



Janusz Korczak in Europe

Old and New



Erasmus+



Gmina Wyznaniowa
Żydowska w Warszawie
קהילה יהודית בוורשה

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**Julia Dmeńska, Magdalena Kołodziejczyk, Wojciech Lasota,
Bartosz Pieliski, Agnieszka Witkowska-Krych**

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**With special thanks to Professor Philip Zimbardo.
For your unconscious and precious inspiration.**

Korczak Foundation's Team



Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New
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A few reflections instead of the preface

The goal of an educator ought to be to achieve the best results by violating the smallest number of human rights.

Janusz Korczak

Paraphrase:

The ambition of a [politician, president, manager, ...] ought to be to achieve the best results by violating the smallest number of human rights.

Korczak Foundation

Old and New Europe

Korczak's journeys to Berlin, Paris and London (from 1907 to 1911) took place during the last years of stable, as it may seem, political world order. Korczak's reports from the journeys are for us, who know the subsequent events, a transcript of reality of a completely different era, which in a few years, was supposed to change forever. When in 2014 we applied for a donation for our project "Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New" in the program Erasmus+, the world also looked differently than today in 2017. I am not claiming that, like 100 years ago, we are on the verge of a war. However, the world and especially Europe faces many serious challenges, which, a few years ago, did not seem significant.

In London we spoke with people who talked bitterly about both Brexit and their country's politics, which led to it.

In Paris, not only did we see soldiers with machine guns on the streets, but also we witnessed the liquidation of the immigration camp at the – nomen est omen – Battle of Stalingrad Square.

In Berlin, we visited the Weihnachtsmarkt, that is a Christmas fair under the famous Television Tower (der Fernsehturm). Two weeks later, a group of people celebrating at a similar fair six kilometers away from the Weihnachtsmarkt was run over with a truck driven by a terrorist.

The world Korczak knew was not easier. All over Europe there were terrorist attacks and wars on the one hand, and, on the other, political feuds and fierce fights for human rights, for example women's rights or blue-collar workers' rights. Unfortunately, few decisions that were made then proved reasonable and lasted long.

... on agency

But why, instead of concentrating on our project, am I writing about the situation in Europe and in the world? The answer is, I deeply believe that the main issues of the project we proposed to our participants are essential on the global scale as well. From our point of view, the most crucial value for Janusz Korczak was respect for others people's agency – no matter their age, gender, religious beliefs or social status. This agency should be respected not only by people in relations, but also by institutions, which should be reflected in social rules. Janusz Korczak created these kinds of institutions, and we called them "institutions based on agency". We encouraged our participants to think and act on creating these kinds of institutions nowadays, as we believe that the model co-created by Korczak is not obsolete.

What has changed globally, unfortunately, is the way of perceiving agency.



Janusz Korczak (in the middle), Michałowka, 1908

Author unknown

Korczak's assumption about respecting the agency of others was, in his times, deemed right only by a few people. Nevertheless, Korczakian institutions based on this assumption had been active for years back then, when, in 1924, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in Geneva was adopted.

Nowadays, there have been numerous people, organizations and governments, thanks to whom human rights (which basically consist in Korczakian subjectivity), for many years, have seemed obvious in the Western civilization, both at the level of law and people's world views.

They have "seemed", because today's reality indicates that they are not that obvious. In my opinion, the perspective of the respect for agency is not only the key Korczakian postulate, but also the source of today's local and global conflicts.

On the one hand, there are those who would gladly move others out of their places to assume their "rightful" places and to stop causing trouble by expressing their needs or different views. These kinds of people do not know or do not want to know that "effectively" not always means "well".

On the other hand, there are those who, motivated by their noble faith, think they should be helping all the needy, often not seeing in such people their adversaries. Those kinds of people, on the other hand, do not know or do not want to know that "well" not always means "effectively". Between those people, there are plenty of those who are always undecided, who change their minds frequently, who help others one day, and refuse to do it another day, who treat others either as human beings or as things.

We all do not know or we choose not to know how to reconcile the "well" with the "effective".

I think that the modern crisis of objective attitude towards others is responsible for the fact that elections are won by people who treat subjectively only those of their social status. This crisis, however, was not created out of the blue. It is the result of powerlessness of those who are aware of the idea of agency, who did not know how to make use of that idea because of their financial or social status, gender, religious beliefs or their country of origin. They could have been getting help from other people or institutions, but they were not able to understand that they could co-create their own lives.

Should people, not causing harm to others, become self-sufficient by using their own potential, and should they be supported at that by their countries and institutions? Or should they just be marionettes destined to play their bigger or smaller roles which their countries and institutions dictate them to play?

Time will tell, which one of those paradigms will shape our future. Nevertheless, no matter what it will be: you can't leave the world as it was when you were born, as Korczak wrote.

The Orphanage began its work in 1912. The children who lived there were treated with respect for their agency much more than their families, who were just pawns of the Russian Empire.

The beginnings of the cooperation of Janusz Korczak and Maria Falska, which resulted in a long-term common running of Our Home, took place in 1915 in Kiev where, at that time, there was a war. That is where, for several days, Janusz Korczak showed his work methods.

That experience shows that, even if we were to work in times of political and social objectification of people, it is good to remember that, thanks to our choices, we can treat others subjectively, though it can prove very difficult.

And if the idea of agency becomes significant once again, let us find a way to incorporate it into our lives even more, not only in relations with others, but also in political and institutional environments. Our offer in this area is creating institutions based on agency which reflect those Korczakian institutions we write about in this publication.

The Goals of the Project and the Publication

We went to London, Paris and Berlin to – in line with our mission – propose a kind of way of perceiving social reality (especially towards people who are socially excluded or are on the verge of it) and changing it thanks to Korczakian ideas. Not only in the context of working with children, though, as our main idea is: the mechanisms of the functioning of Korczakian institutions are universal and timeless, and Korczakian concepts and solutions can be applied also while working with adults regardless of their age.

We want this publication to be a guide and a form of help in this process for the people who are willing to use our interpretation. You can use it however you want – as an inspiration, as a source of information, or as an outline for workshops. For those who decide to run their classes basing on our publication, we have additional information.

Our first three lectures (“Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New” by Wojciech Lasota, “Janusz Korczak and Amartya Sen. Looking for Equality and Freedom” by Bartosz Pielński and “The Orphanage During World War II. Proximity and Distance” by Agnieszka Witkowska-Krych) serve as an introduction to three issues: the concept of an institution based on agency (Lasota), amazing similarities between Korczak’s work and the reflections of a Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen (Pielński) and the tragic events of the last years of the existence of the Orphanage (Witkowska-Krych).

The workshop which follows the lectures (“Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak’s Footsteps”. Part one; Julia Dmeńska, Magdalena Kołodziejczyk, Wojciech Lasota, Bartosz Pielński) will lead the participants to understanding their own agency in the sense which Korczak (according to the interpretation of the Korczak Foundation) perceived it. They will experience their agency on the personal level and on the level of relations with others.

The three following lectures (“The Korczak Effect” by Wojciech Lasota, “Looking for Self-Government” by Bartosz Pielński, and “Korczak’s Pedagogic Postulates in Practice” Julia Dmeńska) will continue our interpretation. The concept called the “Korczak Effect” (Lasota) completes the idea of institutions based on agency. The comparison of the research done by Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom and the way the Orphanage functioned (Pielński) is about the modernity of Korczakian ideas. A very personal illustration of that modernity can be subsequently found in the text on running a sociotherapy center and a family center (Dmeńska).

The last workshop (“Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak’s Footsteps”. Part two; Julia Dmeńska, Magdalena Kołodziejczyk, Wojciech Lasota, Bartosz Pielński) is a continuation of the journey through agency, this time, from agency in a group to an exercise of creating an institution based on agency.

On our website www.korczakowska.pl we published the presentations we used during our workshops. Due to technical issues, they can’t be part of this publication, but they are available for download and to be used especially during workshops.

We did not publish the biography of Janusz Korczak in this text either – for more materials like this please visit our website www.korczakowska.pl, where we posted presentations on Janusz Korczak available in 8 languages.

This publication will soon be available also in German and in French.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to many more people than we managed to mention here, that is why, I am going to list just several of them.

We thank the participants of our lectures and workshops for their curiosity and trust.

We thank Magda Raczyńska, Muna Khogali, Patricia Haluska, Hanna Zaworonko and Ella Nilova for their support and hospitality.

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And we thank Gregory McCormick for all he did for us.

Very special thanks we are directing to Professor Philip Zimbardo. For his unconscious and precious inspiration.

Last but not least, a huge thank you to our families, who put up with our absence during the project.

We also thank all those who offered us their help, but we did not mention here.

Request

As we are not infallible, we will be grateful for your remarks, comments and suggestions (as well as acknowledgements and your feedback from the classes) on fundacja@korczakowska.pl.

Wojciech Lasota

President of the Korczak Foundation



Wojciech during our workshop in London.

Photo: Elzbieta Piekacz

Courtesy of the Polish Cultural Institute in London

About the Project

The project „Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New” was sponsored partly by the program Erasmus + and by the Jewish Community of Warsaw.

As part of the project:

1) Six people from our Foundation went twice to give lectures and run workshops to three cities which were once visited by Korczak: Berlin (1907/08), Paris (1910) and London (1911).

First, we visited London (16th - 18th September 2016 and 21st - 23rd October 2016), then Paris (2nd - 4th November 2016 and 30th November - 2nd December 2016) and Berlin (5th - 7th November 2016 and 3rd - 5th December 2016). Originally, we also intended to go to Switzerland, which Korczak visited in 1899, but it was later excluded from the program.



2) That is why, we found several partners abroad, including: Polish Cultural Institute in London, Association Française Janusz Korczak in Paris and Janusz Korczak-Haus in Berlin (a subsidiary of the Europäische Janusz Korczak Akademie in Munich).

3) We reminded our participants that, more than 100 years ago, Korczak went to those cities to gain knowledge and experience. We tried to persuade them that many concepts and solutions created by Korczak are applicable today, even when it comes to working with adults, especially those who are socially excluded or who are on the verge of social exclusion.

4) In each of those three cities we made contact with dozens of people and institutions, which were potentially interested in our project. Thanks to them:

a) In London (together with Forest Hill Society), apart from activities stated in the project, we also organized a walk in Korczak's footsteps, which was attended by people from the local community and other interested people.

b) In Paris, together with Association Française Janusz Korczak, we visited the Paul Valéry high school and Frédéric Chopin middle school situated in Melun near Paris (where we participated in a discussion on teen projects), as well as the so-called second chance school for young adults, where we made the headmaster fascinated with Korczak's ideas.

c) In Berlin, we started a long-lasting cooperation with our partner, Janusz Korczak Haus, and we will participate in their project, which will take place in summer 2017 in Poland.

5) As part of our preparation, we had classes with English teachers (including a native speaker), who worked with us on improving our linguistic skills, taking into consideration the nature of our project and the needs connected with running our lectures and workshops.

6) Our lectures and workshops were conducted in English, but we translated our materials and questionnaires into French and German as well. The presentations we used are not part of this publication. They are available on our website www.korczakowska.pl.

7) The versions of this publication in various languages are not identical – the differences result from the nature of the available materials, the uneven level of knowledge of Korczak's visits in the three cities as well as from our additional activities.

Our Instructors

Julia Dme ska – a co-worker at the Foundation. A pedagogue, a socio-cultural instructor with substantial experience in working with children and teenagers. As a Foundation member, she co-worked with the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland and the Center for Citizenship Education. She had run socio-therapeutic workshops for teens for four years, then, also for four years, she had run a family center.

Natalia Jungraw – a volunteer at the Foundation. A graduate of the Social Politics Institute of the University of Warsaw and the Social Services College in Warsaw, currently a post-graduate student of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Warsaw. Her research interests include poverty, social exclusion, social work and Janusz Korczak's ideas.

Magdalena Kołodziejczyk – a member of the Foundation, a pedagogue, a socio-cultural instructor, a soft skills trainer. She co-works with the School of Leaders and Ocalenie Foundation. She has got substantial experience with coordinating projects on leadership and management.

Agnieszka Witkowska-Krych – a graduate of Culture Studies and Hebrew studies as part of Cross-Divisional Individual Humanistic Studies at the University of Warsaw and sociology at the Collegium Civitas, a post-graduate at the Faculty of the History of Culture of the Institute of Polish Culture at the University of Warsaw. A curator at the Documentation and Research Center KORCZAKIANUM (Museum of Warsaw), a co-worker at the Forum for Dialogue Foundation, the Korczak Foundation, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Center for Yiddish Culture. The author of numerous articles on Korczak's life and work.

Wojciech Lasota – the president of the Korczak Foundation, currently a social skills trainer, permanent co-worker at the EY Foundation (Poland). Former worker at the Documentation and Research Center KORCZAKIANUM (Museum of Warsaw). A theatrical instructor, art historian, copywriter and educator (a former guide at the Royal Castle in Warsaw for more than 10 years).

Bartosz Pieli ski, Ph.D. – the vice-president of the Korczak Foundation. A lecturer and a worker at the Social Politics Institute of the University of Warsaw. He does research on non-governmental organizations, social economy, as well as coproduction. As the Foundation member, he tries to use his research experience in practice. He perceives Korczak as a visionary who created institutions based on agency.

The trouble with “agency” (“la subjectivité”, “die Subjektivität”, podmiotowo)

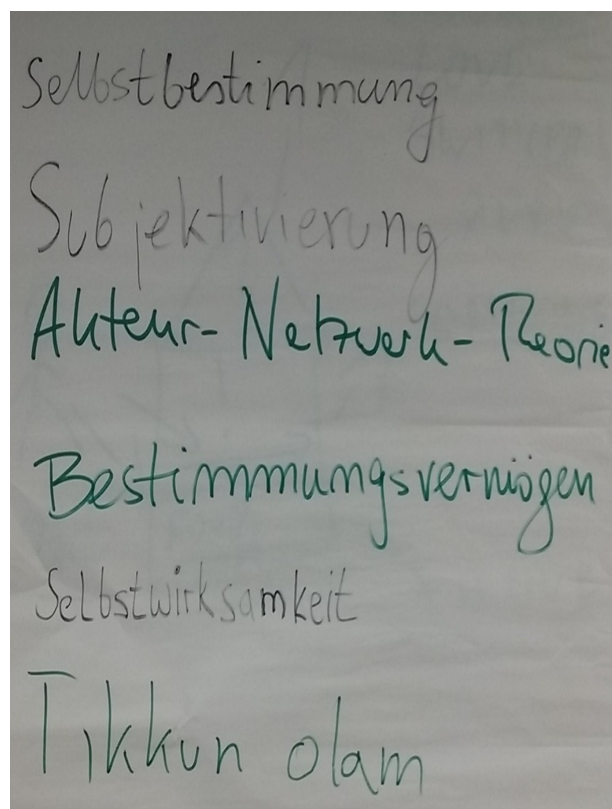
The concept of “agency” is essential for perceiving Korczak’s heritage by the members of the Korczak Foundation, as well as for the interpretation we presented during our lectures and workshops in London, Paris and Berlin. In the context of Korczak, we understand agency as a feeling of intentional influence on one’s self and the others. We think that this term, as well as values connected with it, are a fundament which Korczakian institutions and ideas were based on (for more on this topic please read the text “Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New”).

In the three European capitals we visited, this interpretation met with understanding and acceptance. What did not meet with understanding, though, were the terms we initially used, that is the English word “subjectivity”, the French word “subjectivité” and the German word “Subjektivität”.

The English “subjectivity” was acclaimed by our linguistic consultant, a native speaker from New Zealand. However, it did not meet with acclaim from our audience in London at all. We asked them which word will sound better in the context of our interpretation. After a short discussion, the word “agency” was agreed on, which we have been using since, but, in our personal opinion, it narrows down the meaning, which is perfectly reflected in the Polish term “podmiotowość”.

The French term “subjectivité” was met with equal distrust in Paris. In a discussion and the struggle of our translators which followed, the following terms came up: “émancipation”, “subjectivation”, “être sujet”, “responsabilisation” or, following the English “agency: “agentivite” and “pouvoir”. Eventually, for the purposes of our further actions we had agreed on “émancipation”, although we know this term is not perfectly accurate.

In Berlin, “Subjektivität” was also greatly protested. As it was our last city to visit, we expected this kind of remark, so we worked on the best alternative terms via brainstorming, and below are our conclusions:



In further presentations, we agreed on “Subjektivierung” (fully aware of the term’s imperfection), and the translator of the German texts included in this publication chose “Rechtsträgerschaft”, which completes the illustration of the difficulty we faced.

The practical reason why I discussed our struggle with the words is that in the English, German and French versions of this text, as well as in their accompanying presentations, we did not standardize the words, for example, in the English translation, we use both “subjectivity” and “agency”. This is a deliberate action which also allows the reader to experience the linguistic problem we struggled with.

We want the readers to feel it, because this linguistic

struggle shows a much deeper level of reality. Namely, they evoke the question: don't the problems with the words also capture the problems with the phenomena?

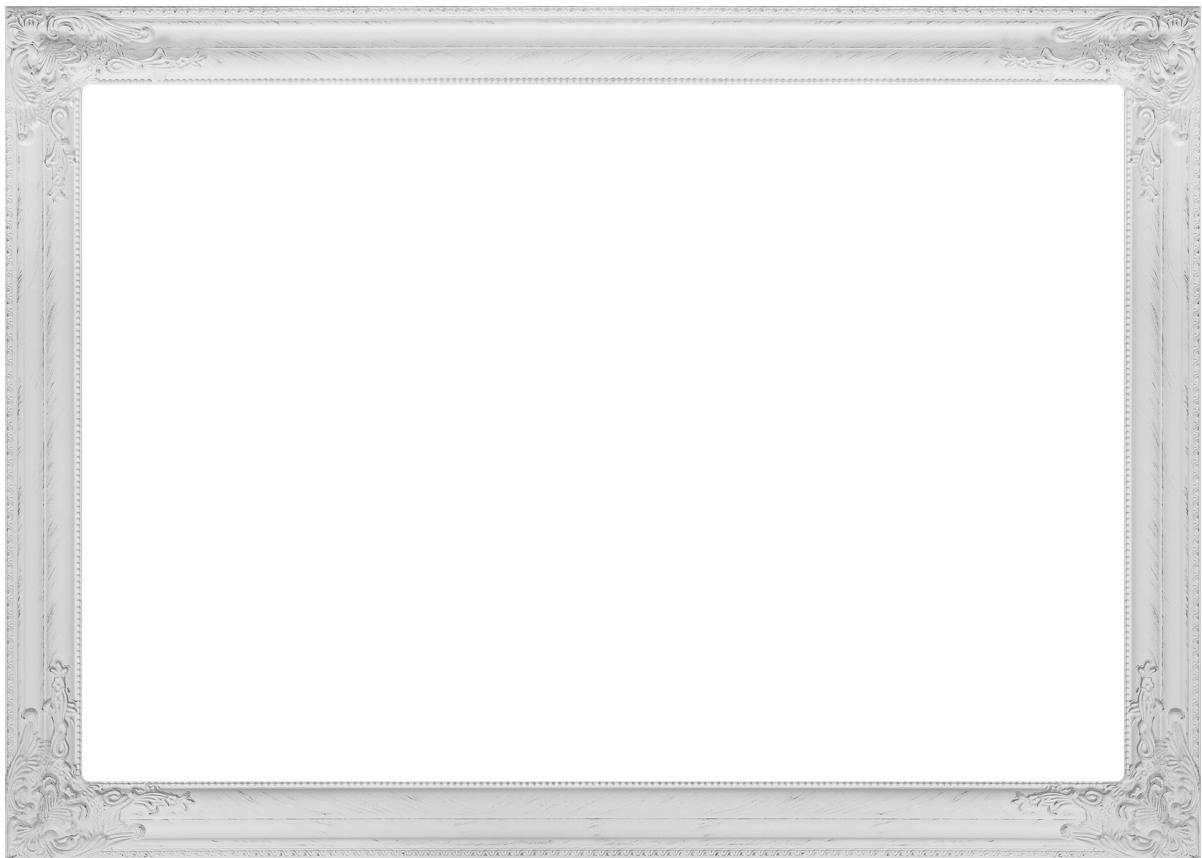
Isn't the phenomenon of agency, like many others, conditioned by culture, history and society, and, because of that, aren't there different ways of not only naming it, but also experiencing it?

In our opinion, there are.

It also means that this problem is to be taken into consideration not only when popularizing the work of Janusz Korczak.

Due to the immense importance of agency it can mean that many situations, projects and decisions, for example in the context of the European integration, despite sounding similar in translation, are interpreted and experienced differently or completely differently than it was intended.

If, paraphrasing Ludwig Wittgenstein, the borders of our language are the borders of our world, then the trouble with "agency" can dangerously easily reflect the trouble with agency.



Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New

Both our project and this text are called “Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New” because of two facts. First, so that the people from Berlin, Paris and London can observe the traces of Janusz Korczak, who was in those cities more than a hundred years ago, to gain knowledge and experience. What he learnt there was extremely important to him and resulted in his work and activity in the future. Secondly, we want to show that Janusz Korczak is not just another person from history. His ideas and solutions, which are definitely worth a closer look, can come back to those three cities.

One of the most valuable elements of his heritage, though, still remains unappreciated, that is, the way the institutions he established functioned. As far as we know, those institutions served only the good of the people who made use of them. This is quite a rare type of institution, which, in the Korczak Foundation, we call an institution based on the subjectivity of the people who have contact with it. We believe that it is possible nowadays to build such institutions.

The Orphan's Home as an Example of an Institution Based on Subjectivity

Practically all the information we have claims that Janusz Korczak and the people he worked with created a system which very efficiently helped the children from the Orphan's Home cope with the results of their multiple exclusion. I suggest looking at this enormous experience as an inspiration to work not only with children, but with people in general, especially with the excluded ones.

What Janusz Korczak has to offer to New Europe is a kind of universal and timeless mechanism of thinking and acting. The mechanism is best described in our conversation with Ryszard Szarfenberg (<http://rszarf.ips.uw.edu.pl/>), who said that Korczak's experience can help fill the gap in the system of social aid, which is situated between the micro level (of individuals) and macro level (of the law and the country), so on a mezo level (of institutions and organizations). That gap is the reason that even the best ideas and solutions (such as human rights, above all) passed by convinced parliaments and introduced by convinced people fail at the level of the institutions which bring them to life. In our opinion, it does not only concern the system of social aid, however, Korczakian inspirations could be helpful with understanding why that happens and with creating more apt institutions.



The Orphan's Home was based mainly on values and beliefs concerning the rights of children as adults. From the perspective of the Korczak Foundation, those rights had one thing in common: the acknowledgement of the subjectivity of children as human beings.

Korczak did not use the word “subjectivity” (Polish “podmiotowość”), but we claim that word to be most accurate. The word is very vast nowadays, and that is why it requires disambiguation. In the Korczakian sense, it is understood as the capacity to have an intentional and real effect both on myself and my environment.

Korczak did not assume that, by giving the children the right to subjectivity, he will convince them to use it in a way that is acceptable and fine with him. He knew that, in order for the kids to create situations in which they will learn to use their subjectivity in a way that will serve them and others well, they must learn from their mistakes and they must profitably experience situations which are inevitable in a healthy functioning of a group, such as conflicts, information flow, self-

management, including management of one's successes and failures, as well as of one's belongings and of an institution.

That is why, he focused on creating methods and mechanisms of coping in the optimal way with all the areas of social life. The description of many of these is in Korczak book titled "Jak kochać dziecko. Dom Sierot" ('How to Love a Child. The Orphan's Home').

The underlying rule of those methods and mechanisms was the fact that they did not regulate various behaviors, but they rather created choices for individuals. Choices which promoted subjective approach towards others, even during conflicts. If a rule failed, the people from the Orphan's Home were eager to change it. Also, the ideas were not created at Korczak's nor Wilczyńska's desks, but during contact with reality; they were reactions to real needs. That is why, the system of those solutions reminds a tree rather than a code of rules, as it still could elastically grow and change, depending on a situation.

Below, I will show two examples of the mechanisms functioning in the Orphan's Home.

The Court of Peers

The basic assumption of the Orphan's Home is that each person there is a subject. What to do when he or she confronts another person? How to resolve such a conflict with regard to the subjectivity of both sides of the conflict?

Such a question implies a method of looking for answers: proper solutions for the conflict area have to be consistent with the idea of subjectivity. If they are not, they are to be rejected and replaced by other ones.

What was developed in the Orphan's Home?

First of all, the goal would be questioned: the most important thing was not who was guilty and what the punishment should be (as we might think), but to understand the reason for the conflict to be able to react better to it in the future.

Who should do this job? The children, of course, because they are the experts of their own lives, as Korczak wrote.

It is the adults' job to give the children methods and tools so they can do a given job the best they can and in the smartest way. This method was "Sąd Koleżeński" (Court of Peers), and the tools were the rules of the Court and the code with its articles.

Let us illustrate it on the following example.

Dawid was pushed by Estera on the stairs, he nearly fell, he was scared. He went to the Court List hanging on the board and he sued her by writing "Dawid sues Estera".

Anyone could sue anyone – including the adults. In the evening, the Secretary of the Court (Stefania Wilczyńska or another teacher) registered the lawsuits on the list (in the 1920s the number of the suits was, on average, ten thousand) in the Court Book. The next day, the Secretary of the Court gathered the statements from the plaintiff, the defendant and possible witnesses. This concluded the first stage of the case. Courts were in session once a week. Then, four judges would be chosen from among all the children in the Orphan's Home, who had been there for at least one year and who were not the judges in the past week (there were five judges overall, but the fifth one was the Secretary of the Court and he or she had no vote). Each group of five were judges in 50 cases. The consideration of the cases and the children's job consisted in the children matching Korczak's articles to each ongoing case. The reason for that was not to blame or punish, but to understand the reason of the conflict, end it and cope with it better in the future. Out of 109 articles, 99 articles were acquitting articles.

It is important to know that in the Court of Peers there was no way for a child to be expelled from the Orphan's Home, even for the worst transgression. In order for Article 1000 to be used, an article which allowed to expel a child from the Orphan's Home, a child had to be sentenced

multiple times. Those convictions were to make the children realize that they do the wrong thing and give them a chance to atone, also with the help of other people. As far as we know, this Article was used only few times throughout the history of the Orphan's Home.

Let us summarize. How did Korczak and his co-workers manage the area of conflicts using the Court of Peers? Firstly, they treated conflicts as an inevitable part of everyday life of the people he was surrounded with. Secondly, the adults gave the right to settle the conflicts to the "life experts", that is, to the children, leaving themselves in the role of "the architects of the system". The system that meant to support the children. Last but not least, the system was not directed towards the individuals and the past, that is who was guilty and how to punish them, but towards the circumstances and the future, that is what caused the conflict, how to settle it and what conclusions were to be drawn from it for the future.

I will now briefly discuss the next area, self-management. If children wanted to cope with their flaws and weaknesses, they could do it through the so-called "bets". This method was based on a conviction that children's space should be organized in the way they could receive feedback about their behavior, which helped cope with their flaws and weaknesses, not to worsen them. It was the job of the children to cope with things they themselves wanted to cope with, because, just like in the case of other people, no one could do it for them.

A child did that by having a following conversation with a teacher (here, the example of the problem is cursing):

'Hello, what do you want to bet on?'

'Hello, I'd like to stop cursing.'

'How many times a week do you curse?'

'About 40'

'How many times do you want to curse next week?'

'I don't want to curse at all!'

'Will you be able to go from 40 to none?'

'I don't know...'

'So maybe go to 30 a day for starters? You can curse 30 times next week.'

'OK'

'Meet me here in a week and tell me about your progress. If you succeed, you will get two pieces of candy. If you don't, you will give two pieces of candy. Is that OK? The bet is on.'

There was no control over children. Educators trusted them.

That's why this method particularly resembles today's coaching. Just like a client in coaching, here, the child is treated as a subject who not only wants to change, but even has tools to cope with various situations. As Zalman Wassercug, one of wrote: "The bets reflected the vitality and the will to fight of the children who struggled with their lives. Thanks to the bets, the children showed the will to self-improvement, which is one of the foundations of the human soul."

Finally, the last area: the organization of space.

The Orphan's Home auditorium, the place's biggest room, was a place where the residents ate, played and worked.

At each table there were always several children. Each table had an appointed volunteer that brought hot meals from the lift, which was behind the counter (not visible in the picture). After the children had finished eating, the volunteer took the empty plates back. But what was the challenge here? The challenge was: how to make the children act effectively and to make them safe? The rule was: the children with full plates moved between the tables, and those with empty



plates moved along the walls. The next question would be: why think of such a mechanism instead of telling the children to be careful? Because then, each child would have been responsible for the order, and, with their best intentions, it could not have been maintained. According to Korczak's approach, it would be an unnecessary limitation of the children's subjectivity, if the responsibility within a method, within a system solution, to

which the children would have to adapt, for the sake of their own and others.

The Logic of the Mechanism

The methods I have covered are examples of the logic of the functioning of Korczak's institutions based on subjectivity. Despite the abundance of methods and problems they concerned, the logic seemed unchanged. Korczak defined it as follows: "The ambition of the teacher has to be achieving the best results by avoiding violation of any human's rights."

I will show it on the following picture:

In an institution based on subjectivity, when there is a challenge, it is not about finding the fastest or the cheapest solution, but a solution which guarantees respect of the subjectivity of people involved in this institution.

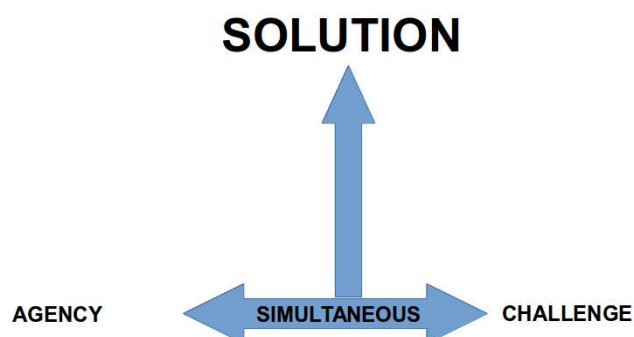
That was the way the Court of Peers, the bets or some space organization aspects worked in the Orphan's Home.

Will the mechanisms work among the children only?

According to the Korczak Foundation, definitely not. They will work in any organization, in which

the people in charge will agree on following rules based on subjectivity. It is a most challenging task (the reason of this challenge is described by Bartosz Pielinski in his text on Elinor Ostrom, which is a part of this publication), but, on many levels, it is also worth a closer look.

We assume that the rules will work best with people who are excluded, no matter their age. The reason for that is they do not treat themselves as subjects and neither does their environment, and this is the most important reason for their



There are no children, just people
Janusz Korczak

The ambition of the teacher has to be achieving the best results by as the smallest as possible violation of any human's rights.
Janusz Korczak

exclusion. They need subjectivity like fresh air, to which they are not accustomed; it easily bores or stimulates them, so they should slowly learn theirs and others' subjectivity.

In our opinion, though, the matter of subjectivity is significant in each organization because, thanks to various social mechanisms, even the people who treat themselves and others subjectively can totally objectify the people they have contact with. That is why, I will conclude this text on a note of encouragement by addressing it to those responsible for their institutions, companies, departments, non-governmental organizations, as well as families: if you want to be treated subjectively, treat others thus, at the same time also achieve goals in your institutions, then Korczak's ideas and practice can prove to be very helpful.



Janusz Korczak - Amartya Sen. Looking for Equality in Freedom

The legacy of Janusz Korczak clearly shows that Korczak is a pioneer of many concepts developing nowadays in the area of science and philosophy. His observations concerning pedagogical process, working with outcasts, or the question of human subjectivity, contain reflections which harmonize with modern discussions on these topics. That is why many significant people of today's world can, in a certain sense, be called unconscious continuators of Korczak's work. Among others, the Nobel Prize winner in economy – Amartya Sen.

Sen began his scientific work with analyses of democratic processes of making decisions within the framework of the so-called social choice. His interest in the mechanisms of democratic decision-making is one of many similarities between his work and Korczak's. Janusz Korczak paid a lot of attention to the procedures of collective decision-making. His hard work on creating the Court of Peers or the Parliament in the Orphanage is proof that, just like Sen, he held democracy dear, being at the same time aware of its great complexity. The difference between them was that Korczak discovered it in practice, and Sen discovers and describes that complexity on a theoretical level.

Perhaps Sen's greatest achievement is the development of capability approach – the concept of the opportunity of choice, which contains many Korczakian elements. It was created from Sen's reflections on justice, especially on the key question: what kind of goods should we talk about, if we want to discuss their fair distribution? Sen is a critic of the so-called proceduralism, which says that we should not look for an optimal level of the distribution of goods, but rather for a set of optimal rules governing that distribution. In that way, a fair social system is a system in which there are fair procedures for the distribution of goods.

For Sen, such an idea of justice is defective, because people do not perceive justice of a social system according to formal construction of its rules, but in the light of its "end result", that is, who



gets what as a result of its functioning. Sen shares this notion, because even the best formally constructed rules of social life often give an entirely opposite effect. They become an "unjust version" of a just social system which they were supposed to co-create.

How then, according to Amartya Sen, are we to avoid creating such "deformed" utopias?

When it comes to justice, the answer is to concentrate, above all, on analyzing the end results of different

rules of social life. To focus on people's possessions, occupations and competences. To concentrate on how to remove already existing injustices, and not on creating fully just societies. Such an approach is also present in Korczak, who did not create utopian communities. The Orphanage was not a utopian project, and Korczak did not keep a close eye on obeying the rules of perfect social life. He was rather an animator of the life which he constantly corrected the rules of. This tendency towards change resulted from the fact that he evaluated the rules from the perspective of their end results. He observed how the rules worked on each child and on the interactions of the children. He did not protect the rules which brought negative results. For him, just like for Sen, the justice of the rules of social life was their actual influence on the dynamics of everyday functioning of people.

Neither Korczak nor Sen reject the reflections on the rules of social life. On the contrary. Institutions are extremely important to them, as they guarantee that the world is known and predictable, and that it is not governed by anarchy, which is an ally of the strong and brutal

people. They both treat institutions as the means leading to a goal, which is to diminish the injustice in social life, and not as a goal as such. Institutions do not represent justice, but they support it. *Courts are not justice, but they should lead to it* – Korczak wrote.

Amartya Sen, by rejecting the primacy of rules in his reflection on justice, and by acknowledging the distribution of goods as crucial, considers what kind of goods we should be discussing. He also rejects the conviction that it is about the distribution of material goods, because he underlines that every human being has a different capacity of using these goods. An economist will spend a hundred zlotys differently than a three-year-old child. Sen claims that money is not important, but the things one can obtain with it are. It is not about the content of a wallet, but about the possibility of buying food or a house with it.

Sen also rejects looking at justice through happiness. He disagrees with perceiving justice through people's level of satisfaction, because people are able to adapt to very unfavourable conditions. They can feel ecstatic happiness during an armistice.

What should we concentrate on, according to Sen, when we want to talk about justice? He points at the so called functionings and the capability of choice.

Functionings mean who we are and what we do: do we have enough to eat, do we have a roof over our heads, are we educated, do we vote, do we travel freely. In this perspective, poverty is not lack of money, but it is a lack of possibility of achieving the wanted level of functioning: I am malnourished, my house is too small, I can't afford to see a doctor. This situation is, for the most part, but indirectly, a result of the lack of financial means and is not the same as poverty.

The Human Development Index, co-created by Sen, is largely based on such functionings. It is a measure which enables the UN to evaluate the development of countries. It works on the basis of the analysis of indexes of areas such as education or health condition of citizens of a given country. This way a multidimensional image of a country is created. It concentrates on living conditions of its citizens, and not on its economic level. In a similar way, Janusz Korczak perceived the Orphanage. He also evaluated his success in the light of the functioning of the children living there, for example: were they healthy or properly nourished. Of course, Korczak took care of those children's basic needs, but he did not stop there. He also wanted them to enjoy their freedom, to be able to decide how they wanted to function, what aspects of their lives were important to them and how they wanted to develop. Korczak never dreamed of the Orphanage full of clean, smiling and educated children. His goal was rather for them to be free and able to express their distinctiveness. Using Sen's terminology, Korczak's goal was for the children to have equal capability of choice. For Sen, the crucial criterion of the functioning of both societies and institutions was the freedom of choice. The functional justice of such societies should be evaluated, above all, upon the equality of people's right to choose who they want to be and what they want to do. For him, injustice means that some people have very limited choice on how healthy, nourished or educated they are supposed to be. Others, in turn, have almost no limit on deciding such matters – thanks to their wealth or to their competences.

The similarity of approaches of Sen and Korczak consists, above all, in joining the themes of justice and freedom. They both claimed that we should evaluate the justice of our reality, above all, in the light of what freedom of choice it offers to various people and whether the level of such choice is similar. Sen tends to discuss this topic on an analytic level and tries to develop the methodological tools which allow to examine justice perceived as such. Korczak, on the other hand, concentrated mainly on its practical level. He tried to build institutions which guaranteed its members a similar extent of choice. They both, in turn, inspire people who nowadays want to work on their families, institutions, companies, or communities.

The Orphan's Home During World War II. Proximity and Distance.

The Orphanage – a place where 107 Jewish children aged from 7 to 14 lived, was built thanks to the „Pomoc dla Sierot” Community (Aid for the Orphans) and, also thanks to donations from its members, it was opened in 1912 at Krochmalna St. 92 in Warsaw.

No more than three years earlier, Janusz Korczak joined „Pomoc dla Sierot”, and, as time passed by, together with Stefania Wilczyńska, who had already worked there, he led a group that worked on an innovative pedagogic project that was building an educational facility for young Jewish children. From the beginning, the Orphanage was considered a research institute, which, by satisfying basic needs of its children, was, at the same time, a unique clinic/observatory of children's development, where

not only the children were examined, but also, after Poland regained independence in the 1920s, people were educated to be teachers. For Korczak (and Wilczyńska, and other teachers), it was a place of everyday, methodically documented observations of the children. For the younger co-workers, including future teachers, it was an opportunity to evaluate themselves and their future work in this occupation. For the children, in turn, it was, undoubtedly, a place where they felt professional pedagogic care and where they were given an opportunity of self-development and growing up surrounded by understanding and support.

The Orphanage, sponsored by „Pomoc dla Sierot”, was largely independent from state branches. That allowed it to introduce innovative pedagogic methods to its everyday life, which were absent in other places of that sort. Korczak, in his book *How to Love a Child*, in the part devoted to the Orphanage, described in detail the functioning of the facility run by him (one more institution for children functioned that way back then – *Nasz Dom* [Our House], which was



managed by Maria Falska and co-managed by Korczak). In both institutions, apart from the staff, there were other people employed who contributed to the pedagogic success of those places.

The work of Korczakian homes for children was characterized by a few features which, from today's perspective, can seem special. They were projects which assumed long-lasting effect and complex care for the children. The children, both boys and girls, usually spent

there about 7 years. This period allowed all the involved for a calm, systematic and methodical pedagogic work, it allowed to plan various actions and to feel like being part of a community. This community was established to create comfortable and safe circumstances for one's development, both physical and mental, but also, above all even – social development. Responsible for that were internal institutions which regulated the relations between the children, the teachers and other employees. There were two cardinal rules: civility and responsibility – everyone engaged in the work in the Orphanage or Our House, whether a child or a teacher, was co-responsible for the atmosphere that was present there. In both places, there were



*Dom Sierot
Krochmalna 92*

internal groups such as the Parliament, the Council, the Court and the Notary. Each of them was destined to two things: to facilitate the life and the functioning of a large group of people and to present the residents with a chance to influence the reality.

If we were to account for the people involved in the work in the Orphanage and Our House, then, in 1939, it would be several hundred children and several dozen of teachers. In the sense of social achievements, the balance would be a collection of interesting and innovative pedagogic methods and, additionally, the undeniably high prestige of both institutions.

At the very beginning of WWII, Korczak was in Warsaw, most probably in the private apartment of his sister Anna at Złota St. 8, where he lived. However, September 1939 was the time when he moved to a building at Krochmalna St. 92. There, as he mentions in his later texts, he ordered the “state of emergency” to provide safety to the children and protection to possessions which were prone to destruction by military action.

Having in mind previous wars, which he had participated in, he tried to live and function normally together with the co-workers and the children. He did that by organizing time and work as much as his financial means allowed him. The Orphanage was partially destroyed due to Warsaw being bombarded in September 1939. One of the teachers died, and the number of children naturally increased as a result of new children being orphaned and abandoned. Luckily, the first year of the war was not a year of drastic changes: the children stayed at Krochmalna St. 92 and, in accordance with a long-lasting rule, they went on summer holidays in summer 1940. Meanwhile, the Orphanage was enlarged with a sewing room, and Jewish children who had been deprived of schools were provided with education there.



In November 1940, Korczak, together with his staff and the children, was forced to move to the Warsaw Ghetto; to the building of former Józef and Maria Roesler's Trade School for Boys. The Orphanage switched its location with that School. During the relocation, Korczak was arrested and placed in jail for about a month. All the organizational duties were then in the hands of Stefania Wilczyńska, who had been in such a situation before when Korczak had been sent to war in 1914. According to retrieved sources, the inner structure of the Orphanage and its activities had been preserved. What had changed was its financing – the “Pomoc dla Sierot” Community, given the conditions, was not as active as before. To raise funds, the teachers organized concerts and they benefited from the newly created Jewish Council and Jewish Social Aid, the activity of which

was largely funded by an American organization simply called Joint (full name: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee).

In October 1941, due to the rearranging of the Ghetto's borders, or to its shrinking, to be precise, the Orphanage had to relocate once again, this time to the building of the Aid for Commercial and Industrial Workers Association at Sienna St. 16 / Śliska St. 9. It was the place where, together with the children and the staff, Korczak spent the last months of his life. The number of the children there was still getting higher; in 1942, it could be estimated at about 200.

Apart from working in the Orphanage, Korczak also supported another institution for children, namely Główny Dom Schronienia (Main Shelter), situated at Dzielna St. 39 (right next to St. Augustine's church). He even moved there for a few weeks at the beginning of 1942 in an attempt to revive its tragic material and organizational situation. He did what he could to maintain the work style of the Orphanage at Sienna St. 16 / Śliska St. 9 from before the war started. Despite worsening financial conditions, bigger number of



children and unfavorable prospects for the future, Korczak, along with Stefania Wilczyńska and other teachers, tried to provide the children with the feeling of relative normality and safety. Having survived several other wars and revolutions, Korczak was not defeated by discouragement and, this time, he devoted himself to everyday work, which, undoubtedly, could be regarded as a symptom of civil resistance. He gave up the opportunity of saving himself – he turned down the offer to leave the Ghetto and go into hiding. On August 4th 1942, he wrote in his Diary: “What I’m living through now, already happened”, having in mind his previous war experience, but unaware what was about to happen to him.

On August 5th 1942, together with the staff and the children, Korczak was led to the Umschlagplatz, from where all of them were brought to the German death camp in Treblinka. Despite having been there with all his children and co-workers, Korczak is the only one who has his commemorative stone there. He is an important and necessary symbol, however, he should not obscure the other teachers who shared their fate together with the ones they were responsible for.

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The workshop overview

'Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak's Footsteps'

Part one.

Main goal

Enabling the participants to experience their agency, its influence on relations with others and building the so-called institutions based on agency.

Detailed goals

- 1) Enabling the participants to reflect on the meaning of their own individual agency.
- 2) Expanding these reflections onto the matter of creating relations with others basing on agency.
- 3) Looking into one's current relations from the point of view of both agency and other people.
- 4) An introduction to building institutions based on agency.

Exercise 1: My Agency

Topics:

agency of an individual, social roles, agency in relations

Difficulty level: medium

Duration: 90 minutes (+ 20 minutes of integration exercises if the participants don't know each other)

Brief characteristic

An exercise emphasizing the awareness of an individual sense of agency and different perception of it by different people.

Goals

- 1) Discovering or developing the perspective of feeling agency by the participants.
- 2) Showing the participants their own agency in the context of social relations.
- 3) Preparations for exercises involving agency in interpersonal relations.

Materials

- pieces of paper, markers/crayons, pads for the paper, desks
- a projector and a computer, the presentation "Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak's Footsteps". Part one
- If showing the presentation is not possible, write its main points on a flip chart.

Preparation

If the participants don't know each other, it is advised to do some integration exercises, which will enable them to remember each other's names and to gain basic information on each other (min 20 minutes).

The exercise

1) Show the participants the presentation "Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak's Footsteps". Part one. or write its main points on a flip chart. Discuss slides 2 and 3, indicating the definition of agency shown there. Tell them that, throughout the workshops, you will be going through six steps, from the feeling of individual agency to agency in relations, and then to agency in an institution.

2) Show slide 4 and initiate a discussion on: what does it mean to me to be a subject? The goal is to focus the participants' attention on the term and the difference between its feeling and its interpretation.

3) Distribute paper and felt-tip pens/crayons to the participants. Ask them to draw arrows like on slide 5 (present the slide) and to mark the points indicating 0,5% and 100%. Then give them the following instruction:

This is the axis of your subjectivity shown in line with the interpretation we've discussed. On it, mark at what level of agency you feel here and now, while doing this exercise. The task is for you only, you will not be discussing it with anybody.

Depending on a group, the marking can last from 3 even up to 10 minutes.

4) Give them the following instruction:

Each of you plays several social roles in your lives. You are employees, students, members of families/communities/groups, friends etc. Enumerate on your axes five most important roles you play in your lives.

When they are done, continue:

Now, mark on your axes your level of agency in each of the roles you've written down. Expand slide 5, on which there is a sample marking of the agency.

Report and evaluation

Start with a question about how the participants felt during the exercise. Next, move on to the discussion – below are sample issues:

- Which aspects of experiencing your agency were easy, and which were difficult in this exercise?
- Was indicating the feeling of your agency in a given social role easy or difficult?
- Did you discover anything important to them in this exercise?
- What do you think the goal of this exercise was?

Comment briefly: the goal of this exercise was to focus your attention on your own agency, as it is the main condition of treating others subjectively. The aspect of social roles is important, because there are key social roles which determine other roles, like the role of a homeless person, an unemployed one, a disabled one or a child. These are main roles which in many situations show the respect towards the agency of a person as a whole.

Present a citation by Janusz Korczak shown on slide 6 as a Korczakian summary of the thread of looking for one's subjectivity.

Pointers for the instructors

- 1) This exercise may trigger emotions. Be prepared to create a space in which the participants can express them freely.
- 2) The presentations used during the workshops are available on www.korczakowska.pl.

Exercise 2: Me and You. Agency in Relations

Topics:

agency in relations, building relations based on agency

Difficulty level: high

Duration: 120 minutes

Brief characteristic

The exercise raises the awareness of individual feeling of agency, as well as the ability to verbalize it and negotiating one's borders based on expectations and needs.

Goals

- 1) Raising the level of the ability to verbalize one's agency
- 2) Experiencing a situation in which people express their needs and expectations in front of others with the feeling of agency
- 3) Making the participants aware of the fact that the exercised skills are not easily mastered, which could result in disrespect for their own agency.

Materials

- pieces of paper, markers/crayons and pens, pads for the paper, desks
- a projector and a laptop, the presentation "Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak's Footsteps". Part one
- If showing the presentation is not possible, write its main points on a flip chart.

Preparations

This exercise is to be preceded by the exercise called "My Agency".

The exercise

- 1) Tell the participants that in this exercise, they will be experiencing their agency in a relation with another person, and that this relation is purely voluntary. Ask them to work in pairs with people they haven't met yet. Provide each person with a piece of paper and a pen.

2) Show them slide 7 of the presentation “Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak’s Footsteps”. Part one or write its main points on a flip chart.

3) Give them the following instruction:

The first part of the exercise will be individual work, the other one will be a dialogue.

Imagine that, in your pairs, you have decided to be friends.

In the first part of the exercise, think about the answer to the following question: “What do I need in a friendship relation with you to feel that you respect my agency?”.

On your pieces of paper, write your answers, that is your needs and expectations.

In the other part of the exercise, talk about your needs and expectations (show them on slide 8). On slide 8, you can see some example topics for your conversation.

Report and evaluation

Start with a question about how the participants felt during the exercise. Next, move on to the discussion – below are sample issues:

- a) Which aspects of setting borders of your agency were easy, and which were difficult?
- b) Was indicating the needs and expectations connected with it easy or difficult?
- c) Did they discover anything important to them in this exercise?
- d) What do they think the goal of this exercise was?

Comment briefly: the goal of this exercise was going a step further than focusing your attention on your agency. The participants verbalized their needs and expectations in this area, and then they presented them and discussed them with their partners. Dealing with one’s agency this way is an important skill; it is often ignored. Many people could not have done this exercise because they would have trouble with grasping their feeling of agency, as well as with expressing it in front of others.

Present a citation by Janusz Korczak from slide 9 which serves as a Korczakian remark concerning the ability to create an institutional method of dealing with needs and borders of other people, which, in the Orphanage, was the Court of Peers.

Pointers for the instructors

1) The instructions to this exercise may prove complicated to the participants. That is why, prepare a few variations of them (like verbal variation, drawn variation, variation using role playing).

2) This exercise may trigger emotions. Be prepared to create a space in which the participants can express them freely.

3) The presentations used during the workshops are available on www.korczakowska.pl

Exercise 3: Him/Her. The Agency of the People We Work With

Topics:

Agency in relations, maintaining subjective attitude in non-partnership relations.

Difficulty level: high

Duration: 90 minutes

Brief characteristic

The exercise makes the participants aware of their influence on others' agency and strengthens their ability to manage this influence.

Goals

- 1) The importance of the awareness of a relation between the agency of the participants' dependants and their own sense of agency.
- 2) Raising the ability to apply empathy in practice.
- 3) Experiencing the expression of one's needs and expectations about agency to other people, as well as experiencing being a listener of other people's needs and expectations.
- 4) Stressing the fact that practiced skills are very difficult to achieve for many people, which can result in them not respecting their agency.

Materials:

- pieces of paper, felt-tip pens/crayons and pens, pads for the paper, desks
- a projector and a laptop, the presentation "Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak's Footsteps". Part one
- If showing the presentation is not possible, write its main points on a flip chart.

Preparations

This exercise is to be preceded by the exercise "Me and You. Agency in Relations".

The exercise

1) Inform the participants that they will be experiencing their agency in an imaginary situation, in a relation with another person, and that situation cannot be avoided (for example at work). Ask them to stay in the same pairs they did the exercise "Me and You. Agency in Relations". Provide each person with a piece of paper and a pen.

2) Slide 10: give the instructions (it is advised to illustrate them with a drawing on the flip chart or by role playing):

Like in the previous exercise, the first part will be individual work, and the other will be a dialogue.

In the first part, think of a person you currently work with or you used to work with. It is important that person be somehow dependent of you (a student, a client, an employee etc.). Let us call them Person X. Now, let us imagine you are Person X and you are going to see yourself for an job interview. As Person X, you want to declare to yourself that you want to be treated with more respect for your agency so you want to share your expectations and needs. Playing Person X, imagine what could be their expectations and needs and write them down. Your partner will

shortly be using your notes, that is why write them down legibly.

Example: Anna remembers Magda, who used to work for her.

She decides that Magda will be her Person X.

Anna imagines that she is Magda and is going to Anna for a job interview.

While being Magda, Anna writes down the expectations and needs of Magda. The needs are the result of the fact that Magda wants to be treated by Anna with more respect for her agency.

Discuss your expectations and needs with your partners. Tell them who your Person X is and give them a few details on that person (their age, social status, characteristic features) which will make playing that person easier for them. Next, your partner plays Person X. By using your written expectations and needs, your partner as Person X announces them to you to be treated with more respect for their agency. Talk to Person X (played by your partner) about their expectations and your abilities, by using the questions shown on slide 12.

Now, you are playing Person X, the needs and expectations of whom your partner has written down earlier.

Report and evaluation

Start by asking how the participants felt during the exercise. Next, start a discussion – choose a topic from the list below:

- a) Which aspects of setting borders of your agency were easy, and which were difficult?
- b) Was indicating the needs and expectations connected with it easy or difficult?
- c) Did you discover anything important to you in this exercise?
- d) What do you think the goal of this exercise was?

Comment briefly: the goal of this exercise was to go a step further than agency in a voluntary relation. The participants played people dependent on them and saw the relation with them through their eyes. Subsequently, they had an opportunity to discuss this with their partners who played the people dependent on them. It was a unique opportunity of the contact with needs of people who would perhaps never express them because either they cannot do it or they do not see this situation as one where you can do it. It is crucial for the participants to realize that, while working with other people, they will be responsible for the decision whether to speak in the name of those who cannot take care of their own agency (like Korczak did) or not.

Present a citation by Janusz Korczak from slide 9 as a Korczakian remark concerning frequent ignoring of the experience of other people, who are the experts of their own lives. It concerns not only children, but also people who are socially excluded or disadvantaged.

Pointers for the instructors

- 1) The instructions to this exercise may prove complicated to the participants. That is why, prepare a few variations of them (like verbal variation, drawn variation, variation using role playing).
- 2) This exercise may trigger emotions. Be prepared to create a space in which the participants can express them freely.

3) If some of the participants feel like they do not work with anybody dependent on them, they can write down their own needs and expectations towards the people they are dependent on. In the case of such people, it slightly changes the sense of this exercise, but it still allows to perform it.



Our workshop in London.

Photo: Elzbieta Piekacz

Courtesy of the Polish Cultural Institute in
London



Janusz Korczak 1927 author unknown

The Korczak Effect

In my text “Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New” presented in this publication, I called Korczak’s institutions the institutions based on agency. According to the idea illustrated in the picture below, those institutions are not about finding solutions to challenges using the quickest and cheapest ways, but about the solutions that guarantee respect for the agency of each member of a given institution.

But why do I claim that being effectively inspired by Korczak’s work is possible even today? And why is Korczak’s heritage universal and timeless, which suggests that its consequences and the conclusions resulting from it are topical even today and they do not apply to children only?

I am going to answer these questions in this text.

The experimentality of Korczak’s institutions (the Orphan’s Home, Our Home and Little Review), despite numerous differences between them, has one common feature, that is, the question: what

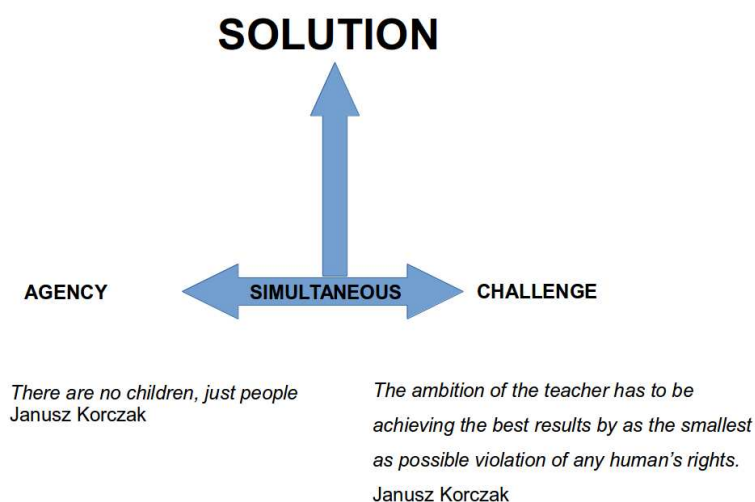
will happen if the people in charge base their institutions on the respect towards the agency of other people, including children? This is the gist of Korczak’s famous quotation: “There are no children – there are only people.” (Korczak 2013a).

For Korczak, answering that question required the rejection of the rules of an institution currently in existence, in the context of both facilities for children and newspapers for children. That is why, the Orphan’s Home, Our Home and Little Review were built in a different way, anew. Agency became the fundamental value, and the rules and methods of a common life were created based on this value. The respect for agency in institutions concerned both children and adults. Each of the famous pedagogical methods and techniques based on Korczak’s institutions was born as a way of coping with everyday challenges having in mind agency as a fundamental value, which is illustrated on the diagram at the beginning of this text.

To explain why I perceive the achievements presented above as an experiment with universal and timeless consequences, I will recall two examples which are not only present in textbooks on social psychology, but they also have various practical applications.

Kurt Lewin’s Experiment

In 1939, Kurt Lewin (one of the most significant creators of social psychology), Ronald Lippit and Ralph White published an article titled *Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created social climates*. It served as a summary of an experiment of several months during which they researched the influence of a given type of leadership on the effectiveness of work and the participants’ emotions. The participants of the experiment were divided into groups and, during six weeks, each of the group was led by a different kind of leader: autocratic,



democratic and compliant (*laissez-faire*). After six weeks, the leaders changed their groups, as well as their type of leadership, so each group could experience all three kinds of leadership shown by three different leaders. The most important conclusion from the experiment was the superiority of the democratic type over the other types, both in the area of the work effectiveness and the atmosphere in the group and the participants' emotions.

The consequences of the experiment surpassed scientific debate. For many decades, the experts in education and management, for example, have been trying to find a practical application for the conclusions from this experiment. It is to this experiment that we owe the fact that many people all over the world make a huge effort to make the functioning of schools, companies or other organizations more friendly for their participants, and to facilitate an effective achievement of their goals.

The participants of this experiment were 10-year-old boys. It was their behavior and emotions that supported the far-fetched conclusions I wrote about.

Jane Elliott's Exercise

In 1968, Martin Luther King was murdered. Jane Elliott, a teacher from Iowa who was devastated because of the tragedy, decided to find a way to show white Christian children she taught, relying on their experience, what discrimination meant. She divided the children into two groups: the blue-eyed children and the brown-eyed children. She told them that the blue-eyed ones were better and more intelligent, presenting some fictitious arguments. Very quickly, the children divided themselves into the better ones and the worse ones: the situation created by the exercise became a textbook example of discrimination. Then, Jane Elliott reversed the roles by saying she was wrong and that the brown-eyed children were actually better. The "worse" group easily became the "better" group, and the blue-eyed children faced discrimination. This "exercise" (Jane Elliott insists on calling it an exercise) claimed an important place in psychology books, as well as in practice – Elliott ran trainings for corporations and governmental agencies in the USA, and her exercise appears in the context of fighting discrimination in texts all over the world.

Institutions based on agency

Above, I have described two examples of innovative social actions whose the participants were children. One of them concerned social sciences, the other one – education. Both have become a subject of scientific interest, and it was made sure that the conclusions based on them find practical application in many other areas besides working with children and education.

In our opinion, the work Janusz Korczak and his co-workers should be perceived in the same way as the exercises by Lewin and Elliott not to honor anybody, but to expand the range of inspiration for the next generations of people who will look for the way not to leave the world behind them as it was when they were born – as Korczak claimed.

For me, the main conclusion from Korczak's long-lasting experiment including both children and adults is as follows: it is possible to create organizations based on the respect towards the agency of people who are part of them (workers, students, clients etc.). It requires using an alternative way of thinking, other rules, methods and techniques, but it is feasible, also preserving the efficiency in achieving many other goals.

What is essential is that, unlike many other social exercises, including the ones by Lewin and Elliot, Korczak's experience can inspire us as to what to do and how to do it and not as to what we are not to do.

Korczak's experiment belongs to a limited group of experiments carried out on the basis of absolute ethics and not on relative ethics. As Philip Zimbardo wrote: "An absolute standard

postulates that because human life is sacred and it must not in any way be demeaned, however unintentionally. In the case of research, there is no justification for any experiment that induces human suffering.” (Zimbardo 2007a).

Korczak surpassed this way of thinking and acting by a few dozen years. In the fragment of his book *How to Love a Child. Summer Holidays*, he addresses the other teachers, simultaneously characterizing his approach: “A brilliant French entomologist Fabre prides himself on making breakthrough observations on insects by not killing a single one of them. He studied their flying, their customs, cares and joys (...). He studied it all by just looking at them. Dear Teacher, be the Fabre of a child’s world.” (Korczak 2013b).



The Korczak Effect

The name “Korczak Effect” is an attempt to indicate a mechanism thanks to which it will be possible for an institution based on agency to work. The name refers directly to the famous book by Philip Zimbardo titled “The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil”. The book contains a description of the Stanford prison experiment, which showed that doing evil is largely based on a

situation.

The Lucifer Effect appears when sane people who do not show signs of aggression or cruelty are subjected to so much pressure from particular social situations that they behave – for example – aggressively and cruelly.

The Korczak Effect is understood by us as a reversal of the result of the situation, but with simultaneous preservation of the mechanism. It appears when people who, for whatever reason, show signs of antisocial or destructive actions, are subjected to so much pressure from particular social situations that they start behaving socially and constructively. That is exactly what was happening in Korczak’s institutions to which – apart from the Orphan’s Home and Our Home – also belonged Little Review – an innovative magazine established and ran by Korczak for several years.

Zimbardo’s experiment and explanations, as well as Korczak’s experience, stand in opposition to intuitive thinking that people doing bad things are simply “bad”. As Zimbardo wrote: “Social psychologists (such as myself) tend to avoid this rush to dispositional judgment when trying to understand the causes of unusual behaviors. They prefer to begin their search for meaning by asking the «What questions» (...). Social psychologists ask: To what extent can an individual’s actions be traced to factors outside the actor, to situational variables and environmental processes unique to a given setting?” (Zimbardo 2008b).

The situational approach was used also by Janusz Korczak (though he did not call it that), which is especially visible in the philosophy, the way of working and the paragraphs of the Court of Peers, described in detail in Korczak’s book “*How to Love a Child. The Orphan’s Home*”.

That was also the way Korczak understood the role of the council: “That is exactly the definition of work: that the people who work, study, spend half a day with each other do not cause harm, disturb or laugh at one another. On the contrary, they should help one another, care for one another and take care of order.” (Korczak 2007).

To show that in Korczak’s work and in Zimbardo’s experiment we deal with the mechanism of situational influence, it is crucial to know the terms “dehumanization” and “humanization”.

As Zimbardo wrote: “Dehumanization is the central construct in our understanding of man’s «inhumanity» to man” (Zimbardo 2008c). Let us paraphrase: “Humanization is the central construct in our understanding of man’s «humanity» to man”, as Korczak would write.

How then did Korczak humanize the institutions he created, as well as the people (both children and adults) who were their members?

In my opinion, he did it in two basic ways. I have tried to formulate the ways so they can also be useful nowadays.

The areas of social life: diagnosis and solutions

The first way consisted in seeing and accepting the fact that, in a group or a society, there are some areas of social life, such as conflicts, the use of violence, intrapersonal difficulties (those of individuals with behaviors not accepted within the group), which require the ability to self-management, maintaining order in their environment, including the management of one’s property, information flow, but also positive reinforcements and the ability to co-manage one’s society. In those areas, there are various situations, including the difficult ones, which are a rule and not an exception to it. So, it is not wise to make those situations disappear or to pretend they do not exist, but it is important to cope with them with simultaneous respect towards the people who take part in them.

Korczak’s practice anticipated managers’ taking responsibility by organizing those areas using numerous techniques developed in institutions. In this area, modern practice contains thinking similar to free-market thinking, according to which people are to be left alone and then they will organize themselves. Usually it is true, however, it often happens at the cost of the weakest, and the results of such an organization can be cruel for the whole society or for its part.

Agency categories

How to manage those areas so that the people feel they are treated subjectively?

Below I propose a list of categories I chose when analyzing Korczak’s institutions, and which are almost the exact opposite of the categories present in dehumanizing institutions described, above all, by Zimbardo:

- 1) The intentions of the people in charge;
- 2) Conversation;
- 3) Deal (big thanks to Jacek Jakubowski from the TROP Group, www.grupatrop.pl, for pointing out the important role of a conversation and a deal. Jacek uses the terms “contact” and “contract”);
- 4) Clarity;
- 5) Openness;
- 6) Responsibility;
- 7) Freedom.

Intention

The results of the duties that the people in charge perform depend on the intentions of those people. If they want, for example, to gain maximum control, then the tools they can use to achieve it can be the most democratic of methods. Unfortunately, these intentions are often unconscious at some level and they change depending on a situation. That is why, they require frequent revision, especially whether the declarations of the intentions, the actions that they entail and their results are coherent.

Conversation

A conversation in Korczak's institutions was, above all, a means of communication, and not of oppression or showing one's superiority. It was used on a daily basis, not only in difficult situations. It was not perceived as a synonym of a monologue or a stage dialogue in which the answers of the students or the teachers were in advance predicted and consistent with a certain scheme.

Deal

For Korczak, a deal was one of the ways of maintaining both understanding in a social reality, and order in various aspects of its functioning. That is why, when writing about the deal, I mean the relation between instructors and their groups. It is the shaping of such behaviors between them which will largely influence the behaviors of both sides, and not the abstract subordination of real people to some rules in documents. Let us not assume that "everything must be done by the book", but by choosing the elements which are the most significant to the functioning of a group and applying them directly to the group members.

Korczakian deals, which often looked like procedures, regulated real behaviors in a real world. They did not tell anybody who to be nor how to change, but rather what to do and what not to do in a given situation.

Clarity

Clarity is a recipe for a good conversation and a good deal.

Above all, in the context of the most comprehensive communication on many levels – from a simple talk, to classes; from an email communication to solving conflicts. People do not need to understand language I speak, but they have the right to the information included in it about them to be completely clear.

My own conviction that I speak clearly can be a result of the fact that I understand what I try to communicate. So I can easily think that others do not understand me because they are stupider, they have bad intentions or they are not focused... But my listeners have the right both to misunderstanding of utterances and to smaller intellectual competence. I should not force them to say that they understand something they do not (and then be mad at them for that), but rather find a way adequate to the situation so they can understand it.

Openness

The category of openness (as a feature of managing information and situations) relates to at least two levels of social life.

At the first, basic level, it simply means availability. All those for whom some kind of information is significant, have access to it in such a form that is understandable to them (that relates to clarity).

The openness at a deeper level relates to the "underground" life, to the "second stage" of functioning which appears in each society. I mean the behaviors fully or partly contradictory to the established rules, often based on very strong informal rules which shape relations in a group, and they activate on a bigger scale when the control of the leaders weakens. An exceptional example of openness in the Orphan's Home was the Court of Peers. Thanks to that institution, the situations which were concealed in other facilities (altercations, fights, hurt) were quickly made known to all the residents.

Not everything can be open in an institution, but the borders of openness can be open and clear. We can name and justify which information is open to what kind of people, maybe evoking outrage or anger in people excluded from that information. But, first, it gives them a chance to apply for that information and second, it is favorable to the openness in social life.

Responsibility

Like in the case of openness, we can also differentiate two levels of responsibility as an element of managing a group. The first is often associated with the term itself: it is the responsibility for doing tasks, also conscientiousness of some sort, finishing what we started. The other aspect is more important, though. It is about being the person responsible for thinking and creating actions, and for co-creating group life. That is why there was the Court of Peers in the Orphan's Home. Since its basic postulate was the agency of every person, it gave the people a possibility of influencing the situations they were in.

Two more postulates are important here: first, people deserve to be trusted, and second, they will give reasons not to be trusted from time to time, but it is better than not to be trusted at all. It is the job of the people in charge of an institution to build such a concept of responsibility that the people can be more aware of taking it.

Freedom

Being treated subjectively entails freedom. It has two aspects as well.

The first one is the awareness of the limits of freedom.

As a person in an institution (as a student, client, patient etc.) I should know that I can do anything as long as it does not exceed the borders of my freedom in some way. However, the establishing of these borders will never be fully clear and exhaustive. There will always be behaviors that cross the limits of freedom, though the person who crosses them is not aware of doing so. This is the other aspect of freedom.

If I cross a limit I have not known of before, will an institution inform me about this limit first (in a conversation, by a message or a warning) or will it instantly limit my freedom (with a punishment, a sanction or by hurting me)?

It is extremely important, especially with children, but even criminal law gives lighter punishments for misdemeanors committed for the first time. If the reaction to crossing a border makes the person responsible aware of that border, it entices him or her to exploring the world and looking for new borders, but if it is an instant punishment, it effectively discourages from independent exploring.

Summary

From our perspective, if you manage an institution or a part of it and you take responsibility for a group of people, you will always face a dilemma whether the rules of the institution's or the group's functioning are closer to the Lucifer Effect or to the Korczak Effect. You will always take partial responsibility for a given situation, no matter if it is good or bad. That is why, if you prefer to base your institution on the Korczak Effect, make sure it contains several important categories which comprise the feeling of agency in people involved in it. Be sure there is everyday awareness of the intentions of you as a person in charge because the will of action based on the Korczak Effect is not given forever and it can change. Make each and every conversation and deal with people a regular practice (clear and open). Equip your employees with the feeling that communication and situations are clear, and information is open. Create conditions in which the people can take responsibility for the institution's functioning regardless of the job they do, and in which they could both freely use the potential your institution offers and change it. The potential of change that could appear then seems immense. The experience of taking part in an institution based on agency not only expands individual agency range, but it is also an encouragement to build this kind of institutions on one's own. Also, the bigger number of such institutions and contacts between them, the bigger probability that more people and more organizations can experience the Korczak Effect. It would fill the present void between the level of individuals who want their agency to be respected and the level of legal regulations that sanction and respect that agency.

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Janusz Korczak – Elinor Ostrom. Looking for Self-Government

As I mentioned in the text about Amartya Sen, Janusz Korczak's achievements can be related to the achievements of many renowned figures of modern science. Another example, this time from the area of self-government, is Elinor Ostrom, a winner of the Nobel Prize in economy.

The main area of her analysis was common-pool resources, which are collective property of a certain group of people, property such as pastures, forests or fisheries. For many years, sociologists have been concerned about management of these types of places. They have been interested in how such resources can be in good condition despite many people managing them.

Throughout her entire academic life, Ostrom had been examining communities governing common-pool resources. At a certain point, this research had transformed into a deep reflection on the area of self-government, because a good management of common resources by a society translates into an effective functioning of the self-government mechanisms inside it.

Ostrom's research is, to a great extent, convergent with Korczak's work. One can perceive the Orphan's Home or Our House as collective resources. Both institutions belonged to children and the personnel and they both were exploited by them. They were those people's common good, which they could use, but, at the same time, they had to take care of. In practice, Korczak's idea for these institutions' functioning (applied for many years by Maria Falska, the manager of Our House), above all, consisted in the children governing both organizations: their homes. That vision came true: *A child has become the host, the worker and the manager* – Korczak wrote in "How to Love a Child. The Orphan's Home".

Also from that book, we know the magnitude of Korczak's effort in initiating the mechanisms which allowed the children to govern the Orphan's Home. How many obstacles he had had to overcome before he convinced himself and the children that this kind of action was possible. The way he determined and wrote down the rules of the functioning of the Orphan's Home is proof that he intuitively perceived accurately the key rules present in self-governed communities.

Ostrom published a book titled *Understanding Institutional Diversity*, which was a unique summary of her long-lasting research. At the end of that book, there is a description of eight rules, which, according to her, are crucial for creating a healthy self-governed community. In the further part of this text, I am going to cover six of them, which can be directly related to Korczak's texts and actions.

The most important thing which orders the functioning of self-governed communities is a boundary. One always needs to determine who is a member of a given community and who is not. Who can use the common goods, at the same time taking responsibility for keeping them in good condition, and who cannot. If there are more than one owner of the goods, you need to determine precisely who they are.

Korczak was also aware of the importance of boundaries. Above all, he did not allow the Orphanage to be managed by adults and children from outside, even people who had close relationships with the residents. Korczak, just like Ostrom, was convinced that, in a place where self-government was to be practised, the people in charge should also be aware of its consequences. This did not apply to people who did not live in the Orphanage.

According to both Ostrom's research and Korczak's experience, the benefits that people gain from common goods have to be proportional to the costs of keeping them. Self-governed communities should work in accordance with rules which maintain the balance between the benefits and the costs resulting from being members of such communities. The Orphanage satisfied the basic needs of all residents, but the residents who took part in its community on a bigger scale gained more opportunities of action, as well as received prizes of some kind, for

example picture postcards. The proportionality rule also protects self-governed communities from very dangerous problem of free-riders – people who use common goods, but do not take part in their creation.

Ostrom's research also shows that self-governed communities have to be able to influence the rules they abide by. None of the sets of rules is perfect, so self-governed communities have to have a possibility of changing ill-functioning rules. Self-government is not only a common management of goods, but it is also the skill of managing the rules that shape the life in a given community. In the Orphan's Home or Our House, the children were able to create their own parliaments, which could change the rules in both institutions.

Apart from being able to change the rules in self-governed communities, it was also important to be able to monitor the observance of the rules. According to Ostrom, the thing that distinguishes self-governed communities from those governed in an authoritarian way is how they are monitored. The members of self-governed communities either monitor the rule-abiding together or tell other people to do it. In the latter case, the people in charge of monitoring the rules have to do it in a way which is open and transparent to other members, so that the knowledge of how rules are obeyed is not concentrated in one place.

In the institutions run by Korczak there were multiple mechanisms which allowed children to control if other children follow the established rules. That was the way the Court of Peers, Duty Hours, or the Notary worked. Korczak drew charts and tables which he then hung in easily accessible places. In this way, the children had full control of monitoring their own behaviour.

Ostrom also came to the conclusion that the most important is the way how punishment for disobeying the rules is administered. The violation of the rules should not be ignored, but noticed and reported. The punishment, however, ought to be gradable. If someone breaks the rule for the first time, the punishment should be nominal. When the rule is broken regularly, the punishment should be harsher. Korczak had a similar idea. He created a code for the Court of Peers, which was also based on the idea of the gradation of sanctions (because, according to Korczak, there was no such word as 'punishment'). The sanctions were there not to humiliate anyone, but rather to convince them not to break the rules again.

No community is able to avoid disputes within it. That is why, according to Ostrom's research, only the communities with established mechanisms of coping with conflicts can survive as self-governed communities. A community should reveal its disputes in order to manage them. This was also Korczak's approach, and the proof of that was the existence of the Court of Peers, which was used to regulate and sanction disputes.

Finally, one more important matter. According to Ostrom's beliefs (and Korczak's experience), self-governed communities appear very seldom and they are difficult to sustain. Ostrom was convinced that it is rather coincidental that, in some communities, the power is not in the hands of a limited elite. It is easier for self-governed communities to exist in places well-hidden from the roads of great history – at the foot of the Himalayas or in the middle of the Amazon jungle. Korczak was aware that his experiment was special. When creating the Orphan's Home, he realized the uniqueness of its rules. At the same time, both him and Ostrom were convinced that those fragile communities are very effective in what they offer. They can last long and flourish, not surrendering to the power of despots. Looking at the example of Janusz Korczak, the proof of this thesis' legitimacy is the fact that the Orphan's Home worked and followed its original rules even when it was relocated into the Warsaw Ghetto.

Korczak's Pedagogic Postulates in Practice

As an educator, a leader and a mom, I have to say that Janusz Korczak's ideas have been accompanying me for many years. In each of these three worlds, he is my guide and my support. These three different paths are paved with the same values: respect, honesty, openness and, above all, subjectivity. They are associated with communication, understanding at work and at home. These paths are difficult and they require effort. Many times I stumble and fall because I forget what is important. Sometimes weariness, hurry or my own goals cover those values like mud covers a street. Korczak also had to face this; he also stumbled and got back up again. That gives me comfort. I would like to talk about my two endeavors which were inspired by Korczak's incredible journey.

In both cases, I went through the same phases, in which the Korczakian idea accompanied me. It determined the concept of my role, my goals, my approach to the people involved. Korczak gave me strength to experiment, ask questions and look for answers to them. Thanks to him, I was not afraid of failure and I did not worry about potential obstacles, and, also thanks to him, I knew when to say stop. He showed me that one cannot do everything and that life also consists of difficult decisions, which the future of ours and our dearest depends on.

Though in both cases of my experience the structure and the reflection were similar, it turned out to have produced different results. Both the people involved and my role were also different, but it did not stop me from reaching my goals based on subjectivity. This is my proposed structure:

Phase one – ideas, first actions

Phase two – experiments and questions

Phase three – correction

Phase four – fulfillment

Phase five – exit

I. Teen Center at Brzeska St. in Praga Północ, Warsaw

Praga Północ is a peculiar place on the map of Warsaw, inhabited mostly by people dealing with social exclusion. Strong contrasts can be seen there: poverty and wealth, ruins and new buildings, people's passivity and the activity of companies and non-governmental organizations.



1. Nine years ago at Brzeska St., a lot of children walked about, caused commotion and did not know what to do with their lives. They often avoided going to school and took up various vices. That was not their fault, though.

IDEA – to introduce a change in their lives, to show them another world. We will create an environment in which they can see that they can be heard and treated with respect.

GOAL – to increase the feeling of agency in the children (and their parents). We want them to feel the power coming from being in charge of themselves and their lives!

Our first action was working on the street, then – establishing a Center.

2. Since the first contact with the children, we began a difficult process of building trust and relationships, as well as looking for understanding of their behavior. We asked ourselves why they acted like that and how to convince them that we were there for them.

Our actions were a result of seeking answers to these questions. We divided the children into

small groups, we established rules together and we all kept an eye on following them. We showed them another way to communicate – instead of the one they usually used; we talked about needs and personal space.

3. Conclusions and solutions which, eventually, proved fundamental and crucial to our work with the children were:

- Establishing BOUNDARIES and consequences of breaking the rules. We signed a contract with each child;
- Working in SMALL GROUPS. Individual time devoted to a child which was in need of it;
- Creating SPACE, which had to be thought over, prepared and adjusted to the needs and capabilities of the children;
- Caring about COMMON GOOD, SELF-GOVERNMENT, and the CENTER; the children made decisions concerning changes in the Center's space and ways of spending their time there.

4. Taking the initiative is pure joy – I associate this slogan with fulfillment. After two years of working and being with the children, we began to see them grow strong and make decisions about themselves and their group. What we worked on is still being improved by us today:

- Cooperation and communication – shared care about the Center, organizing parties;
- Community – the children learn to compromise, to see other people's needs, to solve difficult problems.
- Self-confidence – talking about our needs, discovering one's hobbies, making decisions and making dreams come true.

What I wrote above is the perspective of the children in our Center. From my point of view, the fulfillment is contained in those three statements: I UNDERSTAND, I FIND SOLUTIONS, I ACT. Reaching that stage was possible thanks to a team of educators which I was a part of. The way we communicated and supported one another was a paramount element of achieving success, which was building relations with the children. The values which were present in working with children, were also present in our team cooperation: looking for strong points, respecting the boundaries, faith in opportunities, giving space and responsibilities, being there for one another in difficult times, helping each other cope with frustration. In these areas, Korczak's experience was extremely valuable.

5. My needs as a leader have changed. I have become a mom and I have lost the distance crucial in working with excluded children. I have decided to go another way.

6. The Center is still there. It is developing, changing, fulfilling the children's needs.

II. Family Center in Wawer

1. The idea for a Family Center came from my need to meet people in a similar situation, as well as from a belief that this need is universal for mothers with small children.

- THESIS – the moms need time for themselves and for their hobbies.
- ACTION – starting a Family Center which offers activities for moms and their children.
- GOAL – empowering the parents in their role of guardians and teachers; making them self-confident; preventing the isolation of the families with small children.

2. When starting the Center, I was optimistic and sure that my idea will be a success. However, the first year of its work gave opposite effects. The activities for moms and their children were

not as attractive as I had hoped. I asked myself: why wouldn't the women come to the Center? – I prepared an offer aimed at moms. I thought of various activities for them and I found guardians for the children during the activities for their moms.



Unfortunately, still only few people showed up. That was when I asked mothers of young children: what do they expect from a place like the Center? What would make them go there? I invited them to join in co-creating the offer and the space of the Center. I gave this place into their hands.

3. I did not have to wait long for the effects. The moms knew well what they needed. With my help, they thought of and organized everything anew:

The PROGRAM aimed at activities for the children:

- The SPACE for the children and adults, so both groups could spend time there safely and comfortably;
- COMMON GOODS, SELF-GOVERNMENT – caring about the Center, deciding about the space and about how to spend time there;
- Communication – listening, asking, discussing one's needs. We created a table on which people could submit their ideas for the Center. We created a newsletter, we prepared surveys with questions about what the Center lacked.

At that point, I became a leader of a group of moms who organized the life in the Center. More people started to come. The Center became a place full of life. The moms who came, tired, frustrated and lonely, found their peace there. They felt strength and their agency in them. They regained their self-confidence and found joy in being a part of a group that offers mutual support.

4. Parents became the hosts of the Center (there were dads there, too!).

- The Rules of the Center resulted from practice and needs. The members established them, corrected them and kept eye on following them.
- Cooperation and communication – caring about the Center, organizing parties, offering activities and executing ideas.

– Community – older members filled in the new ones; for three years there was the so-called “exchangery” of clothing and accessories for children, open library; self-organization.

5. The Center became a place run democratically; it still changes and adjusts to the needs of new families. However, my needs as a leader have changed. My children are adult now and being in the Center without them excludes me from that place. I have different experience than the moms from the Center, other difficulties and other matters to take care of. I have decided to go another way and fulfill myself in new areas, though I still support the new leader, who is now one of the moms.

SUMMARY

The thoughts, experience and pedagogic practice of Janusz Korczak is present in my stories. The approach to work, to others and to the situation we are in is still universal and important. When we meet other people, we can see another world – a world from their perspective.

This is the moment to make a decision – what I can and what I want to do. I can ignore them or stop and try to understand them. If I decide to understand them, there is a new world opening in front of my eyes – the world of another person; there is also a great challenge and responsibility for myself, the space I create and the relation. What is the most important to me in working with other people and what I see in Korczak's actions is:

1. Establishing FRAMES – a space for action; inviting people to fill that space. The goal of this is to increase the feeling of agency and subjectivity in people.

Creating space for people to experience being heard and treated with respect. That will let them introduce change to their lives and their surroundings.

2. BOUNDARIES – of oneself, of others, of institutions. We create them through:

- a) Communication – talking about one's needs and boundaries;
- b) Common establishment of the RULES within teams and within groups – shared responsibility in following them;
- c) proper organizational STRUCTURE, determining TASKS and knowing the strong and weak points of the people we work with. Creating with resources – talents and skills.

3. EXPERIMENTING, asking questions – being ready for changes, checking the solutions; openness for the experiments of others – taking a step backwards, observation and keeping in touch with the people we work with. Being ready to accept our mistakes and the mistakes made by others;

4. The TEAM – common goals, different ways of their execution – with the help of resources and the competence of others;

5. Building RELATIONS – dialogue, cooperation, co-responsibility.

6. CONSISTENCY of values and behaviors – subjectivity realized on all of the levels: me, me with my dearest people, me with my co-workers, me with my clients.

I am certain that pursuing these postulates will let people build relations based on subjectivity and respect, with respect for people's boundaries and their potential. I think that is what mentality and pedagogic practice need nowadays in every areas they appear – social aid and education.



Julia during our workshop in Paris

The workshop overview

'Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak's Footsteps'

Part two

Exercise 1: Agency in a Group

Topics:

agency in a group, group processes, responsibility for a group process

Difficulty level : medium

Duration: 90 minutes (+ 20 minutes of integration exercises if the participants don't know each other)

Brief characteristic

The exercise allows the participants to both reach to their memories connected with agency in a group and experience the processes which accompany it. The report from this exercise will consist in looking into these processes, naming them and understanding the huge responsibility for the direction of the group's development which lies in the hands of the instructors and the groups' members.

Goals

- 1) Making the participants more sensitive to the group aspect of agency, in connection with the past and the present.
- 2) Allowing the participants to experience how the group rules and norms influence the creation of agency in individuals and in the group.
- 3) Practicing the perception of different aspects of reality from the perspective of both its level and its meta-level.

Materials

- a flip chart, markers, pads for the paper, desks
- a projector and a computer, presentation "Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak's Footsteps". Part two
- If showing the presentation is not possible, write its main points on a flip chart.

Preparations

- 1) If the participants do not know each other, do some integration exercises. It will allow them to learn each other's names and gain minimal knowledge of one another (time: 20 minutes).
- 2) Put the chairs in a circle, away from the desks.
- 3) Make contact with the group for the time of the workshop and ask them to follow the corrective feedback pattern – above all, use I-statements, do not give advice, evaluate their behaviors and not them per se, talk to the person you talk about and not about them.

The exercise

1) By showing slide 2 of the presentation, briefly discuss the course of the previous and present parts of the workshops.

Part two, just like part one, consists of three steps: agency in a group, agency in an institution and institutions based on agency.

These three steps have been singled out because maintaining agency in a group means different rules than in various relations between two people, and maintaining agency in an institution means different rules than in a group (for example, a classroom vs. an entire school or a given department in a company vs. the whole company).

The last step is an attempt to create an institution based on agency in an exercise.

2) Give the instructions shown on slides 3 and 4:

The next exercise is aimed at the entire group. Its topic is agency in a group, understood both as agency between the participants and between the leader of the group and the entire group. Let us use an example of a school by using your school memories concerning agency in a group.

The exercise goes as follows:

a) Please choose 3-4 people who will be asked to recall their school memories concerning their feeling of agency in a group (were you treated subjectively, do you remember if your group treated others as such, were you treated subjectively by your teacher and vice versa).

b) After each story, let us start a short discussion during which other participants can share what they felt and thought during others' stories.

c) Also, please choose 1-2 people, who will be writing down the most crucial conclusions and observations, which will appear in the discussions.

d) The participants are in charge of choosing the people as well as determining the duration of each part of the exercise. However, the exercise should last about 20-50 minutes.

3) Next, the participants do the exercise by themselves. Your job is to make sure they finish the exercise on time and to observe their work. Also make sure the comfort of the participants is not disturbed in a way that you will have to interfere with or stop it (it is hardly possible, but it could happen).

Report and evaluation

The report of the exercise consists of two steps: a report from its level and from its meta-level. Use slide 5.

Step one – from the level of the exercise

1) Summarize what were your key feelings and reflections concerning the memories mentioned.

Show the participants that the exercise has an even deeper level:

Step two – from the meta-level of the exercise

- 1) How did you feel during the exercise?
- 2) Look at the fact that, in order to listen to the stories about agency in a group, your group was formed to perform an entirely individual activity. Now focus on your feelings and reflections about the situation you have just been in.
- 3) How did you feel: what did you or didn't you have influence on in the exercise?
- 4) Did you choose a leader from among you?
- 5) In what circumstances did he or she appear? Was it his/her choice, somebody's suggestion, somebody's readiness or another reason?
- 6) Did you establish any rules during the exercise? If so, how? Who established them, followed them or changed them? If not, how was the exercise conducted without rules?
- 7) Who felt the group pressure to think and do (or not to do) given tasks?
- 8) How did you perceive your individual or group agency in this situation?
- 9) Share your own observations of your group work in the context of agency, if similar observations have not been shared before.
- 10) By using slide 6, summarize: there are always rules, goals and responsibilities in a group, though they are very often unspoken or even unconscious. The people appointed, chosen or having leading skills always take responsibility for its actions and they cannot avoid it. As for agency, the responsibility finds expression, above all, in caring about the group's rules and norms. Even if the leaders abstain from any action, they still make a choice concerning the responsibility for the group.

That is exactly why Janusz Korczak used in his institutions various methods which proved helpful in the group functioning, and which he or other people in charge found optimal (an example of it is the citation on slide 6). Most crucial is the awareness of the responsibility of each member of the group, as the direction of the process depends on them as well (in an extreme situation, for example, there can be another leader chosen from among the group members).

Share the reflection that thinking and feeling in the context of one's agency and the awareness of one's agency is a difficult challenge which not everybody can face, especially not those whose agency is limited or is being limited.

An even more difficult task is to verbalize one's expectations and needs connected with one's own agency and to express them so they become real. We cannot say, though, that the right to subjective treatment is only for those who are able to show their need for it.

On the next difficulty level there is the awareness of how we can limit others' agency as well as the decision whether we want to act on it on a smaller scale. An additional decision is whether we want to represent those who are not aware of their agency and they do not express it (as Korczak represented the children).

Pointers for the instructors

- 1) If the participants did not take part in the first part of the workshops, first discuss briefly the main conclusions from it.
- 2) If the group consists of fewer than 10 people, you can reduce the number of those who will be presenting their memories.

Additional information

1) More on the role of agency in theory and practice will be available in other materials created after the project “Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New”, especially in the transcript of the lecture “Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New” and in the presentation accompanying it.

2) You can find more on the responsibility for a group functioning in a lecture and materials devoted to the “Korczak Effect”.

3) As it is written in the Polish Language Dictionary, the prefix “meta-”, as the first part of compounds, indicates a higher level, succession or changeability of something. (<http://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/meta;2567600.html>). In the case of the word “meta-level” mentioned in the exercise, it signifies the assumption of a point of view allowing the inspection of reality (including the inspection of one’s self) from above it, from an observer’s position. It enables seeing the mechanisms and relationships not visible from the perspective of an agent of the action.

Exercise two: Agency in an Institution.

Topics:

agency in an institution, an institution’s mechanisms, negotiating solutions.

Difficulty level: medium

Duration: 120 minutes

Brief characteristics

The exercise contains a short lecture on the postulates of the concept of an institution based on agency, as well as a task which allows to apply the gained knowledge in practice. It allows the participants to see the model of such an institution from the point of view of the roles inside it, as well as the connection of these rules to agency divided into seven categories. It gives the participants a unique experience of creating solutions (as it was in the Orphanage) which are supposed to be both effective and respectful of the agency of the institution’s participants. The report from this exercise will consist in looking into the participants’ experience and directing them towards another exercise in which they will be using it not in the context of the Orphanage.

Goals

1) Presenting the participants with the basic concepts of an institution based on agency.

2) Allowing the participants to experience a perspective in which negotiating solutions takes place with both respect for the agency of the participants of the negotiation and hope for an effective solution.

Materials

– a flip chart, markers, pieces of paper and pens/felt-tip pens/crayons

– a projector and a computer, the presentation “Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak’s Footsteps”. Part two

– If showing the presentation is not possible, write its main points on a flip chart.

Preparations

The exercise is to be preceded by the exercise “Agency in a Group”.

The exercise

I. Short lecture

1) Slide 7: recall different aspects of agency (the steps during the workshops) indicating that they can overlap with one another.

2) Slide 8: On a diagram, show the mechanism of the functioning of an institution based on agency. Next, appoint three different groups of stakeholders who are significant from our point of view: the people in charge, the employees and the service recipients. On the slide there are also three features which identify such an institution: area of expertise, basic activities and the name/type of institution.

3) Slide 9: illustrate the information above with an example from the Orphanage.

4) Slide 10: show that the diagram illustrating the mechanism of the functioning of an institution based on agency contains seven categories that, in our view, create the concept of agency.

5) According to the notes on slide 11, discuss the steps of the process of finding solutions in an institution based on agency. Some sample challenges taken from the Orphanage:

a) What should the children do with the items which belong to them?

b) How to let the children learn how to deal with money?

6) Slide 12 contains examples of solutions to the problem: “What should the children do with the items which belong to them?”

7) Slide 13 shows a possible effect of the discussion on the first solution of the problem above: Children should take care of their belongings however they see fit. It is important to show that the discussion takes place after the stakeholders make sure that their intention is to maintain a subjective attitude towards others, as well as towards having conversations and making contracts.

II. The exercise

1) Divide the participants into three groups. Each group draws a role of one of the stakeholder groups in the Orphanage (Korczak/Wilczyńska, the employees, the children).

2) Slide 14: the stakeholders meet (after making sure that their intention is to maintain a subjective attitude towards others and towards having conversations and making contracts) to find a solution to the following problem: “Children trade their things between one another”, which results in chaos, dissatisfaction and frustration among the children.

3) First, each stakeholder creates a list of solutions which should take into consideration the agency of all the members of the institution (time for this part: 15-20 minutes).

4) Now, ask the stakeholders to choose the best of their solutions and present them.

5) Each of the presented solutions will now be discussed by the stakeholders from the

perspective of four categories: how this solution corresponds to their freedom, responsibility, openness and clarity.

Each of the stakeholders is asked for their opinion if the solution is or is not satisfying in a given perspective. For each solution draw a table (like on slide 14) in which you put the stakeholders' answers.

6) After discussing all the solutions, compare your tables. If the participants see a solution satisfying for them all, good, but it is not the goal of the exercise. Finally, you can say there are several ways of choosing the solution:

- a) Number. The best solution is the one with the smallest number of the "unsatisfying" votes.
 - b) Adjournment. The conversation is treated as an initial look into mutual expectations and stances, and the process of the choice is adjourned.
 - c) Trial. The stakeholders together decide on accepting a solution (regardless of their attitude towards it) because they take into consideration the possibility that in reality it will work differently than in their minds and it will be the most satisfying for everybody.
 - d) Modification. The stakeholders think about what modifications should be made in the proposed solutions so that they can be the most satisfying for everybody.
- 6) Tell the participants about the solution which worked in the Orphanage, that is the notary (sources given below, under "additional information").

Report and evaluation

- 1) „Bring back” the people who played the stakeholders. Tell each person: You are no longer Korczak/the child/the employee of the Orphanage. You are John, Mary, etc.
- 2) Ask them what emotions they felt during the exercise.
- 3) Ask them which elements of the exercise were easy and which were difficult for them and why.
- 4) Let them share the reflections on how, from their perspective, the process of creating solutions looked, having in mind the agency of all the stakeholders, and how the negotiations went on.
- 5) Ask them if this way of finding solutions can prove useful in their lives.

Comment briefly: the process the participants experienced is a reflection of the situation from the Orphanage in a nutshell. Creating solutions occurred in a similar way there, though it was a more complicated and long term process. According to the interpretation of the Korczak Foundation, this way of searching for solutions is possible to apply also in modern institutions. The next exercise will be all about that.

Pointers for the instructors

- 1) From our experience of running the workshops, during the exercise "Children trade their things between one another", it is important to create groups of exactly 3 people, so only one person will be a stakeholder. Pairs who impersonate one role have problems with unification of their attitude towards different categories of agency, which is a redundant obstacle.
- 2) If there is somebody who knows the actual method applied in the Orphanage (that is the notary), ask that person not to be a participant here but an observer.

Additional information

- 1) The way of functioning of an institution based on agency is described in the transcript of the lecture “Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New” and in the accompanying presentation.
- 2) You can find more on the seven categories constituting the feeling of agency in a lecture and other materials devoted to the “Korczak Effect”.
- 3) The details of the notary: briefly – for example in the publication by Agnieszka Witkowska-Krych titled – “Janusz Korczak (1878[1879] – 1942), Warsaw 2015 of the „Patroni naszych ulic” series (available here: <http://pamiec.pl/pa/biblioteka-cyfrowa/patroni-naszzych-ulic/15432,Janusz-Korczak-1878-1879-1942.html>), in detail – for example in the book by Maria Falska, NASZ DOM. Zrozumieć, porozumieć się, poznać, Warsaw 2007.

Exercise three: Institutions Based on Agency

Topics:

agency in an institution, innovation and change in an institution, negotiating solutions

Difficulty level: high

Duration: 90 minutes

Brief characteristics

The exercise serves as a continuation of the exercise “Agency in an Institution”.

It allows the participants to see the model of the institution from the point of view of its roles, as well as the connection of these roles to agency divided into seven categories. It gives the participants unique experience of creating solutions not from the perspective of the Orphanage anymore, but of a modern institution.

Goals

- 1) Allowing the participants to practice the tools they experienced in the previous exercise in respect of a modern institution which does not involve children.
- 2) To encourage them to use the experience in their work and their private lives.

Materials

- a flip chart, markers, pieces of paper and pens/felt-tip pens/crayons
- a projector and a computer, the presentation “Looking for Agency. Following in Korczak’s Footsteps”. Part two
- If showing the presentation is not possible, write its main points on a flip chart.

Preparations

This exercise is to be preceded by the exercise “Agency in an Institution”.

The exercise

- 1) Slide 15: the example institution in this exercise will be a nursing home.
 - 2) Slide 16: in this exercise, the participants are a step earlier than in the exercise “Agency in an Institution”. Without role playing, they choose a problem by brainstorming, a problem that could come up in this type of institution. After choosing the problem (like the elderly will not take medication, the elderly want to participate in more challenging exercises, they want to go out more often), the participants go to the next step.
 - 3) Divide the participants into two groups. Each group will be doing the same exercise. The members of each group will draw one of three groups of stakeholders in a nursing home (head of the department, workers, and the elderly) so, in each group, there will be three subgroups of stakeholders.
 - 2) Each of the subgroups of stakeholders will be creating a list of solutions to a given challenge which should take into consideration the agency of all the people in the nursing home. (up to 30 minutes for this exercise).
 - 3) Slide 16: the stakeholders meet to find a solution to a challenge chosen before (after making sure that their intention is to maintain a subjective attitude towards others and towards having conversations and making contracts).
 - 4) Ask the subgroups’ stakeholders to choose their best solutions and present them within their group.
 - 5) Each of the presented solutions will now be discussed by all the stakeholders taking into account four categories: how this solution fits into their freedom, responsibility, openness and clarity.
- For each solution, the groups draw a table (as on slide 16) in which they write the stakeholders’ answers. Each subgroup of stakeholders is asked to express their opinion within their group on whether this solution is satisfying from the perspective of their feeling of freedom, responsibility, openness and clarity.
- 6) Having discussed all the solutions, the participants compare their tables in their groups. If they see a solution which will be satisfying for everybody, good, but it is not the goal of this exercise.
 - 7) You can remind them that, as in the previous exercise, there are several ways of choosing the solution.

Report and evaluation

- 1) “Bring back” the people who played the stakeholders. Tell each person: You are no longer the head/the employee/the elderly. You are John, Mary, etc.
- 2) Ask them what emotions they felt during the exercise.
- 3) Ask them which elements of the exercise were easy and which were difficult for them and why.
- 4) Let them share the reflections on how, from their perspective, the process of creating solutions looked, having in mind the agency of all the stakeholders, and how the negotiations went on.

5) Ask them if this way of finding solutions can prove useful in their lives, or in their careers.

6) Comment briefly: this exercise is a crowning achievement of the workshops. Our intention was to allow the participants to get to know both their agency and the way of using it in various relations and to see that it can be applicable on the institutional level as well. The exercises were supposed to show the way of functioning of an institution, the way which can result in a conscious and intentional action more in support of the “Korczak Effect” than the “Lucifer Effect”.

Pointers for the instructors

1) Our proposition of the type of institution in which the participants can work is a nursing home. (slide 15). You can choose another institution, but it is important for that institution to be modern and not involving working with children. However, if you work with teachers from a school or a kindergarten, you can safely propose these institutions.

2) It is important for the subgroups to be small, up to 3 people. From our experience in running the workshops, it is difficult for the members of one subgroup to determine their attitude towards different categories of agency, which is an important challenge at the level of working in an actual institution, but, at the level of the exercise, it is a redundant obstacle.



Our participants during workshop in Berlin



On the Korczak Foundation



FUNDACJA
KORCZAKOWSKA

The Korczak Foundation was established in 2011 by six founders: Helena Datner, Wojciech Lasota, Agata Patalas, Bartosz Pieliński, Dominik Wasilewski and Tomasz Własiuk.

It began its work in 2012, which was the Year of Janusz Korczak.

During a few years of work, it has carried out several projects, some of them local (lessons on Janusz Korczak and workshops for a group of Korczakian educators), some international (the presentation “The Reformer of the World”, prepared for the Foreign Office together with the Documentation and Research Center KORCZAKIANUM and Janusz Korczak’s Polish Community, as well as the project “Janusz Korczak in Europe Old and New”, sponsored partly by the program Erasmus+ and the Jewish Community of Warsaw.

The program of the Korczak Foundation is:

We claim that the unique work of Janusz Korczak and his co-workers should make a very wide appeal, not only in the field of pedagogy.

We are sure that the mechanisms of Korczakian institutions such as the Orphanage, Our Home or “Little Review” are universal and timeless. Built on the idea of agency, the institutions effectively performed their roles, while being an example of self-governing and innovative management.

Basing on our experience and our interpretation of those achievements, we claim that Korczakian ideas and solutions can be applied in working with people from various areas of expertise, such as education, fighting social exclusion, mediations, managing one’s organization or company.

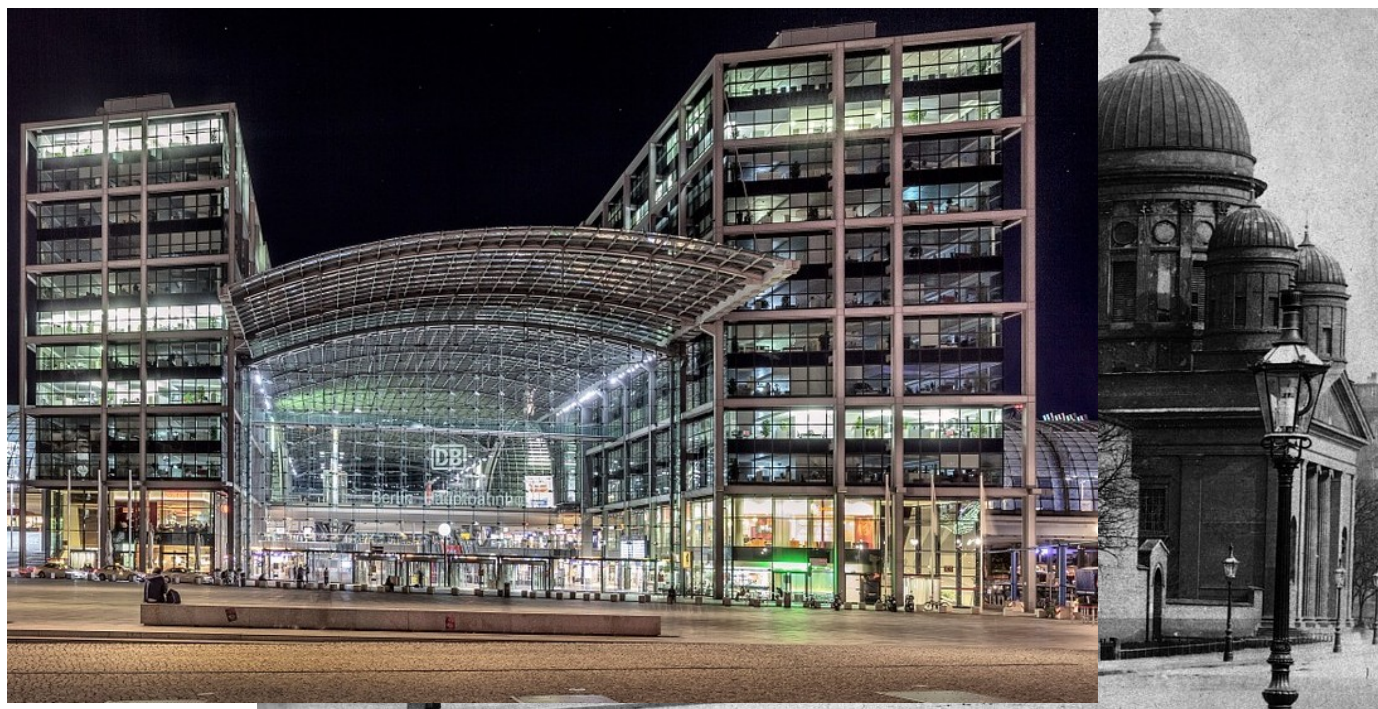
OUR MISSION:

We share our knowledge and interpretation, we try, in various contexts, to help transform the Korczakian wisdom into modern action.

Feel free to contact us fundacja@korczakowska.pl and visit our website www.korczakowska.pl.



Greetings from London!



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