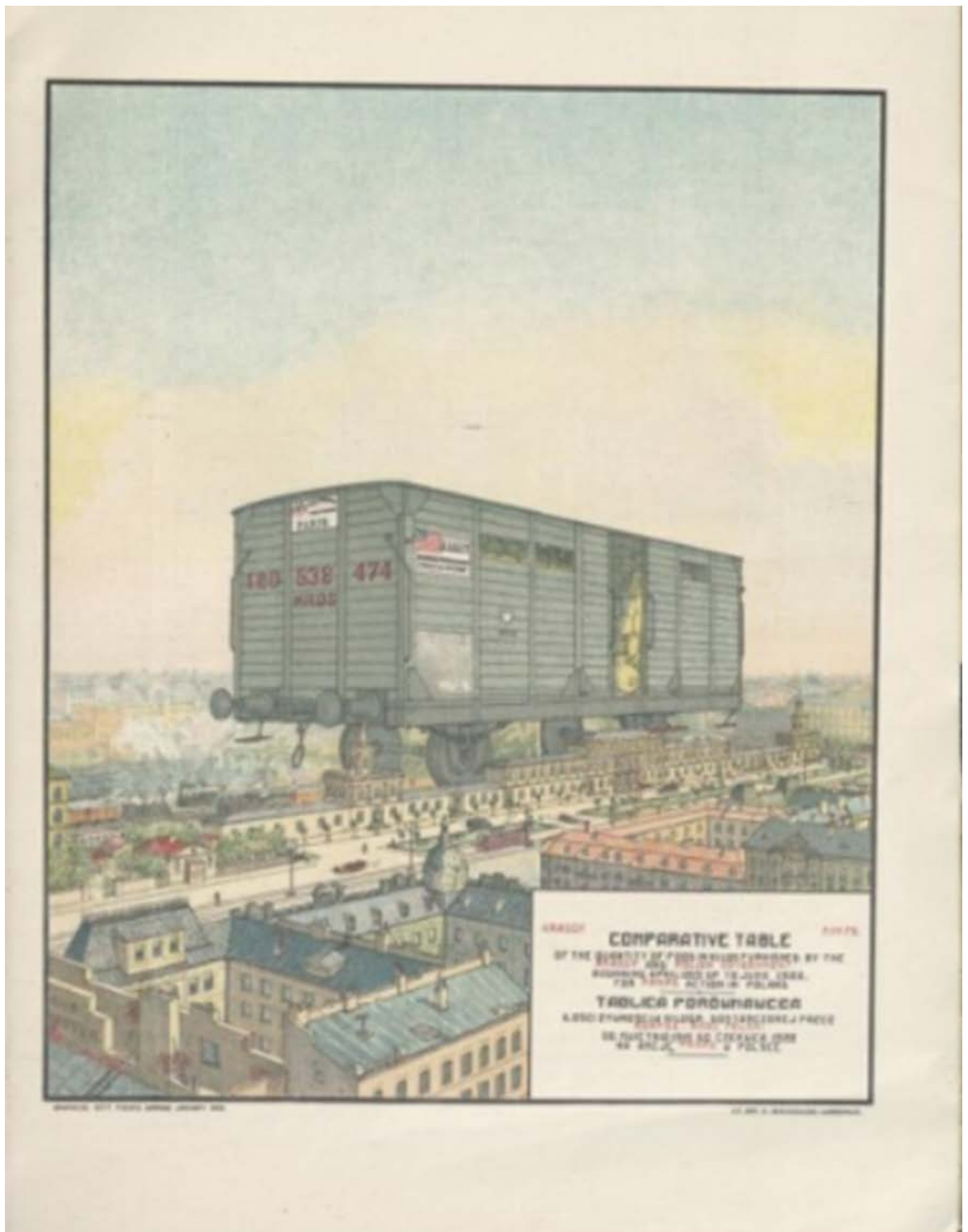


Figure 24: PAKPD infographic depicting food tonnage as a rail wagon dwarfing Warsaw, 1923

Source: National Library of Poland.

10.2 *Eulogy for the Louse*

War meant the mobilization of most doctors, destruction of homes and the military appropriation of existing health infrastructure, leaving cities vulnerable to epidemiological threats. The conditions exacerbated by the mass movement of civilians and troops became conducive to the spread of epidemics, especially typhus (Przeniosło & Przeniosło, 2018). The idea of the disease reaching their homeland terrified the German authorities, who sought to address the danger. In her research into Ludwik Rajchman's role during this period, Balińska (1996; 1998) gives a comprehensive account of how Poland made a mark on world health matters. Undertaking excellent research on this family, she recounts Rajchman's sister, Helena Radlińska, contributing to international social work and pedagogy, while his cousin, Ludwik Hirzfeld, pioneered medical breakthroughs while leading the Warsaw State Hygiene Institute. However, Balińska's work on Rajchman and Hirzfeld (2010) fails to provide insight into Korczak's relationships with this network by over-reliance on existing biographical sources. Significantly, Korczak maintained a life-long connection to the family, having begun an acrimonious relationship publicly criticising their wealth and influence in Warsaw. Of note is that Hirzfeld visited Korczak in the Ghetto as a friend and admirer of his noble work (Falkowska, 1989).

Returning to Rajchman's success relates to seizing opportunities offered by conflicts. Post-war conditions produced a large scale and urgent health crisis as the League of Nations assembled to deal with the emergency of typhus in Poland (WHO, 1958). As armies clawed each other for control, the scale of the health disaster befalling the 28 million civilians grew, with the epidemic threatening to burst into a pandemic. As a result, the League adopted a resolution in 1920 to establish a permanent international Health Organisation, the precursor of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Rapidly, the new Warsaw Institute rivalled the Pasteur Institute in Paris, and

foreign confidence grew as Poles demonstrated capabilities to undertake international health and child welfare initiatives. As an experienced doctor and medical researcher, Rajchman successfully directed the Kings College laboratory in London. Furthermore, he was fluent in five languages, politically connected and culturally astute. He orchestrated a meteoric rise to head the League of Nations' medical division (*ibid*).

The Polish government organised an international sanitary conference on behalf of the League's Epidemic Commission, becoming the first post-war assembly attended by all European representatives, leading to twelve bilateral health conventions (Balińska, 2018). The success of the anti-epidemic campaign saw the League emerge from the conference as the trusted supra-national co-ordinator for Europe, stabilising relations between Germany and Russia. However, the peace treaty surprised Western powers unaware of the subversive work by many actors in backroom deals. Perhaps the answer lies in Kropotkin's theory of forgiveness rather than retaliation. For example, Poland brokered a deal with the American aid program, which would feed more than 10 million Russians daily (Adams, 2009). However, the League's health section formation in 1921 was political rather than charitable, as one director described the Polish doctors involved as 'Machiavellian' (Howard-Jones & WHO, 1978, p.30). Under the leadership of Rajchman, the League's epidemic commission worked with in-country authorities to build local capacity for governance in undertaking and sustaining comprehensive health solutions, from quarantine facilities to mobile clinics (Figure 25). Trans-national cooperation ensured information about outbreaks and migration was shared, contributing significantly to the success of infection control (Staples & Sayward, 2006, p.129). This decentralised model underpinned an unrealised UNICEF template intended to build grassroots capacity for leadership, democracy, and economic development amongst the world's oppressed people.



Figure 25: Polish American Medical Unit Gray Samaritans, 1919. Source: Hoover Institute



Figure 26: School children greet Herbert Hoover in Warsaw, 1919. Source: National Library of Poland

The celebration of the 128th anniversary of the May Constitution in a reborn Poland shows Polish children greeting Hoover, planting trees, and staging performances (Figure 26). To mark Poland's new political independence, Korczak staged a comeback as a leading spokesperson with a series of rapid publications. Keen to broaden his mandate while still at the war front, Korczak penned his cherished book *How to Love a Child*, with the subtitle *The Child in the Family*. Aiming to showcase the versatility of his philosophy and approach beyond the Jewish orphan, he followed quickly by writing *Educational Moments* for teachers to showcase his expertise and adaptability to various situations, either the home or classroom. He also published a series of political articles, *Co się dzieje na świecie?* (What's happening in the world?) - tailored for children and a semi-literate adult audience. Referring to the peace talks in Paris, Korczak explained the international efforts attempted to ensure that:

this was the last war, so the strong did not harm, so no more were killed, wounded, widows and orphans, hunger, disease and tears (...) how (all peoples) [...] may work together, each in their own place, how they want, but for the common good, helping each other, exchanging what each has enough of, coal to one who has run out – and also tea for sugar, sugar for coal and coal for fish.

The focus of this passage is a curious one for Korczak's first publication after Poland regained freedom, as economic trade somewhat overshadows the armistice. Though published in November 1918 to coincide with a peace declaration, Korczak insightfully placed the world economic order at the heart of the peace process and people's concerns.

Tempering the euphoria, Korczak (1919) published a straightforward article in *Gazeta Polska* (Polish Gazette) stating the work, struggle and sacrifice had to continue beyond State independence;

Humanity is divided into men, women and children." [...] Perhaps it should be in first place: children. [...] have to rebuild, furnish, replough, reforest, extract; have to xxx, orphans to feed, to raise them...hoho! [...] Because if it will be as it was if history will signpost its footprints from assault to assault, from crime to crime through fetish in crowns on thrones or mannequins nodding their heads in

front of their selected crowd – if you do not think, the collective effort and their victorious march in mastering the laws and issues - they will be history - hey, you poor children [...]. We are responsible to the child that she was, was and is, is and will be a war, that thousands have died and are trembling; lice, tuberculosis, and longing for their father's hut. It is not yet the spring festival, but the day of souls' - a martyr's child.

(Falkowska, 1989, p.177)

Despite publishing a somewhat negative critique of the new Polish republic, Korczak advanced to the rank of major in a military promotion (Falkowska, 1989). With the Polish Army still at war, Korczak continued as a doctor at the epidemiological hospital in nearby Łódź, an event that again changed his life course. Korczak intended for the arrival of Maria Falska and her refugee children at a nearby orphanage to challenge opinions by showcasing his work in a Polish model. However, failure to strike a partnership within the existing institution forced Falska to move. Meanwhile, Korczak's supporters rushed to his aid while continuing his heavy workload as an army doctor, lecturer and writer. Likewise, the new Polish government did not underestimate Korczak's promotional abilities. Marking his achievements only a few months after his return, the *Centralny Komitet Pomocy dla Dzieci* (Central Committee for Aid for Children), under the leadership of the new First Lady, Helena Paderewska, secured him as her adviser (Falkowska, 1989, p.176).

The frantic schedule took its toll, and Korczak contracted typhus. In 1919, over 230,000 typhoid cases appeared in Poland, with almost 20,000 deaths (Foster, 1981). Though the epidemic ravaged the country, this beloved man falling ill was a newsworthy event reported in February 1920 by the *Robotnik (Worker)* gazette as 'Janusz Korczak, outstanding pedagogue and creator of the best shelters for children in Poland, lies ill with typhus'.

Years later, Korczak commemorated this period in the orphanage by displaying a triptych of portraits; Herbert Hoover, General Józef Piłsudski and Miss Esterka. While

historians recognise the first two as world leaders, the third was a teacher in the Home who died while nursing the children during the typhoid epidemic. The portraits symbolise the three decisive battles fought in Warsaw, promising a new world order. The three figures represent strategic elements that made the children's survival and millions of others possible during and after the war: financial and technical assistance, military power, and health care. The inclusion of a teacher amongst two international giants is indicative of the magnitude of the health crisis, as even with funds, expertise and political goodwill, the battle needed the work of such dedicated volunteers. The fight against typhus involved tending the sick, and the dirty work of delousing required shaving heads and bathing resistant local populations. Volunteers also disinfected homes, laundering clothing, and bedding. Entering homes and crowded sick bays was not only unpleasant but was also dangerous. Many medical professionals and carers succumbed to the disease themselves, as did Korczak in the army hospital. His mother died while nursing him (Falkowska, 1989).

Generally, readers of Korczak's Diary accept that 'sitting at the edge of his mother's grave' drove him to the edge of suicide (Lifton, 1988; Falkowska, 1989, p.181). Though certainly Korczak is racked with guilt and sadness, I offer an alternative hypothesis. As Korczak lies gravely ill, other doctors gain prominence and influence. For example, the League of Nations named Rajchman as medical director, Hirzfeld takes leadership of the State Hygiene Institute, and the Health Minister chose Marcel Gromski from the PAKPD membership as his advisor on children's matters. All three would rise to enjoy international fame and influence. Reminiscing about this period, Korczak recalled being without friends after his closest had died in the preceding years. Of course, he returned from the war to many friendships, the company of his directors and other supporters, but he refers specifically to his loss of political connections. As colleagues like Rajchman achieved meteoric success, Korczak (1942/1967) agreed to

‘not get in each other’s way’, consoling himself with the notion of ‘political demarcation of spheres of influence. So far and no farther, nor higher. You and I’ (p.475).

Korczak’s despondent tone is not solely related to the loss of his mother, but the disappointment of life-long career ambitions unrealised as others charge ahead. It is relatively straightforward that Korczak’s ambitions revolved around disseminating his orphanage model as tiny institutional seeds cultivating the cultural soil. As his medical associates took great strides in public health, Korczak languished as he attempted various strategies to bolster his profile. Not exhibiting despair over his mother’s death, Korczak’s publicity drive continued unabated. He delivered five lectures on PAKPD’s behalf at the Warsaw Hygiene Society in April-May 1921, opening the series with the iconic *Wiosna i Dziecko* (The Spring and the Child). Alluding to the ongoing goals of the ‘revolutionary’ spring beyond that of State independence, he demanded the end of factional fighting; ‘to stop spitting the child out on the left or the right’. He insisted that considerations must move beyond birthrates by reforming the society into which the child is born. To a packed audience at the PAKPD event, Korczak demanded that as children comprise a third of humanity, they are owed the fruit and riches of the earth not by grace but by according to their human rights; ‘children - will not be, but, already are, people!’ (*ibid*).

Polish supporters were equally surprised at the Korczak snub, as one newspaper described his institution as of the highest standard of education, equal or better than any in Europe (Falkowska, 1989). Although lauded as having created the best children’s shelters in Poland and visited by many foreign dignitaries, Korczak’s emphasis on the institutional mechanisms did not impress everyone. His insistence on preserving children’s cultural and community connections would not please the progressive scientific educator who perhaps branded his experiment as too Jewish, too Polish, or

just insufficiently universal for the cosmopolitan community. Inspired by the Homes, visitors such as Piaget (1977) often misunderstood its close theory-practice relationship, reinterpreted it, and appropriated it within psychological or philanthropic paradigms. Of the many guests, it appears Lenin's wife, Krupskaya, understood the underlying political agenda. As one of the Soviet Education Ministers, she sent representatives to investigate Korczak's approach and engaged writers to create new fairytales and school textbooks for Marxist propaganda. In the spirit of forgiveness, this Russian communist partnered with the Polish-Jewish patriot during the tentative first steps of Soviet-Polish co-existence. Public gratitude for his assistance came from Krupskaya, who in 1922 translated and published Korczak's (1920/1993) second volume on the *Internat* (Boarding School), writing the Forward as follows;

I am convinced that everyone should read 'How to Love the Child', this book encourages reflection on many issues, encourages careful analysis and assessment of many aspects of life in children's homes, to take a more careful look at the psyche of resident children.

The enthusiasm of the Russians may have contributed somewhat to an unfortunate association of his system with communism, a dangerous position on the heels of the Polish-Bolshevik war. The unexpected victory of the Poles in 1920 over the Red Army exposed some members of socialist parties as sympathising with Soviet goals rather than an independent Poland. The Trotsky followers, known as the 'Jewish Bolsheviks', had little in common with the Polish Jews but fuelled currents of mistrust and anti-Semitism nonetheless (Kadish, 2013). Hence, reviews of Korczak's 'Jewish' and 'worker-friendly' books were fraught with political danger even when positive. For example, Józefowicz wrote her article *Ofensywa na młodzież* (Offensive on the Young, 1923) attacking the children's gazette, *In the Sunshine* (Falkowska, 1989). Calling for a boycott of the journal, she described it as 'party propaganda' (p.201). Although not

solely directed at Korczak, another reviewer sought to defend him against communist charges by teachers that 'Korczak propagates Bolshevism education' (*ibid*).

Generally, the turn of the century had seen a backlash against children's institutions, with the family model promoted as a preferable option. In contrast to Korczak's orphanages, the Orphan's Nest model evoked back to nature sentiments many yearned for after years of war. The result was a deinstitutionalisation movement advocating family-style homes and rural schools to solve the orphan crisis. Loyal supporters persisted by writing letters to foreign colleagues asking for financial assistance for Korczak's endeavours while he busily maintained his public presence. A newspaper associated with the Polish cooperative movement praised the enlightened organisation of his new Our Home for Polish children as committed to equality, democracy, and transparency of its institutions. Emerging from miserable conditions, the achievements of the children in running the building and grounds are extraordinary. Like Rajchman, Korczak (1942/1967) had apprenticed himself in Europe to gain his paediatric speciality and then, in self-described terms, got 'carried away' embarking on his ambitious project to 'sculpt' society from below (p.450). He expresses some disappointment for resigning from the children's hospital, admiring doctors who stayed the course. He had paid tribute to those tackling typhus by publishing a children's book on Louis Pasteur. Rather than dismiss the book as simply informative for children, much later one colleague recalled Korczak's explanation for writing it as follows:

*I wrote 'Stubborn Boy' right now - at a time when cruelty and spiritual slavery weaken us, at a time when the Nazi craze is spreading around, and devote their lives not to annihilate man, but to liberate him, to enrich and ennoble the human being.*⁴⁶
(Zerubawel Gilead (1981) quoted in Witkowska, 2021)

The clause reinforces the notion of master's tools, where medicine could both annihilate and liberate. Witkowska (2021) muses on Korczak's reasons for publishing at that time,

⁴⁶ Zerubawel Gilead (1981) quoted in Witkowska (2021).

and I add that it coincides with Rachman's dismissal from the international health arena. I suggest this was a man that could engineer resistance, replicating his role during World War I to secure Poland's independence from the German Empire. Later, Korczak's (1942/1967) reminiscences reveal his struggles with envy and regrets from this period, recollecting:

I do not extend myself. I do not try to go deeper into a subject that I have fathomed to the bottom. Indeed, for the first seven years, I am precisely a sort of unassuming resident doctor in a hospital. After that, I am bothered by a nasty feeling of having deserted. I betray the sick child, medicine and the hospital. I am carried away by a false ambition: physician and sculptor of the soul of the child. Soul. No more, no less.

Oh, you old fool, you have made a mess of your life and your cause! You got what you deserve!

Braude-Heller, a hysterical flounder, an idler with the mentality of a hospital cleaner, now represents this important sphere of life, a maitre d'hotel (XX) dabbling in hygiene.

For that, I went around hungry, down-at-heels, in the clinics of three European capitals.

Better to keep quiet about it.

p.450

In a dream sequence, Korczak (1942/1967) stands on stage with his children as wealthy Americans throw money, hinting of jealousy that the Rockefeller Foundation funded Rajchman and Piaget while he missed out.

One newspaper protested that if 'Korczak worked in Switzerland, the whole world would know his name' (Głodowski, 1920, p.6). It hints that the issue dates back to earlier rivalries, where the Voice group had been vocal opponents of Sienkiewicz, later placing Korczak at odds with the powerful émigré group directed by the celebrated writer and his aristocratic supporters. The new Ministry formed partnerships favouring old colleagues and political affiliations (Faszczka, 2017). For example, the publisher of *Wspomnienie o Sienkiewiczu* (Memories of Sienkiewicz, Lausanne, 1916), Jan Perłowski, became the new vice-minister for foreign affairs and the legal advisor to the Polish delegation for the League of Nations. Though Korczak regained some influence by joining the PAKPD board, the Polish government favoured other candidates, and thus in

a tokenistic gesture, they restricted his representation to only 25% of institutions serving Jewish communities. Meanwhile, the right-wing party fanned suspicion about the commitment of minorities to a Polish state, challenging their rights to vote.

In summary, Hoover's political motives were rather explicit regarding the 'disease of Bolshevism', and the Soviets were suspicious from the outset of the use of 'food as a weapon' (Patenaude, 2007, p.1). However, the accounts by Foster (1981), Marshall (2008), Mahood (2009) and Patenaude (1992; 2007) all represent the Poles as passive recipients and victims much like the children, and none consider the possibility that the image of children and women differed markedly in Eastern Europe to that of the West (Figure 27; Figure 28).



Figure 27: Lwów Eaglets during the Polish- Bolshevik War. Source: Wikipedia Public Domain



Figure 28: Liga Kobieta (Women's League), Lwów 1920. Source: Bibliotheque Nationale de France

10.3 The Little Insurgents

Rebranding the Save the Children fund in London as politically neutral and secular effectively side-stepped British, French, and Polish political opposition. Propaganda assisted the *save the children* action coordinated by ARA to overcome the hostility towards feeding enemy children to extend across former Prussian, Austrian and Russian territories. Under the guise of philanthropy, *save the children* facilitated political strategies geared towards the independence of small nation-states. As Kuźma-Markowska (2015) outlines, the appeals capitalised upon beliefs about both women and children and the role of the strong State to protect the weak, especially one with good financial standing, such as the United States. The various humanitarian organisations employed a vast array of tactics to convince the West to care about the plight of children in Central Europe. The negative perception of propaganda that Bernays (1928/2005)

attached to the public deceit during WWI is an apt description for the *save the children* action serving the political agenda. The imagery of the Polish woman as maternally devoted to innocent children had a strong presence within the action (Figure 32). The imagery of childhood innocence left a legacy abroad, but internally the *save the children* campaign had already fashioned Polish children into patriots (Figure 30; Figure 31; Figure 33).

Scholars such as Tobin (2014) criticise the vulnerability most associate with children compared to adults. However, this feature is notably absent in the Polish sentiments, where portrayals of the little brigands are reminiscent of those often celebrated by Korczak. Though Korczak's publications were often at the forefront of participatory practice, seeking and promoting children's opinions through surveys, letters to the editor, interviews and even art analysis became increasingly popular (*Polski Komitet Opieki nad Dzieckiem*, 1928). Korczak successfully reinforced an image of the Polish child as disrupters, protesters and activists demanding their rights, as seen in a famous poster for the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Figure 29).

POLSKI KOMITET OPIEKI NAD DZIECKIEM



Deklaracja praw dziecka.

1. **Każde dziecko** powinno mieć zabezpieczony normalny rozwój fizyczny i duchowy.
2. **Dziecko głodne** winno być nakarmione.
3. **Dziecko chore** – pielęgnowane.
4. **Dziecko wykołojone** – zwrócone na właściwą drogę.
5. **Dziecko upośledzone** – otoczone opieką.
6. **Dziecko-sierota** i opuszczone – przygarnięte i wspomagane.
7. **Dziecko** przed innymi winno otrzymać pomoc w czasie klęski.
8. **Każde dziecko** winno być przygotowane do zarobkowania na życie.
9. **Dziecko** winno być zabezpieczone przed wszelkim wyzyskiem.
10. **Dziecko** winno być wychowane w przekonaniu, że obowiązkiem jego jest najlepsze swoje cechy oddać na usługi współbraci.

Figure 29: Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 193-, Polish Committee of Child Care.

Source: National Library of Poland



Figure 30: Polish 'Save the Children' poster, 1917. Source: National Library of Poland



Figure 31: Monument to the Little Insurgent in the Warsaw Old Town.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Deeply ingrained in the Polish psyche is a celebration of the Little Insurgent. The most famous and controversial portrayal is a child wearing a German soldier's rifle, helmet, and boots (Figure 31). The tension is evident to historians such as Wysocki, as most contemporary Poles wish to keep children away from violence, conflict and fighting, but this forms part of the Polish story he argues (Lubański, 2018). There is no intention for The Little Insurgent to be an incentive of war or violence but remains for Wysocki 'an unfortunate symbol of our troubled history and the Polish experience of difficult childhoods' (*ibid*). A homage to the nameless and courageous children who died fighting for our freedom.

There remains a false image of children only as passive and traumatised victims of war. Repeated wars fashioned various roles for Polish children and youth as brave and capable revolutionary fighters, spies, couriers, traders, and smugglers saving their families, communities and the nation during uncertain times. Avoiding such political-historical context of childhoods, Sztyma (2018) cites the depiction of war only as a 'backdrop of grand events' for Korczak's work (p.27). She justifies disconnecting political activity from Korczak and the children by labelling him as only interested in democracy 'in (his) own backyard' (*ibid*). This chapter challenges such understanding of Korczak's responses as isolated by presenting evidence of social movements treating children seriously as citizens of the nation. In his usual style of political commentary, Korczak addressed the children directly in cooperative magazine Sunshine. He repeated the fragment known as "Life" awarded to each child leaving the orphanage;

We do not give you anything. We do not give you God because you will have to find Him within your own soul with solitary efforts. We do not give you a Homeland, because Her you will have to find through your own work of heart and mind. We do not give you Love of the people because there is no love without forgiveness, and forgiveness - it's a trouble, it's a hardship that everyone has to undertake themselves. We give you only one thing: "A longing for a better life, that does not exist, but someday it will be, for a life of Truth and Justice. Maybe this longing will lead you to God, Homeland and Love.

(Wolins, 1967, p.10)

Heralding the status of children amongst the adults, he reminded the crowds that national independence was insufficient, and work still needed to be done.

While the government floundered above and Poland's existence appeared precarious, the doctors of the PAKPD repeated the call to arms targeting women and children to secure the needs of their communities. The simple booklets adapted their titles from Mickiewicz's revolutionary poem, *Do Matek Polek* (To Polish Mothers), presenting health and hygiene activities as heroic endeavours that still require more sacrifice (Figure 32). The publication *Do Dzieci Polskich* (To Polish Children) urged children to establish their own Junior Red Cross Societies and school cooperatives to secure their communities' essential health and nutritional needs. Besides overtly flouting American-Polish relations on its front cover, this booklet appears benign, except for the Polish flag flown upside down (Figure 33). Having read adventure stories and joined scouts, astute children recognised the symbol as the same signal when hostile forces capture a ship or fort – the nation is in distress and asking for help. The 'How-to' book appears alongside others published by Korczak, coinciding with ongoing political turmoil in Poland and tensions re-escalating in European affairs. When the former Allies signed the Treaty of Locarno to repair relations with Germany without involving Poland and the other newly independent States, it seemed that the West abandoned Eastern Europe once again (Stachura, 2004).



Figure 32: Do Matek Polek (To Polish Mothers), PAKPD, 1925.

Source: National Library of Poland



Figure 33: Do Dzieci Polskich (To Polish Children) PAKPD-Red Cross joint publication.

Source: National Library of Poland

Decades later and nearing the end of his life, Korczak languished in the Ghetto during WWII. Thus, it is unusual for most readers that his Diary recounts such events of WWI. Unable to know the scale of the Holocaust, Korczak (1942/1967) accepts his failures and fate not because 'I am a Jew but because I was born in the East. It might be a sad consolation that the haughty West also is not well off' (p.506). As much as he wanted to, he could not find solace that the errors made by the West had led to another disastrous war and millions of deaths. In the spirit of forgiveness, he can only pray that help will be on its way to rebuild from the destruction once again.

Besides his *Diary* and work in his own orphanage, Korczak wrote other texts during the one month he assisted the *Glówna Dom Schronienia* (Main Shelter House), a large Ghetto orphanage famed for its horrific conditions. One small fragment of his writing outlines his journey from medical ethics as a doctor to a child rights activist, which he chooses explicitly to differentiate from the rights pacifist. Korczak (1942/1992) deftly signposts with the following four items:

- *the Hippocratic oath*
- *a quote from Tolstoy*
- *the railway at the centre of the Russo-Japanese War (1905-6)*
- *someone needs to empty the bedpans.*

p.135

To date, no other researcher has included this fragment in their Korczak analysis, perhaps dismissing it as confused ramblings written under extreme circumstances. Instead, this fragment resembles a sacred text or composition akin to poetry. Why does Korczak group this trinity of medicine, railways, and social care? The answer lies in the WWI analysis presented earlier. Using the hidden histories elicits a new reading replacing Korczak, not as a hapless Holocaust victim caught unaware by his circumstances but a politically savvy veteran of several wars and revolutions.

After the failure in 1905, the Warsaw intelligentsia treated the wounds of their revolutionary colleagues and assisted the imprisoned families; some fled the country,

while others were buried. Recognising the role of such experiences in the *zawód* (vocation) provides a greater understanding of how professions developed through this cycle of battle-defeat-battle. Compared with Korczak's elements, the Warsaw doctors had evolved far beyond the Hippocratic oath of 'do no harm', and the social workers rejected the concept of passive 'non-resistance'. While Tolstoy's *War and Peace* advised youthful readers that the strongest of all warriors were time and patience, Korczak stressed activity rather than passivity.

Writing in the Ghetto, Korczak is once again a doctor-educator working on the same street as his old Children's Hospital and dealing with a magnitude of death he said is not on an unimaginable scale for him. He explained that he had seen such human misery before as a doctor in the army during the Russo-Japanese war—another colonial war bringing domination via conquest of the Chinese along with starvation and disease. A decade later, he witnessed more famine and epidemic visited upon hapless civilians, this time Poles, Jews and others caught in the European conflict. Finally, amidst WWII, he worked again in the local sphere of his backyard. Here, he satirises his inability to attend to the distress of the ill and dying (1942/2012). However, he reasoned that the tiniest actions cumulatively win the war by continuing to battle during moments of suffering, sadness, and longing.

The Korczak creed suggests that his *zawód of wychowawcy* (vocation of raising/educating) is a pedagogical service to others. Equally noble as doctors, social activists, and soldiers, but surpassing all three by being inherently disappointing, dirty, dangerous, and full of obstacles ranging from the absurd to the blandly repetitive. Whether colleagues, regulations, the enemy, or laws of nature enforced our obstacles, there appears a continual opportunity to create an emerging order and restore dignity out of the chaos. Even if only to 'clear away the dishes', 'empty the bedpans' or 'catch flies', which Korczak (1942/1978) explains all the orphanage residents must do, to keep

at bay their descent into the hell of the Ghetto (pp.66-67). Thus, to be passive, weary or seek comfort away from the conflict and struggle of work is to be defeated in 'the war'. To no longer feel the bitter disappointment that things are not as desired is to end the resistance, the rebellion, and the noble battle towards justice and the truth (*ibid*).

Korczak's fragment reflects the railway in the Russo-Japanese war, where Korczak witnessed the injured soldiers walking rather than boarding the Russian train. The construction of the railway into China facilitated the effective mobilisation of troops and the expansion of the Russian Empire. For Korczak, the train symbolised the broken promise of the industrial revolution. Somewhat more modest than Fourier's utopia resting on the advent of machines, whereby mechanised horsepower promised liberation of the peasant, worker and slave from bondage and hard labour. Instead, the 'train of the war-god' facilitated ever-increasing conquest and colonisation, as seen with Germany's rail expansion pre-WWI, leading the preparation for supremacy and world power (Pratt, 1915). Even in the children's book, King Matt learns about winning modern wars, not on the heroic deeds of soldiers but in the finance and logistics of rail, bread, and boots.

Despite being forced to fight for the Russian Empire, the Poles aligned themselves with the tiny nation of Japan through acts of espionage, sabotage, and desertion (Pałasz-Rutkowska, 2011). Thus, deciding to walk along the track rather than ride the train became a small ideological performance, perhaps one that constituted the only recourse these soldiers had left in terms of physical resistance rather than accepting the evil of the train. During such a struggle for human rights and dignity, Korczak (1942/2012) recalls his failings recognising that sometimes war encouraged more noble actions than during our busy lives in peacetime. He recounts how he had only ridden a rickshaw once in China, recoiling from it as an inhumane practice. Later in Warsaw, he convinced himself that he was doing the rickshaw-runner the favour of being a lighter

passenger and tipping more, sarcastically ‘how noble – then and now’ (*ibid*, p.31). How easy it is to justify our violations against others as he mockingly rationalises that the smoke from his cigarette is a beneficial expectorant assisting the children’s cough (*ibid*). Likewise, it was a daily personal ‘overcoming of evil’ even in the tiniest actions such as ‘emptying the bedpan’ (1942/1992, p.135). While Korczak smuggled out his memoirs, his poet friend, Szengal (1942), penned the haunting imagery of the Old Doctor marching with his children, completing the final stage of Korczak’s transformation into legend.

In summary, in the case of prefiguration, the actors themselves have the right to evaluate success. This thesis makes the case that the *save the children* action represented a successful, large-scale, inter-cultural process involving decisions at all levels, from daily life to international politics. The actors involved, including Korczak, imagined new governance structures fundamentally transforming power relations and society. Their direct action embraced Kropotkin’s forgiveness theory by emphasising human rights for all, including the children of their enemies, as the means to end oppression in their society. Their program featured the anarchist principles of illegality, propaganda, and rejection of hierarchy without resorting to violence. Opportunities came via deeds in medicine, education, law, and commerce by co-opting the master’s tools to satisfy local needs. The loosely affiliated mutual self-aid institutions gained support from minorities, allowing the Poles to sufficiently control the territories and challenge the legitimacy of foreign interference and rule. As Kropotkin predicted, the volcanic eruption of war released diverse revolutionary factions, some willing to serve the masses while the others realised ambitions for themselves. By saving and involving the children, diverse revolutionaries achieved their primary aim in securing Poland’s independence.

Conclusion

This thesis challenges the commonly accepted readings of Korczak as working in isolation and politically detached from significant historical events. I recover the legacy related to humanitarian efforts by Polish and Jewish doctors, teachers and social actors working on the ground during WWI to demonstrate shared philosophical and political ideals. Therefore, I reverse the centre-periphery perspective to take a distinctly Polish point of view on the *save the children* movement. The Western perspective usually depicts Poles solely as victims or soldiers, whereas I demonstrate that diaspora and foreigners successfully supported their grassroots action on a massive scale. Critical evidence reveals that Polish orphanages and other institutions confess to usurping donations and foreign aid under the guise of philanthropy in the cause of self-governance, economic restructuring, and nation-building. Meanwhile, with the Poles adept at promotion and evading censorship, they enlisted a network of influential allies for the sympathetic construction of a politically neutral façade. The inclusion of Polish sources fills the gaps in existing narratives and suggests the need for historical revision surrounding the UNCRC, Save the Children and UNICEF.

At first glance, the landscape of Korczak scholarship seemed crowded, but the existing understandings failed to gain traction for his contribution to pedagogy to enter academic debates. The proliferation of articles on Korczak's role remains a mere footnote doing little to stop the conflation of his ideas with others. My findings demonstrate that Korczak scholarship adheres to Western narratives while neglecting contradicting evidence from the periphery. The Eastern European experience and Polish perspective remain as hidden histories. Many readers encounter Korczak during the Holocaust; thus, the WWI decade is absent from studies. This complex landscape supports my conclusion that Korczak was at the forefront with other socio-political actors engaged in subversive tactics and geopolitical intrigues during this period.

Undertaking a close reading of his reflections, enduring death and destruction, the Poles embraced this time as offering an immense opportunity. Introducing the Polish motto of 'sadness, work and longing' explains how repeated crises disrupted the status quo, with people expecting creation and change rather than a return to the old-world order. This thesis describes how the violence and protest of the 1905 Warsaw revolution lost ground to cooperatives and social action, as Korczak and primarily female colleagues seized upon actions that today continue to resonate in endeavours such as school cooperatives, *Spolem* and the Polish discipline of Social Pedagogy. Revealing such 'hidden histories' strengthens my argument that remnant ideological veils persist as powerful forces hampering Korczak's inclusion within academia and child rights implementation. In this regard, previous studies failed to comprehend the prefigurative political nature of Korczak's pedagogy. These revelations address my research questions to confirm that a political dimension brings awareness and cohesion of the unknown political climate, debates, and influences that characterise Korczak's life and work.

One common denominator to scholarship is the suggestion of Korczak working in isolation from other influences and without theory or philosophical underpinnings. However, most studies are deficient by relying on translated sources with a Western cultural lens to interpret his work. Furthermore, as accounts neglect Korczak's historical context and ideological position, there is little conscious effort to avoid cliches or explain his views beyond dominant discourses. Despite other writers citing Korczak's life events and people he encountered, they diminish the importance of his writing by reducing it to a patchwork of quotes. He is predominantly read as a solitary figure, isolated from his experiences living in an oppressed and violent city, with little regard for his predecessors or others he influenced during his lifetime. The literature review revealed a heavy reliance on translations and the use of his most famous texts without

historical context. Precisely, my methodology strove to overcome such issues by reading in the original Polish language and broadening the disciplinary scope focusing on his early career texts and experiences.

Scholarship is prone to adopting Korczak symbolically to convey other moral or political meanings. Therefore, scholars invariably understand Korczak through distorting frameworks, especially where his educational philosophy and practice is conflated with other educators to create a pedagogical pastiche. Scholars repeatedly entwine him with other educators such as Maria Montessori and A.S. Neill. Using anarchist concepts within my analytical framework also presented a temptation to overstate similarities with anarchist educators such as Francisco Ferrer. The stark difference from these educators appears in Korczak's rejection of universal models as he advocated for homegrown solutions acknowledging children's roots and realities without diving into romanticised nostalgia. I discovered that previous scholarship does not recognise, nor appreciate certain historical events and ideas, and of these, the evolutionary debate is a standout.

The schism between Eastern and Western Europe is readily apparent within historical evolutionary debates, as it either favours evolutionary factors of cooperation or competition. Significantly, I retrieved a Polish scientific school of thought foreshadowing the Social Darwinism to come. Warsaw doctors questioned aspects of evolutionary theory as potentially dangerous weapons in the Imperial quest for domination and expansion. Though an antagonist of cosmopolitanism and positivism, Korczak was also a scientific thinker and not averse to discoveries or technology. He aligned with the school of thought, increasingly at odds with those advocating Social Darwinism and ethno-nationalism.

As a Polish-Jewish doctor, Korczak comments insightfully upon racist beliefs and the ethical blind spot of the West. However, he also published warnings that some

Polish and Jewish scientists propagated such views also. Illuminating the issue of the ‘degenerate child’ in criminology underpins Korczak's foray into ethics and the pedagogy of law. With him situated within the Polish history of education and political struggle, his thinking remained very grounded in his time and, even more so, his place. He expressed his love of Warsaw and its diverse people, as a regional patriotism, to fashion radical ideas encompassing the relationship of the historical to the geographical, acknowledging the trauma and rootlessness of the people (Polish and Jewish). His pluralist educational model simultaneously fostered diversity and solidarity without trapping communities into tradition and cultural stagnation.

Deconstructing the Korczak legend was crucial for a better understanding of what his experimental institutions sought to achieve, as he aimed to foster self-governance within both Polish and Jewish communities. I identified numerous errors debunking the myth that Korczak was inspired to replicate other educational models by undertaking detailed historical exploration in several archives. I concluded that long before he had established his first Children's Home, Korczak published political ideas seeding resistance and disruptive strategies amongst various groups, including the children themselves. One tangent of the project showed that Korczak became profoundly influential both in Poland and internationally. However, the findings also show that his innovation and reforms were often misunderstood and appropriated. To date, no studies have correlated these hidden histories to Korczak, despite his repeatedly framing his texts around historical oppression.

With a lack of consensus in research approaches to such a history, I adhered to archival research and original language reading as my primary methods of investigation. As the subject of study is a minority figure, the accumulating fragments of evidence required serious fitting-in with the work of diverse scholars, especially historians, to interpret the findings and divulge new insights. From the outset, I took issue with the

expectation that reading Korczak's texts is straightforward or isolated from his context. Thus, I present a political dimension within the historical narrative, as outlined by Pocock's framework.

Firstly, I demonstrated that others had read Korczak with meaning distinctly different from what he intended. Noteworthy is my findings related to his subversive writing style. The linguistic element acknowledges Korczak's influences and that his writing style developed to avoid censorship and mimic the esoteric qualities of his literary heroes. Across 19th-century Europe, revolutionaries exchanged ideas, and thus, unsurprisingly, this Polish movement shares elements with the Russian anarchists. When Poland ceased to exist on the map and in law, it survived in spirit, in Polish memory and in millennial hopes. However, it also became the shame and conscience of Europe, as the nation repeatedly attempted resurrection back into international life.

As a youth, Korczak celebrated the revolutionary Messianists, who spearheaded Polish resistance against voluntary and forced cultural assimilation under the cosmopolitan influences that advocated materialism, singularity, and progress. I have shown how subversive educational strategies fashioned a young generation of Poles restless for change and ready for sacrifice. In Machiavellian terms, these militant revolutionaries were unarmed prophets compared to the Imperial might they sought to overthrow. A history of failed uprisings and revolution ensured their battle would employ multiple, diverse strategies for action. Decades of harsh reprisals and ongoing suppression by authorities also ensured these individuals were well-versed in subversive alliances, and community work beyond the violent action or protest previously attempted.

By revealing this complexity, I found that Korczak, as an author, innovated and democratized the Polish language using sophisticated literary techniques. These findings combine to issue a warning that a lack of aetiology produces superficial translations

from Korczak's 'old' Polish into contemporary Polish, especially whenever Polish scholars assert ethno-nationalist rhetoric, or conversely, parrot the Western history of education and childhood. The proliferation of translations and readers' lack of cultural and historical awareness results in extracted quotes acted upon in new and different language contexts and circumstances to the original where they gained meaning. Continuing with linguistic sensitivity, I overlaid a critical analysis of the socio-historical contexts to divulge far greater insights than others have delivered. Embarking on illegal education pathways, Korczak joined the Flying University beginning his life-long association with underground networks and revolutionary women. Here he encountered the radical professors who embodied the intelligentsia's resistance to the materialist, sexist, and racist aspects dominant in the West. Korczak's female collaborators plotted under the guise of literary salons, sham marriages, and religious orders, continually reinventing themselves to evade authorities. My examples demonstrate that women's roles diverged significantly from what most scholars expect of the era, and hardly the dutiful and maternal imagery disseminated in Poland now.

Despite addressing text accessibility, the thesis cannot incorporate all my research, or the entire body of Korczak's work, falling victim to the word count and the need for concise arguments. However, my re-placing Korczak's texts within the context brings greater cohesion to his rights-based practice seeking greater independence on micro and macro levels. Recognition of children as people appeared as an integral aspect of Korczak's work as he touted educational reform as the pathway to end cultural, political, and economic enslavement. The evidence answers the research questions and reveals a political dimension by finding Korczak associated with various collective movements and sharing their revolutionary goals. As a Polish-Jewish thinker, his heritage influenced his politics but adapted to his realities under Imperial oppression. In many ways, Korczak joined a revolutionary project initiated more than a century prior,

and I conclude that Korczak's Polishness is integral to understanding his texts and beliefs. This school of thought shares elements with anarchism and cooperativism relevant to political theorists, while my research recovers new elements relevant to Polish and European history generally.

With the European Union stressing unity, few relate to this abandoned labelling and find it not intuitive to consider Polish history and culture as not Western or as oppressed. The division of Europe into Eastern and Western is often attributed to 20th-century wars and cemented by the isolation of the Cold War. However, the schism along cultural, economic, and religious divides was already explicit in Korczak's era. Therefore, I found it necessary to explain Korczak's repeated references to the derision and domination of the arrogant West over their backwards, underdeveloped neighbours. The idea of Poland serving as a transitional bridge between East and West remains pervasive and keeps Poles politically active within the Central and Eastern European space.

I recover hidden histories of events and ideas by tracing Korczak's cryptic genealogy. Disproving theories centred upon a psychological breakdown, I show that Korczak's decisions and actions throughout his life reflect the unique circumstances and philosophy of the Warsaw intelligentsia living under the Russian Empire. Examining his references stretching from the Enlightenment to the Holocaust, I show how his perspective differs from dominant historical narratives. From the 18th-century onward, Poland gained a reputation in Europe as characterised by anarchy. Western rulers repeatedly labelled Polish intellectuals irrational, fearing their calls for democracy and freedom may ignite revolution across Europe. An exploration of Poland's struggle for existence clarifies multiple routes of domination as the master's tools, which simultaneously offered ways to resist the Empires. Hence, the Messianist poets responded by enshrining cultural and religious values in protest and resistance to their

persecution. Similar Romantic currents appear in European culture, reflecting a yearning for past social values as a protest against increasing industrialisation and empty materialism. The distinction, however, is that the Polish quest goes beyond nostalgia or tradition by fostering radical initiatives by vulnerable and stateless people.

Though many scholars cite Rousseau as an originator of this philosophical trend, Western and Polish scholars appear ignorant of his conflict with other Enlightenment philosophers shaping the Polish political and educational landscapes. Thus, I differentiate this specific Polish revolutionary current as patriotism and a form of indigenous anarchism, distinct from the nationalism usually associated with the Empire-State, nation-state or the later ethno-nationalism appearing in Poland. My findings relate to the tools of oppression used by Western philosophers and Imperial rulers to dominate and subdue the rebellious Poles. Due to the destruction of wars and the communist era, these histories are forgotten in Poland and abroad. My analysis centres upon cosmopolitanism versus patriotism, where universal ideas of progress and civilisation efforts led to the subjugation of minorities deemed backwards.

Throughout the 19th-century, much like other European colonies, the Poles experienced multiple forms of domination, from violent eradication to more subtle strategies. In the latter case, Western and Russian rulers employed the so-called master's tools of language, science, and commerce. Acknowledging Korczak's role as a doctor, I construct my argument around the hidden history of medicine in Polish territories. I substantiate how Western Europe undermined any support for reinstating a democratic Poland by racially constructing the Eastern Europeans as subhuman targets for colonial expansion. Although the history of medicine has recently acknowledged *Plica polonica* and Polish Plaits, studies in other disciplines have not considered the political impacts or lasting effects of racism. Notable is the role of Western doctors in exaggerating this disease to position ethnic groups within the hierarchy of nations. I

show that Darwin's introduction of his evolutionary theory coincided with medical racism becoming the central premise of Social Darwinism and Nazi policies.

There is difficulty in tracing the ideological origins of Nazi policy, and I do not intend to portray such events as definitively a function of modernity. What I stress, though, is that Korczak held this view, arguing that WWII was the pinnacle of a century of racism and resistance. His descriptions correlate with interwar economists who describe the colonization process as requiring clearance of surplus populations to modernize the structure of Europe. The original contribution of this thesis is the finding that Korczak envisioned his work as one of the pages within the history of human struggle dating back through civilisation. Without a history of child rights per se, he modelled his institutions on the processes of emerging human rights at different points in history. As a colonised subject himself, he fashioned his beliefs in stark opposition to certain Enlightenment ideals of progress and civilisation by standing in solidarity with 'uncivilised' people, both the barbaric and the weak.

The prevalence of the lice-borne disease is central in this dynamic relationship between the oppressor and oppressed, as a reciprocal physical threat within these interactions. I examined Korczak's role as doctor-educator to explain his professional attempts in subverting the master's tools into the service of the oppressed masses, especially in terms of access to health and well-being. His life-long motto, 'children are people', extended rationality to those excluded as sub-human as Korczak argued for dignity, respect, and rights for all. Along with others in the Warsaw intelligentsia, he resurrected the 18th-century efforts of the National Education Commission, *KEN*, which sought to unite Poland by bridging ethnic and class divides. Korczak influenced the newly independent Polish government, especially public health messages featuring transparency and encouraging agency.

The 19th-century increasingly saw experts employ natural sciences to explain social phenomena, particularly in evolutionary science appearing in socio-political theories to depict the march of civilisation. Here, I introduced the concept of (r)evolutionary rights to describe how the Poles understood the processes of societal transformation as based on both evolution (gradualism) and revolution (catastrophe). Korczak's conception of rights is best described as (r)evolutionary in both theory and practice, as his societal transformation processes rely on the slow incremental gains of evolution to capitalise upon preparedness by seizing opportunities in moments of crisis for revolution. Thus, revolution here is not necessarily defined as events orchestrated by the revolutionaries themselves but can refer to any events which disrupt the hierarchy, such as an epidemic, war, natural disaster, or even scandal.

In *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin also provided an orthogenetic evolutionary view that is linear and progressive by outlining a hierarchy of tribal, barbarian, and urban societies. His volcano metaphor suggested that a static society attempting to preserve tradition is subject to fossilisation and decay. Furthermore, the institutions initially devised as emancipatory can become oppressive for new generations, creating bottom-up pressure upon the increasingly hierarchical structure. Realising the volcanic eruption through a catastrophic event is deemed revolutionary. Though not necessarily precipitated by the oppressed, the lower masses can drive this type of change by building the level of force through cooperation between the weak, the outsider and most surprisingly, the powerful. Education, according to Korczak, is the process of raising the educator, who must reflect, and change, as the existing hierarchy is increasingly destabilised by bottom-up pressure. If the adult adheres to a predetermined vision or refuses to change themselves, then the only way to halt the process and maintain the image of harmony is to apply greater force and repression.

Accordingly, Korczak's conception of (r)evolutionary rights views the process of societal transformation as both gradualistic and catastrophic, where rights can be weapons for increasing domination or freedom. The Homes' processes illuminate political machinations and complex relations by bringing greater transparency to decision-making. Without a deterministic vision, Korczak apprehended democracy as a force of nature, where the mass ultimately drove the process in society by accepting or rejecting change. There is no predetermined ideal of goodness or goal of perfection as he does not remove domination, coercion, or inducements but examines how power relations ebb, flow and change within the group and what successfully reduces these elements and fosters greater cooperation. His system of democratic instruments such as voting, courts, and newspapers revealed the prevalent mood of the mass under the law of opinion to prevent a backlash against hasty reforms. Though rights may be declared or enshrined in law, the mass holds power to establish or abolish change. Furthermore, the momentum of cultural evolution takes the work of many hands to ensure the implementation of rights in everyday life.

Polish anarchist philosophy envisions a changing world rather than a static one, where what was once deemed irrational could become more rational over time as society changes. However, Polish education stood in contrast to the national schooling developed elsewhere, which embraced universalism, positivism, and materialism. During an era of positivist science and dogmatic religion, Korczak elevated uncertainty over a universal view of knowledge. He encapsulated his worldview in his pedagogical answer, 'I don't know', acknowledging that every interaction with a child is new. Even a parent greets their child as a stranger each day, having to learn from one another anew. His educational model inherited elements from earlier national pedagogy. Like his predecessors, Korczak's protest and resistance to cultural assimilation correspond well with indigenous anarchism. He rejected forms of education, including anarchist

examples, which imported models that treated local people as a blank slate without incorporating aspects of their language, history, or culture. For Korczak, the child is not an innocent but a cultural and historical person living within a particular society and moment.

Anecdotes aim to expose the micro-level of domination, as Korczak took his readers behind the curtain of childhood to describe how a slave culture permeated every level of Polish society. In the Homes, Korczak fostered diverse opportunities for conflict with adults and each other in his research on how rights are discovered and the conditions of freedom limit individual rights in collective living. There is a temptation by contemporary scholars to deem his institutions as preserving society, but such a-historical assessments ignore Polish society lacked the rule of law or democratic instruments at the time. Korczak believed that institutions and laws both promote and inhibit freedom, thus strove to increasingly deliver the masters' tools into the hands of the weak, both adults and children, who voluntarily worked upon self-mastery and freedom. The Court substantially shifted power amongst the children, where victims often judged their playground bullies. Adhering to Kropotkin's law of retaliation, revolutionaries will only replicate their own domination and fail to transform society unless exercising the law of forgiveness towards their oppressors. The right to self-determination and dignity for all included one's enemy and formed a cornerstone in Korczak's philosophy. He borrowed from medical ethics to advise teachers to ensure the rights of everyone regardless of their crime or status. Thus, his 'rights for all' shaped a generation who revived his legacy within the groundwork for the UNCRC.

Charting a course of human rights struggle, Korczak declared that children are people, today not tomorrow, extending abolitionist arguments into alleviating the domination children endured daily. He defined a child's growth as a product of their labour, arguing for the extension of law and property rights to address children's status

as pets, dolls, slaves, and beggars, to recognise them as people. Aligning with cooperativism, Korczak employed a strategy of building grassroots alternatives amongst the weakest factions. Cooperatives successfully traversed the Polish territories, securing opportunities for self-determination. With a decentralised model, each organisation kept decision-making local and responded quickly to needs and dissatisfaction. Cooperatives based upon consumption differed from the production-based models geared towards workers, which usually have age restrictions. Thus, such Polish cooperatives recognised the child-citizen from birth affording equal citizenship rights, a remarkably modern concept of childhood. This defined the child as an autonomous person from birth with the right to express themselves, taking their opinion seriously, and participating fully in matters of concern to them within political, socio-economic, and personal categories.

The thesis recovers a rich source of alternative ideas, serving as a platform inviting further exploration suitable for interrogation by philosophers and other disciplines. Framing Korczak's ambitious project within underground networks exposes underlying anarchist principles, processes, and relations. It contributes to the body of knowledge by retrieving a grassroots model which successfully reformed civil society, despite succumbing to powerful rivals. Thus, the various themes encountered within the thesis expands the anarchist canon of literature and potential comparisons available to future scholarship. I have shown that Korczak is worthy of inclusion as an important Polish-Jewish thinker within European history. I provide insight into the ethical dilemmas and debates shaping Korczak's endeavours, arguments that remain remarkably relevant for education and broader societal issues today. As the world experiences its first pandemic in over a century, academics seek historical precedents, especially the 1918 Spanish Influenza pandemic. I examine a lesser-known example of public health action by researching the periphery instead of the centre. I located a defining international human rights moment during the simultaneous typhus epidemic in

Eastern Europe. This study makes a radical departure through an alternative *save the children* history during this period of war, epidemic, and famine to show how such action refashioned the world order during a revolutionary spring.

Tracing the history of Poland's struggle for independence and freedom, my research demonstrates different levels of understanding Korczak, especially in employing rights as legal, political, and ethical tools. In his investigations, Korczak posed elementary questions about whether the child is a human being and what is meant by rights and citizenship. Examining ideas and actions during this period frees democracy and the citizen from a State-controlled system, and this can tell us something about ourselves, our relationships, and different ways of living our lives to create a more just society. Thus, it may challenge contemporary assumptions and dominant ideas, especially about children, education, and democracy. The conclusions of this study justify more scholarship into Korczak's practical philosophy while serving as a springboard into exploring anarchist and cooperativist principles within educational settings. This research has generated a usable past for theorists and practitioners as this new reading of Korczak offers hidden histories and (r)evolutionary rights to fill a political vacuum in education and a new perspective on revolutionary action.

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