

The Democratic School and the Pedagogy of Janusz Korczak: A Model of Early Twentieth Century Reform in Modern Israel

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Abstract. This article explores the history and pedagogy of Janusz Korczak within the context of his contemporary early Twentieth-Century European Innovative Educators which include Maria Montessori, Homer Lane, A.S. Neill, and Anton Semyonovitch Makarenko. The pedagogies of the aforementioned are compared and contrasted within the literature.

Keywords: Janusz Korczak, Montessori, Lane, Makarenko

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Introduction

Like many of his contemporary twentieth century educators such as Maria Montessori, Homer Lane, A.S. Neill, and Anton Semyonovitch Makarenko, Janusz Korczak advocated an educational experience based on the child's own nature. Korczak also encouraged full development of the child by having the children become active learners who took initiative and responsibility for their education in a cooperative, self-governed environment. Within Korczak's cooperative learning laboratory, the child presumably became socialized into the democratic process. In this respect, Korczak was pursuing a goal similar to some of his European contemporaries. By providing a democratic educational laboratory which fostered the child's independence, like-minded early twentieth-century innovative educators also hoped to affect a type of adult consistent with new democratic thinking, although they tended to differ somewhat in how they interpreted democracy.

Similar to his contemporary Montessori, Korczak trained as a pediatrician. Korczak attributed his method of educational inquiry to his medical training. Endless observations, weight curves, development profiles, growth indices, and prognoses of somatic and psychic development provided Korczak with data to refine his innovative educational philosophy, based on his "experience at work, under given conditions, in a given terrain, with children" (Korczak, 1920/1967, p. 324). Scientific research, with the emphasis on the school as laboratory, furnished the basis of Korczak's theory and practice as well as encouraged him to further his efforts to unravel the mystery of "the great synthesis of the child" or the natural development of the child and adolescent (Korczak, 1920/1967, p. 318).

Korczak's educational philosophy took shape in a period when Europe was experiencing a profound disillusionment. In many respects, that philosophy was a response to European political, social and cultural changes that were emerging during his lifetime. Like many contemporaries, Korczak hoped that the spread of self-governing schools would lead to the understanding of the democratic process which would in turn make a harmonious society possible (Lawson & Peterson, 1972).

Biographical Sketch

Henryk Goldszmit (a.k.a. Janusz Korczak) was born July 22, 1878 in Warsaw into a prominent Jewish family. The emphasis in the home was on Polish national patriotism and general European culture. When he was 11 years old, his father became seriously ill, leaving Henryk to support the family; he did so by tutoring young children. He went by to study medicine at the University of Warsaw, receiving his medical diploma in 1903. By then he had already begun to establish a literary reputation under the pseudonym of Janusz Korczak. His first book, *Street Children*, was published in 1901.

Upon graduation from medical school, Korczak began practicing as a pediatrician at the Warsaw Children's Hospital where he became known for his dedication and sense of responsibility to the children in his care. Korczak supplemented his medical education with study in the clinics of Berlin, Paris and London.

In 1904-1905, Korczak served as a medical officer in the Tsarist army in the Russo-Japanese War. It was the first of four wars in which he actively participated in this capacity. His war experiences influenced his attitudes towards children. Korczak believed that the true victims of all wars were the defenseless children of the world who bore no responsibility for the carnage. And Korczak would be their defender.

From 1901 until 1909, Korczak volunteered his services to the Summer Camps Society for Warsaw's poor children. In 1912 he became director of the Jewish orphanage,

Orphans Home, at 92 Krochmalna Street. Several years later he became director of a Catholic orphanage for working-class children, Our Home. Throughout this period he continued to write for and about children. It is interesting to note that except for the four years he spent at the front during World War I, Korczak spent the rest of his life with *his* children. He was determined to provide his orphans with the security and all-encompassing love.

From 1909 to 1915, Korczak was affiliated with the Flying University which later became known as the Polish Free University, an underground institution dedicated to keeping alive Polish culture and history then being threatened by Imperial Russia. He was also a lecturer at the National Institute for Special Pedagogy, at the National Teacher's Training Institute, at the Nursery School Teacher Seminary as well as during pediatrician and special school teacher's symposia. In addition Korczak assisted in legal cases involving juvenile delinquents.

In 1934, Korczak initiated a radio program, "The Old Doctor" in which he told stories to children and had conversations with callers, both children and adults. Due to the acceleration of anti-Semitism in 1939, the radio program was discontinued.

On November 29, 1940, due to a Nazi edict, Orphans Home relocated inside the Warsaw Ghetto where Korczak continued his pedagogical efforts including holding pedagogic seminars for the teachers and directors of the Ghetto's new schools. Orphans Home served two hundred of the Ghetto's fifty thousand elementary-school age children.

Despite offers from Aryan friends to hide Korczak on the "Aryan" side of Warsaw, Korczak remained with his children. On August 6, 1942, together with two hundred of his orphans and staff, Korczak walked with quiet dignity to the *Umschlagplatz*, to the trains which took them to the gas chambers of Treblinka. He perished without fully expounding his nearly 30 years of pedagogical experiments at Children's Republic (the name given to Korczak's pedagogical experiments). He died without fully expounding his pedagogy. His pedagogy remains scattered in a wide variety of writings.

Interpretations of Korczak's Pedagogy

Despite Korczak's premature death and the difficulty of encapsulating his educational philosophy, interest in Korczak's pedagogy has intensified in recent years (Lewin, 1997, Page 16)

Reading Korczak is not an easy task. Joseph Arnon (1973), an educator in Orphans Home, contends Korczak writings are, "both in content and form, suffused with a surrealistic atmosphere that combined the most realistic regard for exactitude and detail with the most dreamlike, imaginative and suggestive states" (Page 32).

It is important to note essential to understanding the interpretation of Korczak's pedagogy is the fact that his life story and pedagogy are intertwined. For example, one key aspect to Korczak's pedagogy is making moral decisions. For Korczak, moral decisions are important in creating a world where children will be treated seriously, no longer oppressed and with rights.

According to Larry Brendtro and Denise Hinder (1990), *When I Am Little Again* (Korczak, 1925/1992) contains the germ of Korczak's pedagogical philosophy: educational reform will transform society into democracy. Educational reform based on an individual's physical, social, and mental development could result in the bettering of society-at-large.

As an educator, Korczak was skeptical of educational “recipes” and prescriptions. Korczak regarded education as an individual, creative dynamic process which is also dependent on place, time, and environmental conditions. Hannah Mortkowicz-Olczakowa (1965) maintains “we give no prescription” (Page 11). In other words, the educational process is dynamic. Continual scientific experimentation provided the basis for Korczak’s educational “system”.

Joseph Arnon’s (1983) term for the basic premise of Korczak’s “system” is pedagogical love. Arnon understands Korczak’s pedagogical love to be a particular kind of reliable dependence a child has on an adult. Pedagogical love is attained when the child respects and trusts the adult-educator because the adult-educator creates a “happy atmosphere and refrains from the compulsive use of authority” (Arnon, 1983, Page 27). Thus, the relationship between adult-educator and child is a product of mutual understanding, trust, and caring. As an adult-educator, Korczak promoted and provided an atmosphere of equality where he strove to be detached rather than emotional in his or her interaction with children. Arnon further contends that such love should be “concretely expressed and through personal example” (ibid.)

In *The Gates of Light*, Cohen (1994) expresses pedagogical love to be a gift. According to Cohen, pedagogical love may be defined as the educator’s attitude and behavior toward the child which should be that of a knowledgeable adult friend to a younger companion. At all times, the educator must respect and appreciate the efforts and work of the child. Cohen maintains that the educator acts as adviser, mentor, and facilitator. Thus, a dialogue develops, and a bond of trust results.

Another important aspect of Korczak’s (1919/1967) “system” was freedom which he claimed was necessary for the child’s “harmonious development” (Page 250). Similar to Montessori, Korczak understood the child’s need to have freedom of movement. In an essay entitled “The Human Spirit as Orphan”, Henryk Grynberg (1979) interprets Korczak’s freedom as entailing choice and the expression of Western-type parliamentary democracy within the Children’s Republic. Grynberg (1979) represents Korczak as “a fighter against any physical or psychological child abuse, and particularly against molding children in accordance with any state, religious or social class interests (Page 39).” To Korczak (1919/1967) a child was “a person born to be free (Page 250).” Cohen (1994) maintains that even the physical structure of Children’s Republic was designed in such a manner to “leave room for equality and freedom” (Page 89). Cohen (1994) and Grynberg (1979) are in agreement that Korczak understood individual freedom as not infringing on the rights of others.

Korczak’s Methodology

Observations of children in various situations, such as performing work related tasks, followed by analysis led Korczak continually to modify his pedagogical practice (Rotem, 1997). Often Korczak’s “method” began with a minor detail observed or a child’s question from which he extrapolated to diversified and general problems. Edwin Kulawiec (1980) writes that Korczak’s chief research method relied heavily on ethnographic data collection: fine detailed descriptive data based on direct observation of children at work, at play, at chores, while they slept and so on, as well as measurements, weights, and statistical records of the development of hundreds of children, in an effort to better understand the child (Page 364). Ethnographic methodology, postulates Szlajakowa (1978), was the basis for Korczak’s unfinished attempt to unravel what he called the “Great Synthesis of the Child” (Korczak, n.d./1967). Szlajakowa (1978) refers to Korczak’s method of data collection as the study of the “whole psychophysical phenomena”, where biological, medical, psychological and pedagogical data was integrated (Page 12).

In his essay “The Child in the Family”, Korczak (n.d./1967) stated the fundamental assumption of his pedagogy: a child is a complete human being, of intrinsic worth, although on a different level from that of an adult. In another essay entitled “The Boarding School”, he (n.d./1967) further elaborated that there are no children, only people with different conceptual scales, different ranges of experiences, and different emotional reactions. Hence, children must be treated in a fair and responsible manner. Further, the child is not just something to be molded into an adult (Grynberg, 1979, Page 39) Korczak understood the child to be a seed complete with a genetic code. The image of a child as a seed emphasizes the spontaneous, inner values that a human being brings with him or her into this world (Bereday, 1979). Because the child comes with such inner values, it is impossible for the educator to expect nor would it be appropriate to desire total submission from the student. According to Magnes (1979), children were thought to be rational and creative beings capable of achieving self-control and making decisions.

Korczak’s Major Works

Among his 1000 publications, Korczak’s major works include *How to Love a Child* (Part I: 1919/1967; Part II: 1920/1967), *King Matt the First* (1922/1986), *When I Am Little Again* (1926/1992), *The Child’s Right to Respect* (1925/1992) and *The Ghetto Diary* (1957/1978). An analysis of his works helps bring his pedagogy into focus.

Korczak understood the child to be the “most perfect feature of an otherwise flawed world” (Rosenshaft, 1979, Page 55). Further he contended it is the responsibility of adults to “rise to the child’s level of purity and innocence” (ibid.) Korczak based his relationship with his children on mutual respect and cooperation. His orphanages were run by an elaborate system of rules in which a Children’s Parliament governed the Code of the Court of Peers and the Court of Peers.

Pedagogy offered an opportunity to nurture the whole child whereas medicine was limited to curing the concerned sick child. Based on the medical model, Korczak’s “science of teaching” (Korczak, 1920/1967, Page 3) involved observation in the classroom which was transformed into a research center as well as an educational institution. A variety of disciplines including psychology, medicine, physiology, nutrition, sociology, ethnology, history, poetry, and criminology (Page 481) provided solutions for pedagogical problems.

Korczak formulated his pedagogy at a time that corresponded to burgeoning interest in child development. Prior to this time, childhood was believed to be preparation for adulthood. Korczak (n.d./1967) explained that children were not seen “just as we were unable to see the woman, the peasant, the oppressed social strata and oppressed peoples” (Page 165). Children were not recognized by adults because their earnings were inconsequential. Consequently, children had to yield to the demands of adults on whom they were dependent. In contrast, Korczak advocates the importance of the child and childhood, demanding indelible rights for the child such as the child’s right to the present and the right of the child to be what he is. He maintains that children possess not only common sense but human volition which merit serious consideration.

As an educator, Korczak maintained that he was incapable of removing earlier childhood scars and wounds and therefore understood the limitations of education (Korczak, n.d./1967, 1924/1967, 1926/1967). In his essay entitled, “The Little Brigand”, Korczak (1924/1967) articulated the conditions, “light and warmth, freedom and joy of life (p. 532) which he hypothesized would enable the child to begin the self-improvement process.

European Innovative Educators and Their Experimental Schools: Between the World Wars

In the section that follows, the ideas of four contemporaries of Korczak's, Marie Montessori, Homer Lane, Anton Makarenko, and A.S. Neill, are presented as representative of the kind of experimental pedagogy that was taking root in Europe in the period between the wars. The purpose of this section is to link Korczak's pedagogical ideas to his European context and to help situate him in the context of pedagogical reformers of his time. These experimental pedagogues understood education to be an integral part of the construction of a new democratic society and maintained a confidence in the ability of education, properly conceived, to encourage future citizens to take an active, responsible role in the development of the new progressive democratic order. In some respects, the schools they founded differ considerable, but they all sought to encourage in one form or another, the participation of students in their own learning and governance. It was assumed that a measure of self-governance would be critical in instilling a democratic way of thinking.

All four of these experimental educators, also sought to escape the influence of corrupt social institutions by an appeal to the natural order of development in the child. In this regard, careful observation and recording of children's behavior at different developmental stages provided the scientific data necessary to create new schools based on child and adolescent development and the nature of learning. Like some American child-centered schools, these European experimental schools were designed to harmonize with the child's interests, needs and learning patterns. In this way the natural powers within the child would be released. While the emphasis on child growth and development differed from the emphasis on democratic self-government, it was not inconsistent with it.

In addition to providing opportunities that allowed each child to develop his or her innate gifts, the new schools often incorporated a judicial and legislative system wherein the characteristics of initiative, independence, and resourcefulness could be nurtured. Such participation provided an opportunity for the members of the innovative schools to gain the confidence to act and think for themselves. Participation in self-government was designed to provide a better understanding of the democratic process. In this way, creative self-expression and participation in democratic governance were blended.

Maria Montessori's Casa Dei Bambini

Like other experimental educators of her generation, Maria Montessori (1870-1952), believed it was radically necessary to change traditional education in order to create the sort of person capable of establishing a new democratic order (Montessori, 1949/1972, p. 23). Montessori's pedagogical ideas evolved into what became known as The Montessori Method which was based on what she thought were the principles of modern science. On January 6, 1907, in the slum-ridden San Lorenzo district of Rome, Montessori opened Casa dei Bambini (The Children's Home) for children between the ages of three and seven. Casa dei Bambini provided an experimental laboratory in which scientific observation allowed her to conclude that children's development, including education, was a gradual and 'natural' process. Montessori defined education as the active interaction by the human individual with a carefully designed environment.

According to Montessori, education needed to develop a child's initiative, independence, individuality, and self-direction; self-determination replaced obedience and dependence. Multi-age grouping, according to Montessori, provided an opportunity for a child to cooperate and share, thereby fostering responsibility, caring and unselfishness, attributes she considered necessary for the evolution of a self-determined individual.

Montessori claimed such attributes were consistent and necessary for the new democratic citizen.

According to Rex Lohman (1988), there is little research to substantiate Montessori's assertions; however, he believes that The Montessori Method provided "the means for both social growth and individual growth which leads to confident and responsible participation in a democratic culture" (Page 6). For example, the use of specially constructed didactic apparatus materials were designed to lead to confidence and self-control. Confidence and self-control presumably enabled an individual to become an active, creative participant in the democratic process.

According to Jane Roland Martin (1992) The Montessori Method stresses the very essence of democracy. In a home learning environment imbued with "care, concern, and connection" (p. 34), children's individuality is recognized and nurtured. Children also feel connected to one another and concerned about their welfare. Individual self-determination replaces obedience in the traditional school. Citizens nurtured in such an ideal home environment, according to Martin, will do what needs to be done to maintain, improve, and enhance everyone's lives.

Natural development, according to Montessori, occurred in successive levels or stages of independence and self-regulation known as "sensitive periods". "Sensitive periods: correspond to specific ages when a child's interest and mental capacity are particularly receptive to certain stimuli or didactic approach. Montessori contended that "it is necessary to offer those exercises which correspond to the need of development felt by an organism" (1911/1964, Page 358). Therefore, the educator in The Montessori Method observed much in an effort to facilitate the awakening of the child's intellectual life which is dependent on Montessori's didactic apparatus. Repetition of a didactic exercise, according to Montessori, leads to self-development, the external sign of which is self-discipline.

Homer Lane's Little Commonwealth

Democratic self-governance was much more visible in Homer Lane's (1876-1925) educational methods for delinquent youth than in Montessori's. Self-governance, according to Lane, defined the educational process which took place at the Little Commonwealth (1913-18), located in Dorset, England. Members of Lane's Little Commonwealth were delinquent children and adolescents, born and reared in city slums, most of who were over the age of fourteen and under eighteen; the population never exceeded forty. The Little Commonwealth, a democratic self-governing community, was based on Lane's (1949) faith in the innate goodness of children as well as their ability to devise creative solutions to their problems. Goodness, according to Lane (1949), was equated with being true to one's inner law which guided a person's progress toward "the perfection of the universe" (Page 196). Lane developed "a living community" (Bazeley, 1928, Page 8), a micro-universe, wherein children initiated the methods that governed their individual and social development. For example, weekly General Meetings provided an opportunity for adult and child to cooperate in the decision-making process concerning academic and social policy; however, voting privileges were extended only to children fourteen years or older. The legislative body ran the weekly General Meetings. Motions were brought up, seconded, and voted on. The approved motions became policy. An example of such a rule is "one week shall elapse after resignation of an officer before action shall be taken on the resignation of an officer before action shall be taken on the resignation" (Wills, 1964, Page 138). Offices were held for six month. The two most important offices were those of Chairman of the Legislative and Judge of the Judicial Meeting; there were also offices of Clerk and of Treasurer. Elections were bi-annual.

Another example of democratic self-governance at the Little Commonwealth was the Citizens' Court which was presided over by an elected judge. The judge could also use power of contempt of court for anyone declared out of order during a hearing. Lane himself was once ordered out for being in contempt of court. The most severe punishment appears to have been "close bounds" (Page 137) which was automatically inflicted on any person who lost his or her job. Members on "close bounds" were not allowed beyond the courtyard; during working hours, members were not allowed out of the courtyard. A third aspect of democratic self-governance at the Little Commonwealth was its working life. Due to economic necessity, work rather than schooling became the basis of the Little Commonwealth's self-government (Bazeley, 1928, Page 80). In this way, the life of each individual child was inseparably bound up with the work of the community. Each child was responsible for contributing to keeping the community solvent as well as supporting him or herself by paying for food, clothing, and recreation.

Like other early twentieth century experimental educators, Lane sought to respect the child's natural pattern of development. In *Talks to Parents and Teachers* (1949), Lane outlined four stages of child development which included "infancy", the first three years; "the age of imagination", the third to seventh years; "the age of self-assertion", the seventh to eleventh years; and "the age of loyalty", transition from the eleventh to fourteenth years and then adolescence until about the seventeenth year. Lane looked to the child to initiate the methods that govern his or her development. Thus, Lane's understanding of the natural order of child development, together with his deep belief in the innate goodness of children, worked in tandem to create Little Commonwealth. Most of the members of the Little Commonwealth were, according to Lane's stages of development, in "the age of loyalty", and wherein the social and co-operative instincts are primary. According to Lane, at such a stage, self-governance is an appropriate educational tool to employ, provided that the choices are of interest to the child. Such choices included Lane's suggestion that the responsibility for a course syllabus and the allotment of time to the parts of it ought to be a co-operative, group effort which should be discussed and decided on by the student body of a particular class.

In an effort to assist character and personality development of the child reared in the Little Commonwealth, Lane redefined the role of the teacher. The relationship between teacher and student was one of "pure democracy" (Lane, 1949, Page 122). The teacher renounced his or her authoritarian position, replacing it with "being on the side of the child" (Page 8) which Lane explained to be love or the ability to interact with the child so that the child feels the adult loves him or her and approves of him or her.

Anton Makarenko's Gorky Colony

Democracy for Anton Semyonovitch Makarenko (1888-1939) meant something different from other European experimental educators. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Makarenko expressed the need for shaping the orphan to a particular pattern, "The New Soviet Man", based on the laws of social development of the teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. For example, in conformance with Communist doctrine which emphasized the breaking of the influence of the corrupt social institutions associated with the older order, Makarenko transplanted the *besprizorniki* (orphans) into "educational collectives".

Makarenko described Maxim Gorky Colony (1920-1928), an "educational collective", in what has become known as his magnum opus, *The Road to Life* (1951/1973). Maxim Gorky Colony was created as an autonomous, self-governing educational institution for *besprizorniki* or youth left homeless due to World War I, the Russian Revolution, and Civil War. According to Makarenko, the collective environment provided the necessary conditions which would enable the *besprizorniki* to work at social self-education, thereby transforming them into contributed members of Communist Soviet society.

In *The Road to Life* (1951/1973), Makarenko delineated Gorky Colony as the ideal environment for nurturing “The New Soviet Man”, a human being imbued with ideals such as mutual responsibility and collective governance. The self-governing Gorky Colony was in effect a mini-society, a model of Communist society wherein the individual *besprizornik* developed his or her personality, qualities, aptitudes, and abilities as well as experienced the relationship between him or herself and the new society (Zilberman, 1988, p. 42). In addition to the classroom, educational activities such as participation in the General Assembly which took place outside of the traditional classroom, contributing to the development of the individual *besprizornik* within the cohesiveness of the group.

Although self-government was essential to the functioning of the Gorky Colony, its form was Marxist. For example, although each *besprizornik* was given one vote in the General Assembly, at times, in an effort to influence an important vote, propaganda techniques including indoctrination and “programmed guidance” were used (Cohen, 1994, p. 307). Another example of Marxist influence was Makarenko’s introduction of challenging situations for Gorky Colony to keep the group moving forward toward an ideal which he had drawn from the revolutionary movement. The challenges arose from Makarenko’s own interpretation of the needs of the group rather than from the group itself (Bowen, 1962, p. 103).

The life of Gorky Colony included relationships and types of activities that were typical of the Marxist version of democratic society (Filonov, 1994, p. 81). For example, the collective fostered communal relationships by granting the individual *besprizornik* rights such as the right of a young and weak *besprizornik* to be protected from the older and stronger *besprizorniki*. Another example of democratic activities included *besprizorniki* participation in the self-government of Gorky Colony. This included membership in permanent work detachments to which each *besprizornik* belonged. They were presided over by a boy chosen by election, called a commander, mixed detachments of *ad hoc* committees, and the commander’s council which functioned as the main executive body with Makarenko as the ex-officio chairman. The position of commander of the mixed, temporary detachments rotated providing an opportunity to become leaders. In addition, Makarenko created individualized *besprizornik* assignments, “selected with regard to the uniqueness and potentialities of each individual” (Gordon, 1978, p. 79). Thus, the integrity and identity of the individual *besprizornik* was fostered through their democratic participation in the construction of the communal experience, Gorky Colony.

Work provided a cohesive basis for the Gorky Colony. In conjunction with the teachings of Lenin, Makarenko coordinated classroom teaching with work on behalf of the common work of the people (Monoszon, 1978, p. 18). Socially useful work, according to Makarenko, facilitated the development of a Socialist consciousness as well as the development of joyful respect for and obedience to authoritative leadership. *Besprizorniki* were responsible for their own work activities including the distribution of profits, setting wages, and the organization of consumption. By participating in cooperative activities such as labor, Makarenko believed the *besprizornik* would acquire an appreciation and willingness to enter into the larger society’s communist mode of life.

According to Makarenko, discipline was the result of “correct education” (Yarmachenko, 1978, Page 90). In Makarenko’s educational system, the virtues of duty and discipline took the place of “interest” of other contemporary experimental educators. The needs of the group were transmitted to the individual members of the group, who in turn took on themselves the responsibility of meeting these needs, thereby disciplining themselves. Thus, “peer pressure” from the collective contributed to discipline processes, the individual acted in accordance with the collective’s policy. Although Gorky Colony was impelled by a

different social vision from Lane's Little Commonwealth, both schools sought to mold a model a future citizen by providing appropriate experience in self-governance. In this respect, Neill's work differed from Montessori, Lane, and Makarenko who drew their populations from the lower rungs of the social order. He also was reluctant to enunciate a specific social ideology. A.S. Neill (1960) maintained that the aim of life is to find happiness. Consequently, he understood his primary job as "not the reformation of the society but the bringing of happiness to some few children" (Pages 23-24).

Summerhill's student body comprised about forty-five boys and girls, ages four through sixteen. Neill believe that children would be able to resolve most of their difficulties themselves. To Neill, that process of resolution defined education as a continuous process of self-creation. A child's self-creation at Summerhill was bound by Neill's axiom (1960): he or she could do as they pleased as long as it was neither dangerous to him or herself nor annoying the freedom of others.

Summerhill had a life and purpose of its own (Stewart, 1968, p. 292). Neill accepted Lane's fundamental premise of "being on the side of the child", but Summerhill also was designed to foster a democratic "way of life" (Hemmings, 1972, Page 174), organized around rearing happy children and developing communal relationships. In Summerhill, the rights of the individual child were bound by the demands of the democratic, self-governing society (Neill, 1972). Like the boundaries of a child's self-creation, a child's actions in the pursuit of freedom could be interfered with by the community if said actions encroached upon the freedom of others. Thus, if Jared throws rocks which may endanger others, other children have the responsibility to stop him. In doing so, according to Neill, the children undergo a lesson in social education: as long as Jared is interfering with the freedom of others, the crowd is within its rights to restrain him.

Within the democratic context of Summerhill, student participation in activities such as the weekly General Assembly Meeting facilitated their development of characteristics such as acceptance of others, cooperation, justice, and sincerity as well as provided firsthand experience with democracy. Neill (1960) claimed that the educational benefit of "practical civics" (Page 55), known as the weekly General School Meeting, was of more value than a week's curriculum of courses. A genuine democracy, according to Neill, included relationships in which adults and children enjoyed equal status. As equals, adults were available to facilitate the natural development of the child but did not set the standards. In such an environment, Neill believed the child could attain an education whose end result would be a happy, balanced adult.

Summerhill provided self-government designed to facilitate experience with democracy and justice as well as communal responsibilities. According to Neill (1993), democracy should not wait until the age of voting; self-government was of "infinite value". Like other experimental schools, Summerhill's self-governing community tried to balance the rights of the individual and the community. Each member of the community, whether five or eighty-four, was permitted one vote in the weekly General Assembly Meeting wherein school and social policy was suggested, discussed and voted on (Neill, 1967, Page 37). Adult and child alike were subject to the rules passed by the General Assembly Meeting. According to Ray Hemmings (1972), the rules made by the children were "sacred to one another" (Page 76). Such high regard for their peers' rules led to greater observance of Summerhill's rules and regulations by the children. Punishment for breaking the rules resulted in fines. The General Assembly Meeting provided an arena for practical experience for cooperation, justice, public speaking, and personal development and socialization. The General Assembly Meeting helped create a self-governing democratic community spirit whose ultimate test of success was happiness of the individuals.

To Neill (1960), happiness is the aim of life, could be found through “true interest” (Page 24). In an atmosphere of love, joy, and complete approval, Summerhill provided an experience of democratic, self-government. A happy childhood, suggested Neill, was the basis for a happy adulthood imbued with self-reliance, self-respect, assertiveness, and independence (Neill, 1920). Neill offered no prescription for basic general education. He (1960) maintained that all children are “innately wise and realistic” (Page 4) and therefore, able to accept responsibility for their independence, their actions, as well as their academic and emotional development. Although Summerhill is often associated with the idea that children were simply allowed to do as they please (classes were optional), Neill actually was aiming to create a model community and a model citizen. Like Montessori, Makarenko, and Lane, he tried to provide the basis for self-discipline providing them with the opportunity to govern themselves in a school setting.

Conclusion: European Innovative Educators and Their Experimental Schools

Educational innovators such as Montessori, Lane, Makarenko, and Neill provided an alternative response to authoritarian control as the basis of running a school. They assumed education to be an instrument of progressive change which could bring about a “new world”. Their schools sought to imbue the “new man” with characteristics of cooperation, activism, and a tenacious searching and experimenting. Their schools incorporated a miniature community in the interest of building new social and political order. Varying definitions of the new social and political order resulted in an assortment of experimental schools. Montessori envisioned a new social order through the release of human potentialities. A child educated by The Montessori Method would be self-directive as well as possess the vision to shape humanity’s destiny. Lane developed “a living community”, a micro-universe wherein members gained experience in the methods of democratic self-government. Makarenko molded his students to meet the needs of Communism. Neill’s cure for the sickness of society was allowing freedom for children to be themselves and to govern themselves. The development of character, suggested Neill, was more important than the ability to learn facts and figures.

Reverence for the child was central to these experimental educators. In different ways, they all sought to respect the child’s natural order of development. The Montessori Method is based on belief in the child’s creative potential, his or her drive to learn, and the child’s right to be treated as an individual. In The Little Commonwealth, Lane was always “on the side of the child”. He respected the child to the point that he looked to him or her to initiate methods in keeping with the child’s development. In addition, Lane claimed the children’s experience of providing for themselves contributed to a “good society”. Makarenko was guided by Gorky’s optimistic belief that in all men lies potential good. He refused to view any of the children in Gorky Colony as disturbed or delinquent. The chief feature of Summerhill is self-government but individual happiness was the ultimate goal. Everyone had equal rights, including the opportunity to vote at the parliament. The students are both ego-conscious and at the same time, community-conscious.

While it is difficult to create sweeping generalizations that apply to all of them, all four of these experimental educators had in common the assumption that education was the key to the attainment of democratic ideals. This would be achieved not so much by instructing them directly in these ideals as by creating a democratic school environment. These experimental educators, in varying degrees, were seeking to create a lived democracy in a school setting. In part, this entailed respecting each child’s distinctive individuality by attending to their natural order of development, but it also meant creating a sense of group solidarity through direction participation in decision-making and governance. In general, these were also the foundations which Korczak built his own experimental schools.

While there are obvious differences, Korczak was influenced by the same ideals that lay behind the work of Montessori, Lane, Makarenko, and Neill. In a sense these ideas were part of a European *Zeitgeist* that included a fundamentally optimistic view of human nature and a belief in the power of education to nurture and develop human capacity to the fullest. Out of the disillusionment that followed in the wake of World War One came the belief that a new education could address the failures in the human spirit that the War exposed. Under the right circumstances, a new democratic order would emerge out of a new education.

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