



**Krzysztof Wieczorek**

University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7987-168X>

# A Child is a Human Being Now Responsible Parenthood in the Light of Janusz Korczak’s Pedagogy

**Abstract:** The author extracts from the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical the thread of responsible parenthood. He asks about the situation of a child in family half a century after the publication of the papal document. He points towards a number of threats and disruptions in the adult-child relations, which result from an improper understanding of who a child is from the philosophical perspective. He opts for a development of philosophical reflection on a child and enriching it with new aspects. He reaches out for inspiration to the works by Janusz Korczak, which present an outline of the original philosophy of a child. What deserves particular recognition is the perception of a child as a “a project of a future man,” and not as a full-valued person who deserves appreciation of the contemporary ontic and social status. In the conclusion the author develops and clarifies Korczak’s controversial postulate of the “children’s right to death,” giving it a contemporary interpretation.

**Keywords:** responsible parenthood, child, children’s rights, philosophy of a child

## *The Humanae Vitae* Encyclical Letter and the Problem of Responsible Parenting

*The Humanae Vitae* encyclical letter on the *Regulation of Birth* of the Supreme Pontiff, Paul VI, announced on July 25, 1968, addresses the problem of responsible parenthood, which is important for contemporary culture. In the general perception, not only by Catholic communities, it is considered primarily

as an official interpretation of the Catholic sexual ethics within the scope of conception regulation. However, this important document cannot be restricted to just one dimension. Pope Paul VI also touches upon the need for conscious and responsible shaping of relations between parents and children within a family. The document published fifty years ago reflects the concern for the contemporary family to be a permanent, strong, and functional community of people, and for all its members to create a safe environment favorable to development, building strong interpersonal bonds and proper socialization of the young generation.

In the following commentary by the Italian theologian Roberto de Mattei, it is worth noting the continuity of the papal teaching on the family and the integrity of the vision of the family as a community with specific rights, duties, and values. Mattei writes:

The doctrine of the Church on marriage was affirmed as definitive and binding by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti Connubii* of 31st December, 1930. In this document, the Pope calls the attention of the entire Church and all of the human race to the fundamental truths on the nature of marriage, an institution not of men, but conceived by God Himself, and on the blessings and benefits society derives from it. The first purpose is procreation: which does not mean simply bringing children into the world, but educating them, intellectually, morally, and most of all spiritually, to help them attain their eternal destiny, which is Heaven. The second purpose is the mutual assistance of the spouses, which is not only a material assistance, nor only a sexual, sentimental intent, but primarily an assistance and spiritual union.<sup>1</sup>

A particularly important function of the family is to create optimal living conditions and personal development for the children born within it. In the *Preface* to his encyclical, Paul VI draws attention to the need of taking into account the new problems and circumstances that contemporary families face in the context of their vocation to fertility and the education of their offspring:

The transmission of human life is a most serious role in which married people collaborate freely and responsibly with God the Creator. It has always been a source of great joy to them, even though it sometimes entails many difficulties and hardships. The fulfillment of this duty has always posed problems to the conscience of married people, but the recent course of human society and the concomitant changes have provoked new questions. The Church cannot

---

<sup>1</sup> Roberto de Mattei, "Rereading *Humanae Vitae* in the Light of *Casti connubii*," trans. Francesco Romana, in *Corrispondenza Romana*, July 5th, 2018, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2018/07/de-mattei-rereading-humane-vitae-in.html>.

ignore these questions, for they concern matters intimately connected with the life and happiness of human beings.<sup>2</sup>

On the one hand, the announcement refers to the issue of the medicalization of the regulation of conception, which requires a thorough discussion on the ethics of contraception. On the other hand, one can see here an awareness of the role—not always positive—played by new social and cultural conditions in the formation of family ethos, and especially in the transformation of the attitude of parents towards children. It is the issue that I would like to pay close attention to.

The author of the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical in the subsequent chapters lists and exposes those external conditions and mental changes that have the greatest influence on the decisions concerning responsible parenthood in all its dimensions—both procreative and educational. This is addressed in the following paragraphs: “not only working and housing conditions but the greater demands made both in the economic and educational field pose a living situation in which it is frequently difficult these days to provide properly for a large family” [...]. “The question of human procreation, like every other question which touches human life, involves more than the limited aspects specific to such disciplines as biology, psychology, demography or sociology. It is the whole man and the whole mission to which he is called that must be considered: both its natural, earthly aspects and its supernatural, eternal aspects,” “[...] husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives.” [...] “...this love is fecund. It is not confined wholly to the loving interchange of husband and wife; it also contrives to go beyond this to bring new life into being. Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the procreation and education of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute in the highest degree to their parents’ welfare.” [...]. “Married love, therefore, requires of husband and wife the full awareness of their obligations in the matter of responsible parenthood. [...] they are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator. The very nature of marriage and its use makes His will clear, while the constant teaching of the Church spells it out” [...]. Especially marital relationship has “its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood to which man is called.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* of His Holiness Paul VI on the regulation of birth, July 25, 1968, pt 1, accessed November 27, 2019, [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_25071968\\_humanae-vitae.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html).

<sup>3</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, pts 2–12.

In the light of these excerpts from the encyclical, the priorities for contemporary parents should be: ensuring decent conditions for the upbringing and education of young people, caring for the needs of children in a large family, striving for an integral education that includes the child as a whole, with all his or her vocation, close cooperation between the spouses and the whole family community in the consistent upbringing of children, seeing each child as a gift (and not a threat to one's own egoistic interests) and, finally, experiencing parenthood as a vocation that is inextricably and naturally part of the structure of matrimonial life.

The order of these priorities, as commentators have noted, is partially due to the permanent moral foundation contained in the tradition of *Magisterium Ecclesiae*, but partially to the understanding of the signs of the times inscribed in the epoch in which Paul VI's papal teaching was shaped. Rev. Paweł Gałuszka, Director of the Department of Pastoral Care of the Families of the Metropolitan Curia in Kraków, in an interview with a journalist from the Catholic Information Agency, explains the ideological context of the conceptual and editorial work on the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical as follows:

The problem that arose at that time was the question of demography. Many children began to be born, which was seen as a threat to developing countries. It was pointed out that if children were to be born at such a speed, the Earth would not be able to feed them. Attempts were made to put pressure on future parents by showing the child as an enemy—as someone to be protected from. All political and economic problems were attempted to be reduced to a growing birth rate, indicating that the child is to blame for all the difficulties.<sup>4</sup>

Within this context, the Kraków priest recalls the teaching of Karol Wojtyła, which was shaped by the academic and didactic work of the Catholic University of Lublin:

Responsible parenthood that grows out of the logic of the gift should also be generous parenthood. Hence, Wojtyła often pointed out that when talking about responsible parenthood, we cannot think only of limiting the number of conceptions. On the contrary, responsibility is also expressed in the desire to create a large family.

At the end of the conversation, Paweł Gałuszka unequivocally points to the broader meaning of the 1968 document:

---

<sup>4</sup> Paweł Gałuszka, "Encyklika *Humanae vitae* nie jest jedynie dokumentem o antykoncepcji." Interview for Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna, July 24, 2018, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://deon.pl/kosciol/encyklika-humanae-vitae-nie-jest-jedynie-dokumentem-o-antykoncepcji-wywiad,487353>.

The *Humanae Vitae* encyclical is not only a document about contraception. It is a text that refers to the beauty of human love, describes it, points towards its essential features, seeing it as the foundation of a successful matrimonial life. Therefore, it draws attention to man as such.<sup>5</sup>

## The Present Situation of a Child in the Family— A Philosophical Perspective

Half a century after the publication of the text of the encyclical on moral principles in the field of the transmission of human life, the situation of the family in the Euro-Atlantic cultural circle has turned even worse. Today, not only are secularization tendencies increasing, which are conducive to breaking with the family model based on Christian values, but also the atomization of society, which entails the relaxation and weakening of family and interpersonal bonds.<sup>6</sup> More and more people are resigning from starting a family and thus decide to live as singles or in fleeting, short-term partnerships. In some countries, respect for human life has declined dramatically. The result is, among others, new legal regulations legitimating abortion and euthanasia.<sup>7</sup>

All these and many other factors mean that the situation of a child in a family—morally and economically weakened and increasingly deprived of institutional support—should become a subject of deep concern and responsible reflection. In order to avoid gross mistakes that could have negative consequences in the future, it is worth rethinking the fundamental philosophical, existential, and ethical questions concerning the child as a human being, his or her ontological and social status. Ignorance in this field, which we observe quite commonly today, in practice translates into many dramatic life situations for our children. Knowledge of the truth and reliable knowledge of the subject matter is not sufficient, but it is certainly a necessary condition for remedying some of the difficulties.

Nowadays, there are clear disparities in the knowledge about the child. On the one hand, specific disciplines such as developmental psychology, pedagogy, and education studies are developing rapidly and dynamically. There is also a growing legal awareness related to the gradual introduction of more and more perfect and precise legislative acts concerning children's rights.<sup>8</sup> On the other

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Maria Lewicka, "Rodzina nadal najwyższą wartością? Kierunki przemian współczesnej rodziny," in *Rodzina jako wartość: wzory – modele – redefinicje*, ed. Wojciech Muszyński (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2015), 38–49.

<sup>7</sup> See: Barbara Chyrowicz, ed., *Granice ingerencji w naturę* (Lublin: TN KUL, 2001), *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> See: Leda Korsoumba, "Janusz Korczak and the Convention on the Rights of the Child," in *The Year of Janusz Korczak. There Are No Children, There Are People*, ed. Barbara Smolińska-Theiss (Warszawa: Office of the Ombudsman for Children, 2013), 54–60.

hand, within this background, the philosophical perspective seems quite modest and unsatisfactory. While individual sciences, by solving a number of particular issues, are not simultaneously interested in the development of a comprehensive and general vision of the child and its existential situation, philosophy—which asks about the nature and essence of man—often loses sight of internal differentiation within this superior anthropological category. Meanwhile, today, in the face of facts and findings of contemporary science, one cannot stop at a reflection on humanity as “an abstraction inherent in each single individual,”<sup>9</sup> nor settle for the metaphysics of man as a substance being, equipped with attributes and accidents.<sup>10</sup> Instead of asking questions about ‘man in general,’ one should now ask about the problems of ‘this man’ involved in specific situations and circumstances. Some of them derive from the human psychophysical constitution, which makes each one of us a human being in a specific way. The individual way of being human consists of many factors. Being human, we are also necessarily: a child or an adult, a woman (girl) or a man (boy), white or colored, homosexual or heterosexual, etc. Each of these factors interferes so decisively with our individual ‘human fact’ that a failure to take them into account must result in a misunderstanding of the humanity as such.

The right way of thinking is the one whose outline can be found in the following books by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, namely, *Z teorii i metodologii metafizyki* and *Ja – człowiek*. The author writes about the need to use ‘the method of agreeing with facts’ in the process of practicing philosophy, because “the object of philosophy [...] cannot be incompatible with any fact, with any being.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Krąpiec proposes making the object of human philosophy not an abstract metaphysical category, but a human fact, given through a concrete experience. Krąpiec prefers the following approach: “In philosophical anthropology, as a theory of man, it is necessary to indicate the fact given to us to be explained and to outline the way of explaining this fact. The fact given to be explained is the man himself expressed in his essential qualities of being.”<sup>12</sup>

In his critical commentary on Krąpiec’s book *Ja – człowiek*, Józef Tischner adds that the intellectual style preferred in contemporary philosophical anthropology should be hermeneutical thinking, open to experience and oriented towards its comprehensible interpretation, while at the same time distrusting

---

<sup>9</sup> Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, ed. Fredrich Engels (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1976), <http://www.marx2mao.com/M&E/TF45.html>. Accessed November 27, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> See: Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Metafizyka: zarys teorii bytu* (Lublin: RW KUL, 2000), 62.

<sup>11</sup> Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Analiza rozumowania: problem uzasadnień w filozofii,” in *Z teorii i metodologii metafizyki*, ed. Stanisław Kamiński and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec (Lublin: TN KUL, 1962), 245.

<sup>12</sup> Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Ja – człowiek* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1991), 57.

the habits and mental stereotypes established in the consciousness. He warns against thinking according to “the system [...] of rules determining—before undertaking the proper experience—the real nature of the object being studied [...] according to the hierarchy established in advance.”<sup>13</sup>

However, it is precisely this way of thinking, stressed by both Krapiec and Tischner, that continues to prevail in the reflection on the child. While it can be noted with satisfaction that contemporary philosophy is increasingly seriously and boldly entering most areas of detailed anthropology focusing on endogenous conflicts and tensions between opposition forms of embodied human existence—such as biological and cultural sex, race, social and economic status, relation to state power, especially considered within the concept of biopolitics<sup>14</sup>—it should be noted, with concern, that among these topics there is still too little interest and attention given by the problem of child–adult relations. The philosophy of the child remains a postulate rather than a reality. Sebastian Taboń writes in his article “Zarys refleksji filozoficznej nad dzieckiem”: “Philosophy paid too little attention to the child. Is the child, therefore, too banal, frivolous and trivial a subject for philosophers to deal with? It seems that for them, the child is not a serious enough subject to engage their intellect in it.”<sup>15</sup>

This is quite right, especially with regard to the area of Central and Eastern Europe. In terms of interest in children and their affairs, philosophy has lagged behind other fields of knowledge. Although the philosophy of education exists and is developing, it deals with the child in a specific perspective—more as an object of educational influence and a raw material for shaping or as a bearer of personality potential, the release and updating of which will make it a human being in its proper sense rather than a sovereign subject, a *par excellence* personal being. This approach is unlikely to free us from the stereotype of thinking that “the child as an entity is an incomplete and unfinished form of man.”<sup>16</sup> It is, therefore, worth looking elsewhere for sources of inspiration to revive the style of thinking proposed by Krapiec and Tischner.

<sup>13</sup> Józef Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości* (Kraków: Znak, 1982), 337–338.

<sup>14</sup> See: for example, Erving Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon & Shuster 1986); bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press 1984); Natalie Stoljar, “Essence, Identity and the Concept of Woman,” *Philosophical Topics* 23, no. 2 (1995): 261–293; Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall, *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996); Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Sebastian Taboń, “Zarys refleksji filozoficznej nad dzieckiem,” in *Problemy współczesnego dziecka. Wybrane aspekty*, ed. Małgorzata Cywińska (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 2014), 127.

<sup>16</sup> Taboń, “Zarys refleksji filozoficznej nad dzieckiem,” 129.

## Janusz Korczak—A Doctor, Pedagogue and Philosopher of a Child

In the Polish pedagogical thought of the 20th century, there is a promising lead that I intend to follow. It was determined by the work and practical activity of Janusz Korczak. In fact, his name was Hirszt Goldszmidt. Janusz Korczak—initially a literary pen name under which he began to publish works of fiction—with time grew to such an extent that today hardly anyone remembers his real name. He lived in the years 1878–1942, although both of these dates are not entirely certain. The first one—due to the fact that his birth certificate was lost during the war, whereas the second one was dubious due to the fact that he died in the gas chamber of the Nazi death camp in Treblinka, and it was only owing to tedious research of historians that it was possible to establish the probable date of his death, that is, August 7, 1942. However, according to the legal system adopted in Poland in the post-war years, the official date of his death was 1946. Korczak was a specialist in children's diseases, a pedagogue, a social worker, and an educator. In his professional and personal life, Korczak constantly met with children, although he never started his own family. After completing his studies and military service in the Russian army on the front line of the Russian-Japanese war, he went to practice abroad in one of the Berlin clinics (in later years he also deepened his education in Paris and London). He worked in the Bergson and Bauman Children's Hospital in Warsaw. There he encountered childhood tragedies on a daily basis: poverty, malnutrition, suffering and the death of young patients. Another important testing ground, providing the opportunity to observe the everyday life and behavior of children in various situations, was the work at the Warsaw Orphanage on Krochmalna Street. He spent thirty years there, working as an educator and head of the institution. Until 1932, when he stayed with his sister Anna, Korczak spent days and nights with his children. He slept in a shared room called the dormitory, separated only by a screen and children's beds. Owing to this close bond, he became acquainted with and understood the children's nature—in its better and worse manifestations, which he expressed with engaging honesty in his publications<sup>17</sup>—bet-

---

<sup>17</sup> He wrote, among other things, the following words: "There are as many bad people among children as there are among adults, but they have no need or opportunity to show it. [...] Without organization, in a relaxed atmosphere, only a few exceptional children can develop successfully; dozens will be wasted." Janusz Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Internat. Kolonie letnie. Dom sierot* (Warszawa: Office of the Ombudsman for Children, 2013), 76. What makes the world pedagogical literature so unique is the moving, sometimes even brutal Korczak's study devoted to children with a tendency to do evil, entitled "Children of Pre-school Age." Here is a fragment of the article: "I ask what amount of suffering, what nerve reaction would a group of adults, forced to live with an offensive, brutal individual, with his bandit actions, respond to. For me, it does not matter how much innate crime, how much acquired malice the result is



ter than most education theorists, psychologists, and therapists. Based on this rich empirical basis, he built his complex image of a child, seen from close-up, realistically, and at the same time with love and empathy.

Janusz Korczak was not a systematic researcher of children's issues from a scientific perspective. All the time, however, he remained a clever observer, constantly analyzing and investigating the deeper sense of the phenomena and processes perceived. In his diary, Korczak included the following self-characteristics:

I have a research mind, not an inventive mind. Research to know? No. Research to find, to reach the bottom? Also no. I guess research to ask further and further questions. I do not have the ambition to answer, I want to go to other questions—not necessarily about the same thing. As a child, I did not break toys, I did not care why the doll was lying on the floor with its eyes closed. Not the mechanism, but the essence of things.<sup>18</sup>

One of his pupils from the orphanage, the later famous writer Igor Newerly, completes the picture: “Burdened with anxiety of inquiries, he would explore the essence of every thing to ask further and further questions. He was born this way. But why did the child become an object and inspiration, a goal and a content of the whole life—not the mysteries of the stars, the laws of heredity or the laws of society?”<sup>19</sup>

Let us add the information provided by Maria Szczepska-Pustkowska: “every day he meticulously collected notes about his pupils.”<sup>20</sup> He used the results of his observations and thoughts, based on them, in a wide range of writing. He wrote both literary works—novels and short stories for children and adults—as well as articles in professional medical and pedagogical journals. An important part of his work are works that can be described as textbooks or manuals for conscious parents. This category includes in particular: *Jak kochać dziecko* [How to Love a Child] (1919) and *Prawo dziecka do szacunku* [The Child's Right to Respect] (1928). Korczak also popularized pedagogical knowledge: he gave lectures and talks, appeared in radio plays, organized social awareness campaigns to draw attention to the real needs of children.

From all this rich but not systematized intellectual panorama one can abstract the outline of Korczak's philosophy of a child, which—although in its em-

---

clearly the criminal acts of small pests. How to treat, how long will the treatment last—this is a question of a completely different nature. One thing is clear: these children must be separated, isolated. They poison the atmosphere, they infect it.” Janusz Korczak, “Dzieci występne w wieku przedszkolnym,” *Szkola Specjalna* 8, no. 4 (1925): 129–130.

<sup>18</sup> Janusz Korczak, *Pamiętnik i inne pisma z getta* (Warszawa: WAB, 2012), 117.

<sup>19</sup> Igor Newerly, *Żywe wiązanie* (Warszawa: Czytelnik), 43.

<sup>20</sup> Maria Szczepska-Pustkowska, “The Philosopher Child, the Poet Child. Korczak's Inspirations,” in *The Year of Janusz Korczak. There Are No Children, There Are People*, 146.

bryonic form, never developed by its authorship—is undoubtedly present there. Maria Szczepska-Pustkowska believes that “although Korczak did not manage to write a great and landmark work upon child [...], the Old Doctor came closest to the nature of child and childhood.”<sup>21</sup> There is no place for a detailed reconstruction. Let us conclude by stating that Korczak’s philosophy is based on four pillars:

1. Ontological identity of a child as a special but ready-made and full-valued form of human being;
2. The Code of the inalienable rights of the child as a foundation for the axiology of the relationship between an adult and a child;
3. The scope of responsibilities of adults towards children, correlated with the rights of the child;
4. An innovative and controversial idea of a “children’s republic,” developed in theory, described in the 1922 novel *King Matt The First*, and implemented in practice in the orphanage.

## A Child—A Present or Future Being?

In this, of necessity, short presentation, I will focus on one thread only. It is the postulate of thinking about the child as a being endowed with the fullness of personal existence, living in the present and entitled to respect and protect its current ontological status instead of focusing solely on who it will be in the future. Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein quote an anecdote characteristic of thinking about a child in the future: Mrs. Goldstein is walking down the street with her two grandchildren. A friend asks how old they are. The answer is “Doctor is five and lawyer is seven.”<sup>22</sup> This joke hides a deep sociological observation. Jean-François Lyotard announces that “a child is deeply human,” but then he adds: “since its confusion announces and promises arrival of what is possible.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, for him, too, the humanity of the child is inextricably linked with the future.

There are many more similar voices and statements that can be quoted. Meanwhile, Korczak—already in the first half of the 20th century!—presents the following position: “Leading thought: the child is an equally valuable person for us. Without pedantry, to see him as a human being, not to underestimate him, kindly and trustingly”<sup>24</sup>; “There are no children—there are people, but

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein, *Plato and a Platypus Walk Into a Bar... Understanding Philosophy Through Jokes* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. George Bennington (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 7.

<sup>24</sup> Janusz Korczak, *Pedagogika żartobliwa* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1939), 5.

with a different scale of concepts, different experience, different inclinations, different drives, different play of feelings. Let us remember that we adults do not know them”<sup>25</sup>; “A philosopher is a man who wonders a lot and wants to know what everything is really like. Again, such are the children”<sup>26</sup>; “In the childhood world, everything that happens in the difficult adult world happens. You will find representatives of all types of people and all kinds of deeds [noble and] undeserving.”<sup>27</sup> At the same time, he expresses a sharply critical attitude towards seeing the essence of childhood in its future adulthood. He writes: “Essential view: ‘A child is not, but will be. Does not know, but will know. Is not able, but will be able,’ forces to constant expectation. Half of humanity does not exist; its life is a joke, naive aspirations, fleeting feelings, funny views. [...] What have we done to get to know them and create conditions in which they could exist and mature? [...] For tomorrow, what is neglected is what makes them happy, sad, surprised, angry, occupied. For tomorrow, which he neither understands nor needs to understand, the years of his life, many years, are stolen from him. [...] And the child thinks—I am nothing. Only adults mean something. [...] How many more years do I have to wait? But let me just grow up [...].”<sup>28</sup> In another place: “Children’s doubts and reservations seem to be insignificant. [...] Weak, small, poor, dependent—it will only be a citizen. A brat, a child only, a future man, not a present one. He will be only really there. [...] There are, as it were, two lives: one serious, respectable, the other leniently tolerated, less worthy. We say: a future man, a future employee, a future citizen. That they will be, that they will start to really start later, that they will only really start in the future. We allow you to graciously wander around, but more comfortably without them.”<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere, he quotes a funny scene of a conversation with a child; this scene shows how serious and fundamental matters a child can embrace with its seemingly incompetent mind: “It was like this. I say: ‘You know, Helcia, you are a restless human being.’ ‘I am a human being?’ ‘well, yes. I am not a doggy, aren’t I?’”. She thought about it. After a long pause she adds surprised: “I am a human being. I am Helcia. I am a girl. I am Polish. I am a mother’s daughter, I am a citizen of Warsaw [...] I am so much.”<sup>30</sup>

Leda Koursoumba, President of the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children, comments on Korczak’s views from a contemporary perspective in

<sup>25</sup> Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Internat*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Janusz Korczak, *Prawidła życia. Pedagogika dla młodzieży i dorosłych* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1930), 141.

<sup>27</sup> Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Internat*, 76.

<sup>28</sup> Janusz Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1919), 20.

<sup>29</sup> Janusz Korczak, *Prawo dziecka do szacunku* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1928), 13–26 *passim*.

<sup>30</sup> Korczak, *Pamiętnik i inne pisma z getta*, 37–38.

the following way: “The conceptualisation of children, as full members of the society, as individuals worthy to be appreciated for what they are and not what they are about to become, laid the foundations for Korczak’s unique and also radical, of his time, humanistic vision of children. [...] Korczak’s call, was about respect for children, their inherent dignity as human beings but also for their particularity, their capacities and competences. For him, children were human beings *à part entière*.”<sup>31</sup>

## Korczak’s Great Charter of the Liberties of Children against the Background of the History of the Development of the Idea of Children’s Rights

As part of his plan to radically change the attitude of adults towards children, Korczak called for the introduction of *magna charta libertatis*<sup>32</sup> following the example of that historical one, introduced in 1215 in England during the reign of John Lackland (1166–1216) and granting the subjects the right to resist the king. The difference is that the ‘subjects’ in Korczak’s version are children, and the ‘king’ is the entire adult community. The Great Charter of the Liberties of Children turned out not to be so great, because it consists of only three points. It seems, however, that the author attached the greatest importance to them. Korczak’s declaration reads as follows: “I call for *magna charta libertatis*, for rights of a child. Maybe there are more of them, I have found three fundamental ones: (1) The children’s right to death; (2) The children’s right to the present day; (3) The children’s right to be what it is.”<sup>33</sup>

A short historical commentary is needed first. The idea of children’s rights, honored and protected by adults, as well as specially established institutions for this purpose, matured very slowly in our civilization. The basic obstacle was the not very humanistic (to put it mildly) attitude towards the child. The book *The Child and Family Life in the Ancient Régime* by the French historian Philippe Ariès is devoted to this issue. He writes there how a child was perceived in the relatively recent past: “The child was not perceived, as it is today, as a future adult. Too many of them died. [...] Indifference was the inevitable result of the demography of that time. In the deep province it survived until the 19th century [...] and it should not surprise us—in the demographic conditions of those times it was all too natural.”<sup>34</sup> The Polish sociologist Bartłomiej

<sup>31</sup> Koursoumba, “Janusz Korczak and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,” 54–56.

<sup>32</sup> Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie*, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 48–49.

Dobroczyński speaks out in a similar way: “Before the 20th century [...] due to the difficult life situation, the bond with children was not particularly strong, they did not receive as much attention as they do today. [...] There was nothing special about children [...], including in culture. Ancient and later literature until the 19th century did not say much about children, in fact it did not deal with this subject at all. [...] In a sense, there was no child, only an unfinished, immature adult.”<sup>35</sup> It should be added that in some regions the attitude of indifference survived until the 20th century: Janusz Korczak encountered it directly. We can find evidence of this fact in Igor Newerly’s account from when he worked as Korczak’s secretary. He quotes the doctor’s conversation with the mother of a sick child: “Do your children grow well in your home? There were twelve. Four are alive, eight have died. The opposite is true of the Nowis family: eight are growing, four have died. Kazio Nowis, the son of an Ochota worker, eight months old, is the twelfth in a row. [...] They bring and bring children from all corners of Warsaw to him. With despair, with hope or not at all, simply to get a certificate of death later, that it supposedly was being treated. Because without a certificate there was a problem with the burial [...]”<sup>36</sup>

In this light, it becomes more understandable that the first legal formulas protecting children were only included in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, prepared by the League of Nations and published on the 13th of February 1924. It contains five points, not in the form of directives, but merely suggestions. The full text reads as follows:

#### a) Preamble

By the present Declaration of the Rights of the Child, commonly known as ‘Declaration of Geneva,’ men and women of all nations, recognizing that mankind owes to the Child the best that it has to give, declare and accept it as their duty that, beyond and above all considerations of race, nationality or creed:

- Article 1. The child must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually.
- Article 2. The child that is hungry must be fed; the child that is sick must be nursed; the child that is backward must be helped; the delinquent child must be reclaimed; and the orphan and the waif must be sheltered and succored.
- Article 3. The child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress.
- Article 4. The child must be put in a position to earn a livelihood, and must be protected against every form of exploitation.
- Article 5. The child must be brought up in the consciousness that its talents must be devoted to the service of fellow men.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Bartłomiej Dobroczyński, “Kiedy dziecko zaczęło pytać,” in *List. Catholic Monthly*, no. 2 (2012): 17.

<sup>36</sup> Newerly, *Żywe wiązanie*, 152.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.humanium.org/en/text-2/>, accessed November 27, 2019.

Let us take a look at the chronology: Korczak's Magna Charta dates back to 1919, the Geneva Declaration was prepared five years later. In the following years, intensive work was carried out to codify the natural rights of all children to a fuller extent. It was only in 1989, when the Convention on the Rights of the Child was promulgated, that the result was measurable, using, incidentally, the intellectual heritage of the Old Doctor. As Thomas Hammarberg noted—between 2005 and 2012 the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe—“the thinking of Janusz Korczak influenced the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some of us who took part in the long process to formulate this treaty had read his texts and learned from them. [...] Korczak was one of those thinkers who were ahead of his time.”<sup>38</sup>

## The Contemporary Significance of Korczak's Adult-Child Relationship Project

However, Korczak's draft of the Children's Liberty Card cannot be left without comment. His demands are by no means obvious—especially the first one—and as it can be seen from a comparison with officially adopted documents, they have not been fully understood and accepted by the international community. It is, therefore, worth taking a closer look at not only the content, but also the intentions and consequences of the project forwarded by Korczak. I will start with points 2 and 3, to leave the most controversial one at the end.

What observations and experiences, and what desirable values are behind the claiming of the “children's right to present day,” has been already addressed above. The point is, let us repeat, to renounce once and for all the temptation to see only a misty announcement of the future in a child. Such an attitude is connected with the tendency to disregard the present world of the child: its current experiences, current problems and needs, current questions and attempts to answer them, etc. The whole of this innumerable treasury of values with which the child lives here and now is often confirmed by a frivolous shrug of the shoulders or a wave of the hand and a disrespectful commentary: when he or she grows up, he or she will become wise. “For tomorrow, what pleases them today, what saddens them, surprises them, makes them angry and occupies them is ignored”—Korczak wrote.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the issue of an adult's attitude towards a child should be viewed from the perspective of the personalistic norm which (in Kant's conceptualization) proclaims: “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Hammarberg, “Korczak Helps Us Understand the Rights of the Child,” in *The Year of Janusz Korczak*, 46.

<sup>39</sup> Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie*, 40.

as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.”<sup>40</sup> By agreeing—in line with Korczak’s postulate—that a child is a person now, and not only in the future, when he or she grows up and matures, we must consequently also agree to see the child as the ‘goal’ of our actions. Many of us, however, have a tendency to see the child as the only means of achieving the goals we care about in the future. “You say: It should... I want it to be... And you are looking for the model that it should be, you are looking for the life that you want for it”—Korczak expresses this thought.<sup>41</sup> From the philosophical point of view, this should be considered a form of instrumentalization of the personal existence of a child.

The third paragraph of Korczak’s declaration, that is, “The children’s right to be what it is,” has a similar meaning. The Old Doctor writes with bitter irony about the scientific views prevailing in his time:

Researchers stated that a mature man is guided by motives, a child’s drives, a logical adult, a child drawn into an illusory imagination; an adult has a character, a fixed moral face, a child gets entangled in the chaos of instincts and wishes. They examine the child not as a different, but as a lower, weaker, poorer psychological organization.<sup>42</sup>

He himself stands in a clear opposition: “And the seriousness, prudence and balance of children, solid commitments, self-experience, the capital of just judgments and evaluations, tactful restraint in demands, subtle feelings, non-deceptive sense of righteousness...? [...] Let us demand respect for clear eyes, smooth temples, young effort and trust.”<sup>43</sup> He tries to instill in the minds of adults a belief that children are similar to that which Chiara Lubich proclaimed in relation to every human being: “If someone in his life [...] begins to live well in the present, [...] this note so deeply marks his every action that his existence becomes very colorful. [...] We will never sufficiently understand the value of living in the present.”<sup>44</sup> Korczak, as a clever observer, knew perfectly well that it is the child who has the natural ability to live now and to spontaneously enjoy what the current time brings. He knew that this ability, with age, diminishes and fades away. He sought to remedy the fact that adults driven by recklessness or jealousy deprive their children of this natural, precious gift. He was aware that the persistent and unnatural transfer of the child’s attention to what was to come in the future entails the destruction of the child’s spontaneity and the deprecia-

---

<sup>40</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (New York: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 36.

<sup>41</sup> Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Korczak, *Prawo dziecka do szacunku*, 254.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>44</sup> Chiara Lubich, *Ogni momento è un dono* (Vaticano: Citta Nuova Editrice, 2001), 20 and 22.

tion of what the child is living in the present moment. Hence the postulate to protect this delicate, ephemeral but irreplaceable value.

The last problem to be discussed is the meaning of the postulate “the children’s right to death.” This theme of Korczak’s thought, the most controversial and even shocking for contemporary man, has already received several valuable studies, including Męczkowska-Christiansen<sup>45</sup> and Walczak.<sup>46</sup> However, I would like to add a few of my own observations.

Given its complexity, the issue needs to be addressed in several separate points. I will start by placing it in a specific social and cultural context. Korczak’s thoughts were formed at a time when infant and young child mortality was incomparably higher than today.<sup>47</sup> In those days, the death of a child was something common and somewhat natural. This fact happened in most families and due to the specificity of family life at that time (much wider contacts among closer and further relatives) it became a common experience, which was known and discussed. Korczak himself had a stoic attitude towards this phenomenon, since he wrote about everyday hospital life in his diary: “Children recover and die, as it happens in a hospital. I was not being smart.”<sup>48</sup>

Korczak, however, as a doctor with a widely recognized reputation, moved freely in all social strata, from the lowest to the highest. There, he was confronted with polarized attitudes of adults towards the death of a child. Among the poorest people, living below the poverty line, there were some attitudes of indifference and insensitivity that we do not understand today. However, this resulted from certain reasons, such as: a low level of education and, consequently, a low level of moral sensitivity, a lack of hygiene and an unfavorable level of satisfaction of material needs, which increased the morbidity, minimal access to health care and, finally, a relatively high helplessness of contemporary medicine in the face of many serious diseases of childhood. Given these circumstances, Philip Ariès’s diagnosis should also be applied to them: “Indifference was an inevitable consequence of the then demography [...] and should not surprise us—in the conditions [...] of those times it was too natural.”<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Astrid Męczkowska-Christiansen, “Child’s Right to Death in View of Korczak’s Philosophy of Childhood,” in *The Year of Janusz Korczak*, 186–203.

<sup>46</sup> Paweł Walczak, “The Child’s Right to Death in the Perspective of Korczak’s Philosophy of Childhood,” in *Ethical Thinking Past and Present. Man and Death*, ed. Vasil Gluchman and Marian Palenčár (Prešov: Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity, 2018), 229–242.

<sup>47</sup> Based on estimates provided by Encyclopædia Gutenberg, child mortality in the first decades of the 20th century in Poland ranged from 13% to 19%. Compared to other European countries, this indicator was very high. A similar scale of the problem was noted only in Spain and Hungary, while the Scandinavian countries reached at that time a rate of about 5%. Source: Encyclopædia Powszechna Encyklopedia Wydawnictwa Gutenberga, Phrase: Polska—statystyka sanitarna (Poland—sanitary statistics), <https://www.gutenberg.czyz.org/index.php?word=60774>.

<sup>48</sup> Korczak, *Pamiętnik i inne pisma z getta*, 48–49.

<sup>49</sup> Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 48–49.



On the other hand, amongst wealthy people a psychosis of fear of losing the beloved child happened sometimes. It was a motive for undertaking irrationally exaggerated behaviors, which were aimed at preventing, at all costs, a child from being exposed to the danger of injury or death. Korczak referred to these behaviors with an angry irritation. He claimed that they gave birth to educational pathologies that threatened children more than the dangers they were supposed to be protected from. He wrote:

It seems to me that the more frightened a mother of wealthy spheres is about the possible death of her child, the less conditions she will find to be able to become probably only a physically and spiritually successful person. Whenever I see a pale child in an oil-painted white room, among white lacquered equipment, in a white dress with white toys, I experience an unpleasant feeling: a bloodless soul in an anemic body has to grow up in this surgical room rather than in a child's room. [...] Fearing that death would not tear the child away, we tear the child away from life; not wanting it to die, we do not allow it to live.<sup>50</sup>

He was thinking about finding remedies for both extreme deviations. With regard to the high mortality of poor children, little could be done with such scarce resources as Korczak had, apart from awareness-raising campaigns, for example, in the field of hygiene and appeals to the rich for charity. However, one could think of a change of mentality in this direction in order to see and protect at least the personal dignity of the child. Within this interpretation key, the postulate “the children’s right to death” should be understood as a demand for the right to a dignified death—and here much could be done, from the care for a proper and dignified setting for funeral ceremonies to the wise and serious experience of mourning.

In a completely different direction, we should consider the problem of the attitude towards death in a wealthy and well-educated family. Here Korczak’s postulates are definitely aimed at overcoming the excessive, exaggerated fear of the risk of exposing the child to danger. To put it in a more contemporary language: this is about changing the attitude of fear of an undefined danger into a rational risk management strategy (see Beck 2015; Glassner 2018). In this context, “the children’s right to death” means as much as the right to the risk of potentially dangerous behavior within a reasonably limited scope. This requires making a difficult but pedagogically correct decision, where there is a border between justified risk and dangerous bravado, and teaching the child to comply with this border.

Finally, a few words about the contemporary meaning of Korczak’s thoughts in the discussed scope. Let us again divide the question into two sectors: (a) indifference to death, (b) a psychosis of fear of an unnamed and undefined danger that may result in the death of a child. Both these symptoms, contrary to appear-

---

<sup>50</sup> Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie*, 18–19.

ances, are still present in society but have taken on a different form. Indifference to the death of the child has now moved into the prenatal phase. Contrary to the findings of science and faith, more and more often the voices of the mother's autonomy in deciding about the life of the conceived child are raised. The abortion procedure is spoken in euphemism in order to create the impression that we are dealing with something other than taking the life of a human being. In the context of the ongoing discussion on the status of the conceived child and the right to abortion,<sup>51</sup> it is worth considering the current meaning of Korczak's postulate. In my opinion, "the children's right to die" means, firstly, the right of every conceived child to be recognized as a living human being, and secondly, the right to clearly define an abortion procedure as an interruption of a child's life. Only by defining this situation clearly and precisely will it be possible to make a realistic assessment of the attitude of parents towards the conceived and yet unborn child.

The issue of today's attitude towards fear of losing a loved and accepted child is different. This is a multi-faceted problem, and I would like to mention just one aspect of it, namely, the deep and paralyzing fear of the suffering of loved ones affected by the trauma of a child's death. One such person, Anja Franczak, the author of the blog [www.SprawyOstateczne.pl](http://www.SprawyOstateczne.pl) and the organizer of the Funeral Forum, confides in the editor of the Catholic magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny*: "At night, I was woken up by my own crying. My body took control of me. I was numb. [...] I felt terrible, but there was more emptiness, numbness and physical pain in it than a conscious sense of loss, to which I did not give myself the right. [...] This state of emptiness lasted for a few weeks. And then I completely broke down. Not only did my psyche speak, but also my body. The health problems I had were getting worse and worse."<sup>52</sup> Only after four years of experiencing a psychosomatic nightmare did she manage—as she says—"to reach the point where there is more love than despair within [her]."<sup>53</sup> Under the influence of these experiences, she became a professional therapist, accompanying in mourning, and a volunteer in a hospice. She decided to "contribute to reducing taboos around death" and in various forms publicly encourages open discussion about our helplessness in the face of the pain of losing our loved ones, especially children.<sup>54</sup> I believe that her attitude is close to a proper interpretation of the contemporary meaning of Korczak's message.

*Translated by Szymon Bukal*

---

<sup>51</sup> See: Marian Machinek, *Spór o status ludzkiego embrionu* (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2007), *passim*.

<sup>52</sup> Anja Franczak, "Alma znaczy dusza," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 44 (2019): 16.

<sup>53</sup> Franczak, "Alma znaczy dusza," 14.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Anja Franczak, *Sprawy ostateczne. Błog na śmierć i życie*, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://sprawyostateczne.pl/>.

## Bibliography

- Ariès, Philip. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Translated by Robert Baldick. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962.
- Beck, Ulrich. *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2015.
- Cathcart, Thomas, and Daniel Klein. *Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar... Understanding Philosophy Through Jokes*. London: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Chyrowicz, Barbara, ed. *Granice ingerencji w naturę*. Lublin: TN KUL, 2001.
- Dobroczyński, Bartłomiej. "Kiedy dziecko zaczęło pytać." In *List. Catholic Monthly*, no. 2 (2012): 15–18.
- Franczak, Anja. "Alma znaczy dusza." *Tygodnik Powszechny* 44 (2019): 14–18.
- Glassner, Barry. *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things*. New York: Hachette Book Group, 2018.
- Goffman, Erving. *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 1986.
- Hammarberg, Thomas. "Korczak Helps Us Understand the Rights of the Child." In *The Year of Janusz Korczak. There Are No Children, There Are People*, edited by Barbara Smolińska-Theiss, 46–52. Warszawa: Biuro Rzecznika Praw Dziecka (Office of the Ombudsman for Children), 2013.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by James W. Ellington. New York: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993.
- Korczak, Janusz. *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie*. Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1919.
- Korczak, Janusz. "Dzieci występne w wieku przedszkolnym." *Szkola Specjalna*, no. 4 (1925): 129–130.
- Korczak, Janusz. *Prawo dziecka do szacunku*. Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1928.
- Korczak, Janusz. *Prawidła życia. Pedagogika dla młodzieży i dorosłych*. Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1930.
- Korczak, Janusz. *Pedagogika żartobliwa*. Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1939.
- Korczak, Janusz. *Pamiętnik i inne pisma z getta*. Warszawa: WAB, 2012.
- Korczak, Janusz. *Jak kochać dziecko. Internat. Kolonie letnie. Dom sierot*. Warszawa: Rzecznik Praw Dziecka, 2013.
- Korsoumba, Leda. "Janusz Korczak and the Convention on the Rights of the Child." In *The Year of Janusz Korczak. There Are No Children, There Are People*, edited by Barbara Smolińska-Theiss, 54–60. Warszawa: Biuro Rzecznika Praw Dziecka (Office of the Ombudsman for Children), 2013.
- Krąpiec, Mieczysław Albert. "Analiza rozumowania: problem uzasadnień w filozofii." In *Z teorii i metodologii metafizyki*, ed. S. Kamiński and Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, 198–253. Lublin: TN KUL, 1962.
- Krąpiec, Mieczysław Albert. *Ja – człowiek*. Lublin: RW KUL, 1991.
- Krąpiec, Mieczysław Albert. *Metafizyka: zarys teorii bytu*. Lublin: RW KUL, 2000.
- Lewicka, Monika. "Rodzina nadal najwyższą wartością? Kierunki przemian współczesnej rodziny." In *Rodzina jako wartość: wzory – modele – redefinicje*, edited by Wojciech Muszyński, 38–49. Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2015. Lubich, Chiara. *Ogni momento è un dono*. Vaticano: Città Nuova Editrice, 2001.
- Liotard, Jean-François. *The Inhuman: Reflections on time*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

- Machinek, Marian. *Spór o status ludzkiego embrionu*. Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2007.
- Męczkowska-Chriastiansen, Astrid. "Child's Right to Death in View of Korczak's Philosophy of Childhood." In *The Year of Janusz Korczak. There Are No Children, There Are People*, edited by Barbara Smolińska-Theiss, 186–203. Warszawa: Biuro Rzecznika Praw Dziecka (Office of the Ombudsman for Children), 2013.
- Newerly, Igor. *Żywe wiązanie*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1968.
- Szczepska-Pustkowska, Maria. "The Philosopher Child, the Poet Child. Korczak's Inspirations." In *The Year of Janusz Korczak. There Are No Children, There Are People*, edited by Barbara Smolińska-Theiss, 146–166. Warszawa: Biuro Rzecznika Praw Dziecka (Office of the Ombudsman for Children), 2013.
- Taboń, Sebastian. "Zarys refleksji filozoficznej nad dzieckiem." In *Problemy współczesnego dziecka. Wybrane aspekty*, edited by Małgorzata Cywińska, 127–138. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 2014.
- Tischner, Józef. *Myślenie według wartości*. Kraków: Znak, 1982.
- Walczak, Paweł. "The Child's Right to Death in the Perspective of Korczak's Philosophy of Childhood." In *Ethical Thinking Past and Present. Man and Death*, edited by V. Gluchman and M. Palenčár. Prešov: Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity, 2018 (ETPP 2018/19).

## Internet sources

- Paul VI. Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, July 25, 1968. [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_25071968\\_humanae-vitae.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html). Accessed November 27, 2019.
- Mattei, Roberto de. "Rereading *Humanae Vitae* in the Light of Casti Connubii." Translated by F. Romana. In *Corrispondenza Romana*, July 5, 2018. <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2018/07/de-mattei-rereading-humane-vitae-in.html>. Accessed November 27, 2019.
- Gałuszka, Paweł. *Encyklika Humanae vitae nie jest jedynie dokumentem o antykoncepcji*. Interview for Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna, July 24, 2018. <https://deon.pl/kosciol/encyklika-humanae-vitae-nie-jest-jedynie-dokumentem-o-antykoncepcji-wywiad,487353>. Accessed November 27, 2019.
- Marx, Karl. "Theses on Feuerbach." In *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, edited by Fredrich Engels. Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1976. Prepared for the Internet by D. J. Romagnolo. <http://www.marx2mao.com/M&E/TF45.html>. Accessed November 27, 2019.
- Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1924. <https://www.humanium.org/en/geneva-declaration/>. Accessed November 27, 2019.
- Encyklopedia Powszechna Wydawnictwa Gutenberga. <https://www.gutenberg.czyz.org/index.php?word=60774>. Accessed November 27, 2019.
- Franczak, Anja. *Sprawy ostateczne. Blog na śmierć i życie*, 2019. <https://sprawyostateczne.pl/>. Accessed November 27, 2019.

Krzysztof Wieczorek

Un enfant est déjà un être humain  
La parentalité responsable  
À la lumière de la pédagogie de Janusz Korczak

Résumé

L'auteur de l'article examine dans l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae* le thème de la parentalité responsable. Il s'interroge sur la situation de l'enfant dans la famille un demi-siècle après la publication du document papal. Il indique un certain nombre de menaces et de perturbations dans les relations enfant-adulte résultant d'une mauvaise compréhension du statut de l'enfant envisagé dans une perspective philosophique. Il opte pour le développement d'une réflexion philosophique sur l'enfant et l'enrichissement de cette dernière par de nouveaux aspects. Il s'inspire des œuvres de Janusz Korczak, d'où émerge l'esquisse d'une philosophie originale de l'enfant. Un aspect mérite particulièrement l'attention : le refus que l'enfant soit perçu comme un « projet d'homme futur » et non comme une personne en tant que telle, qui mérite qu'on apprécie son statut ontique et social actuel. Enfin, l'auteur développe et explique le postulat controversé de Korczak sur « le droit de l'enfant à mourir », en lui donnant une interprétation moderne.

Mots-clés : parentalité responsable, enfant, droits de l'enfant, philosophie de l'enfant.

Krzysztof Wieczorek

Il bambino è ora un essere umano  
Genitorialità responsabile  
Alla luce della pedagogia di Janusz Korczak

Sommario

L'autore dell'articolo esamina nell'enciclica *Humanae Vitae* il tema della genitorialità responsabile. Chiede sulla situazione del bambino nella famiglia 50 anni dopo la pubblicazione del documento papale. Indica una serie di minacce e distorsioni nelle relazioni bambino-adulto risultanti da incomprensioni su chi sia il bambino in una prospettiva filosofica. Opta per lo sviluppo di una riflessione filosofica sul bambino e per il suo arricchimento con nuovi aspetti. Prende ispirazione dalle opere di Janusz Korczak, da cui emerge il profilo di una filosofia originale del bambino. Una particolare attenzione merita il disaccordo sulla percezione del bambino come un « progetto di uomo futuro » e non come una persona che merita di essere apprezzata nel suo attuale stato ontico e sociale. Infine, l'autore sviluppa e spiega il controverso postulato di Korczak sul « diritto del bambino alla morte », dandogli un'interpretazione moderna.

Parole chiave: genitorialità responsabile, bambino, diritti dei bambini, filosofia del bambino.