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**Summary of dissertation: Experience and comprehension of childhood in Janusz Korczak.
An approach to philosophical conceptualization**

Doctoral dissertation entitled *Experience and comprehension of childhood in Janusz Korczak. An approach to philosophical conceptualization* (pp. 265) was written under the supervision of Prof. Ewa Nowak (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). It comprises seven chapters, an Introduction, a Conclusion and a Bibliography. Its central thesis is that Korczak created an original philosophy of child and childhood.

Chapter I, „The birth of dialogue”, outlines Korczak’s vision of the child and childhood, as well as his method of direct observation of the child, rooted in Korczak’s practice as a paediatrician. Furthermore, Chapter I presents a philosophy of the child as an entity that becomes comprehensible not in the context of adulthood, but only in the universe of the here and now that constantly happens. For Korczak, the child is not an imperfect adult, but a complete human being at every moment of life.

Chapter II, „The mature sorrow of childhood”, sets out the foundations of Korczak’s philosophy of the child, whose humanity is constituted by an existential experience more profound than that available to the adult. The child will not just be, but is already entirely human due to its sensitivity, which is no longer available to adults.

Chapter III, „Philosophy of responsibility – the responsibility of philosophy”, addresses the topic of responsibility. In Korczak’s practice and philosophical thinking, responsibility is confirmed as a turning point in the child’s journey towards freedom. Responsibility – both for the child and before the child – prepares one to comprehend the genesis, conceptualisation and meaning of children’s rights against the background of Korczak’s thought, professional activity and personal experience. Together with Korczak, we realise that the rights due to every human being we adults have taken away from children, often in the name of our love for them.

Chapter IV, „Philosophy of Education by Janusz Korczak”, is dedicated to his idea of upbringing, which grew entirely out of experience and practice. The chapter takes a closer look at the child’s mind and spiritual shape within the framework of epistemological ignorance, as well as at the foundations of the philosophy of the „new education” that Korczak presented in his work *There Is School*. This philosophy with its holistic understanding of the child and childhood has reformist traits according to Korczak himself, juxtaposed here with related ideas by Rabindranath Tagore.

Chapter V, „The Philosophy of teaching by Janusz Korczak”, is focused on Korczak’s concept of moral education, which is based on the independent voice and judgement of minors, above all in the context of co-responsibility for an equal and just common existence. In the range of social, public and political institutions created by children on Korczak’s invention, they will find exemplification of the previously discussed concepts of the child’s cognitive, epistemological and also normative potential as an entity always already mature in the sense of moral (self)awareness. The same chapter describes the principles of the children’s court, parliament and self-government, as well as the children’s public opinion with its most important organ: the *Mały Przegląd* review edited by Korczak.

Chapter VI, “Antinomies of freedom”, deals with the issue of freedom, previously discussed in the company of responsibility, and here extended by Korczak’s reflection on human freedom inspired by Nietzsche’s Zarathustra. I further juxtapose it with related themes in the thought of Marcus Aurelius and Eastern philosophy. In conclusion, it becomes apparent that living reflection can only be mediated by the matter of life. Such reflexivity is able, among other things, to undermine the bourgeois philosophy of philanthropy, whose wantonness, self-deception and lack of rooting in the experience of life – here socio-economic life in all its misery generating radical harm to the child – Korczak criticised.

Chapter VII, “The hope of confidence”, draws a spiritual portrait of Korczak himself, beyond religious or cultural standards of ‘spirituality’. Its central moment is the experience of ‘encounter’ as a form of touching transcendence. I refer here to the ‘limit experience/situation’ outlined by K. Jaspers. I conclude the chapter by accompanying Korczak intellectually in the last months of his life as he tries to salvage in himself and his children his confidence in humanity.