

THE SPECIAL SCHOOL

"SZKOLA SPECJALNA"

*Theory And Practice*³⁴

Thanks to theory — I know; as a result of practice — I feel. Theory enriches the intellect, practice colors feelings, trains the will. I know — does not mean that I act in accordance with what I know. The views of others must crystallize in one's own living ego. I weave from theoretical precepts, but with the possibility of choice. I reject, forget, omit, dodge, ignore. The outcome is my own conscious or unconscious theory which guides my actions. A great deal has been achieved if a piece of theory sustains within me its existence, its *raison d'être*; if it has influenced me to some degree, has had an impact. Theory I repudiate time and again; myself — rather rarely.

Practice is my past, my life, the sum total of subjective experiences, collection of failures, disappointments, defeats, victories and triumphs, negative and positive sensations. Practice distrustfully controls and censors theory, tries to each it in lies, in blunders. Maybe for him ... for that place ... perhaps for his conditions ..., but for me, in my own work, in my workshop.... Always different. Routine or experience? Routine is the result of apathetic willpower out in search of ways and means to facilitate, simplify, mechanize the work, to find a convenient short cut to saving time and energy. Routine makes emotional detachment possible, eliminates hesitation, sets up equilibrium. You do *your* job, efficiently discharge your formal duties. Routine enters at the point where the day's professional work ends. Now I find everything easy, no need to rack my brain, search, even look. I know for certain, beyond argument. I get along. I act sufficiently to avoid inconvenience. Anything new, surprising, unforeseen upsets and annoys. I want it to be just as I know it to be. The legitimate function of theory is to support my outlook, never to negate, undermine, embroil. Reluctantly, I have already once molded the framework of theory into a point of view, a plan, a program. I molded it carelessly because I do not care. You say: awful! Too late now, I am not going to start over again. For routine, the ideal quality is tenacity, my own authority propped up by the authority of *ad hoc* tenets picked up and strained off. Myself and others (a welter of quotations, names and official titles). Experience?

³⁴ First published Jan. 1924 — March 1925.

I make a start from what others know, I build according to my own capabilities, I yearn honestly, completely, not under external orders, under the pressure of control by others, but out of my own, unconstrained goodwill, under the wakeful eye of conscience. Not as a matter of conformity but to enrich my own self. Distrustful alike of alien opinion and my own, I do not know, I seek, I question. Tired, I brace myself and mature. Work is the most precious part of my innermost life. Not what is easy but what is most comprehensively effective. Seeking depth, I complicate. I understand that to experience means to suffer. Much experience — great ***suffering. I judge failure not by the sum of frustrated ambitions but by the total of amassed evidence. Whatever is novel is a fresh incentive to mental effort. The truth discovered today is but one stage. I have no notion what will be the last stage; suffice it that I am aware of the first stage of work. That first stage of educational work — what is its message, what does it amount to?

Paramount, in my opinion — judging fact at face value — is for the educator to be able:

To forgive in every case wholly and completely.

To understand everything is to forgive everything.

The teacher has to growl, grumble, shout, scold, threaten, punish; but within and for himself he must judge every offense, breach, fault indulgently. He went astray because he did not know; did not think; succumbed to temptation, prompting; because he experimented; because he could not do anything else.

Even where marked ill will is involved, the responsibility rests with those who incited it. Sometimes, a serene and indulgent teacher must patiently weather the communal storm of vengeful anger called up by the brutal despotism of a predecessor. The provocative "do it to spite him" is a trial, a test, a touchstone. To forbear, to stick it out means to prevail.

A teacher who frowns, frets, feels resentment toward the child for being what he is, how he was born, where he was reared — is not a teacher.

Sorrow — not bad temper.

Sorrow that the child should choose a crooked diversion from the lone trail of destiny. A smooth yoke or sharp-edged shackles. He is unfortunate, and the more so because he is at the beginning of the road.

Every report of an imprisonment or the death penalty is a painful memento for 'a teacher.

Sorrow, regret — but not anger. Compassion — but not vengefulness.

Are you not ashamed to be seriously angry? See how small, fragile, weak and helpless he is. Not what he will be, what he is today. A few joyful cries and sky-blue smiles at the dawn of life. He knows, senses the burden of his inferiority. Give him a chance to forget, relax. What a powerful moral lever in his sordid life will be the memory of the person — perhaps the only one — who was kind, who did not fail him. Saw through him, understood, and remained kind. He — the teacher.

It is essential to believe that a child cannot be squalid, only dirty. A delinquent child is still a child. That must not be forgotten for an instant. He has not given up yet, still does not know why he is what he is, wonders, at times realizes with alarm his own separateness, his inferiority, his being different from others. Why? Once he accepts his fate, he will cease to struggle, or worse ... if he comes to the conclusion that men, in general, are not worth his struggle with himself. Then he declares: "I am as good as, perhaps even better than, others."

How straightforward and dignified is the work of an animal tamer. The fury of wild instincts is overcome by man's unflinching, consistent will. He prevails by the spirit. A teacher might well follow with bated breath the new trends in taming — by gentleness — no longer with whip and pistol. And this is but a tiger or a lion.

Amazing how a brutal teacher can incense even gentle children.

I do not require that a child surrender totally; I tame his movements. Life is a circus ring, with moments more and less spectacular. He judges not what he is but what he does.

A teacher who has not experienced the rigors of hospital, clinical work is short of many focal points of thought and feeling. My job as a doctor is to relieve if I cannot cure, to halt the progress of the disease if I cannot help, to combat the symptoms ... all ... some and, if no other course is open, to cope with but a very few. That is the first thing. But not all. I do not ask whether he is going to use for good or ill the health I have restored to him. In this respect I must be prejudiced, dumb, if you wish. A physician who treats a man condemned to death is by no means ridiculous. He does his duty. The rest is not his responsibility.

The teacher does not have to take responsibility for a distant future, but he is fully responsible for the present. This assertion, of course, will arouse controversy. Some think just the opposite, erroneously in my opinion, though sincerely. Sincerely? Perhaps hypocritically? It is far more comfortable to suspend responsibility, to hold it over to a hazy tomorrow, than to account for every hour — right now, today. The teacher is indirectly responsible to society for the future, but for the present he is directly

and preeminently responsible to the child under his care.

It is convenient to sacrifice the child's immediate present to tomorrow's lofty ideals. To teach morality is simultaneously to nurture the good, to obtain a good which exists in spite of faults, vices, and innate vicious instincts. And confidence, faith in man, is this not in itself a good that can be perpetuated, developed as a counterweight to the evil which occasionally cannot be eradicated, and which can be controlled only with difficulty?

How much more reasonable life is than many teachers are! What a great shame.

And now, when after years of work, mental effort, harsh experience, one finally arrives at these truths, he finds to his astonishment that they present no novelty, that theory has long been saying the same thing, that he has read it some time, heard it, always known it, and now, in addition, practice has made him feel precisely what he also knows.

Whoever finds a clash between theory and practice has not developed emotionally to the level of current theory; let him not learn any more from books and prints but from life; he does not lack ready prescriptions but the moral strength, won by sweat, to feel truth, to make a blood brother of the truth of theory.

The Little Brigand³⁵

"ZŁODZIEJASZEK"

The division of institutions for children into child care and correctional, which seems neat and tidy from the point of view of the administration, may mislead an uncritical teacher. In institutions of the first type he may shut out thoughts of reform, and in the second type he obscures the problem of care by the categorical imperative of reforming. "Reformatory" is better than "penal"; and we shall have it still better — "educational."

To bring up, rear, guard under the wings of kindness and experience, in warmth and peace, shield against danger, keep in storage until they grow up, become strong enough for independent flight. Wings — flight. Dangerous metaphors. An easy job for a hawk or hen to warm chicks with her own body. For me, man and teacher of a variety of children not my own — a more complex task. I long to see my little community soar, I dream of them flying high, a yearning for their perfection is the sad prayer of my secret heart, but with my feet firmly grounded, I realize that as soon as they begin to toddle they will busy themselves — prowl, stray or plunder — in search of nourishment and crumbs of

³⁵ First published April — June 1926.

joy. Those tots — chicks — include future hawks and hens, and I offer myself equally to all. A little bird of prey is growing up — not my fault, no business of mine. And it makes no difference whether chance has placed him in an institution for correction or care.

To all this I expect a justified opposition. One needs to travel a long road of observing and solitary musing, laboriously excavate many fields of study, grow honestly conscious of the imperfection of human nature and written laws, assess the meager forces and means at the teacher's disposal — to be able to look without resentment or fear on that last link in the chain of experience. Not my fault. Not for me to remedy. Beyond my strength. My responsibility is to rear, save, shield, defend against wrong, preserve until they grow up. When they do — let the courts, police, and jails have their way. Too bad. I am responsible for my charge's present, and have no authority to influence and interfere in his future fortunes.

And that present must be cheerful, full of pleasurable effort, childish, no worries, no burdens beyond his age and strength. I am supposed to give him the chance to let off steam, to give, despite the grumblings of offended written law and its awe-inspiring paragraphs, all the air, sun, all the kindness that is his right, irrespective of his doing what is right or what is wrong, unrelated to his virtues and vices. Uproot, weed out, tend? Weeds either grow unchecked or are destroyed en masse without ceremony, and in their place potatoes are planted. As a teacher I am concerned with the laws of nature, of God, not those of officialdom, of man. How splendid, disinterested and straightforward is a hospital. It heals the wound of a hero and of a prison inmate; whether on recovery he goes back to his honest pursuits, or out to work some wickedness, or is sent to the gallows — that is not the issue for a doctor. Maximum effort to assist in restoring to normal the disordered functions of an organ. If I am ineffective, I do not blame the patient for leaving the hospital with a chronic disease and thus becoming a burden to his family, to society. That is not for me to judge.

How fraudulent and dishonest is an institution which on the basis of giving a little food, a roof, meager clothing, indifferent care, declares — in defiance of common sense: We reform! Every case of moral turpitude — we heal. As the newspapers say: "A useful, honest worker put into circulation." No. I will not litigate with the coffins of unidentified heredity, with its unknown instincts and urges. I cannot undertake to remove the scars and wounds of earliest childhood. I am no quack, no witch doctor — merely a hygienist. I provide conditions conducive to recovery — light and warmth, freedom and joy of life. I trust that in his own way he will edge toward improvement. He will struggle, suffer disappointments and shocks. Let him renew his efforts. Let him seek his own ways and means. Let him experience the joy of small and

isolate victories. I help him with the sweet atmosphere of my boarding school.

Where improvement must be forced violently — that is no place for the teacher. A job for a prison guard. Better, quicker, openly and thoroughly. They will reform, will obey, will not dare oppose, will be cowed into submission. Attention, forward march! They're off. They run. Under the threat of severe punishment, they have charged their ways in no time. Entirely and promptly. As a teacher, I can spot among the rogues many honest ones, sent here by accident. I wish there were many like them at large. I can, naturally, see thieves, too. I see how many of the worst do well for themselves, enjoy respect. I see also those led on by bad example, scarcely infected, with crime — and the incurable, absolutely doomed.

I respect their efforts, pity them — for, God knows, is contemporary life worth their inner struggle, desperate at times, their bloody path to improvement, their despairing but stubbornly renewed efforts?

Their eyes are set on me, the master, the model. They strive to be like me — their teacher — to earn my commendation, encouragement, anxious to reward me for my efforts and services. Ingenuously and yet charmingly they tune themselves to my key of justice, honesty, duty. My poor dears! I am tempted to warn you: don't overdo it. And without the actual words, they sense it themselves, anyhow.

The model reformatories cure slightly more than half. And the rest? Well, they go into life armed with the memory of a serene childhood and the image of men who felt for them, did not cuss and condemn but blessed them when they were starting out on their crooked, serpentine, stormy and hard road of life. Police work made easier. They are not benumbed with punishment which years ago ceased to produce any effect, have not become petrified in the hatred to man, tense with the passionate thought of revenge.

A little brigand with whom it is easy to find a common language.

*On Various Types Of Children*³⁶

"UWAGI O ROZNYCH TYPACH DZIECI"

A quick run over the subject, journal fashion. I begin with children who steal. These are the most numerous. From the point of view of the possibility of reform, they split into a number of categories having very little in common with each other.

A chance theft. He took because "they all do it." He snatched an apple from the push cart or from someone else's garden, a handful of candy or prunes, a box, a bag, a can. He tried to pick a pocket of a coin or small bill, he snatched a wallet. For the first time, or he has been doing it over a shorter or longer period. Happily, children in this country are rather seldom put on trial. Such cases are dealt with summarily — the delinquent is given a good scare or dealt with there and then.

I cannot get the following case out of my mind. In Berlin, a boy of nine brought a book to a secondhand bookstore. Together with the book, a sheet of paper — father's permission to sell it. The sophisticated handwriting aroused the bookseller's suspicion and the child was arrested. Thy. father was called to the police station. Trying to shield his son, he claimed that he wrote the permission. He was warned, however, that should an expert find the handwriting was not his, he would be charged and severely punished. Fearful of the consequence, he changed his statement. He did not write it himself but told the child to write it for him. It did not help him. They said he would be charged with inducing a minor in his care to commit a forgery. Finally, the father was magnanimously forgiven and the boy sentenced to several months in a reformatory. I hope that Poland can avoid such type of lawfulness for as long as possible.

A boy — dynamic, lively, with plenty of initiative and imagination — is on the lookout for adventure, thirsts for it, needs it. Incidentally, the traditional raids of village children on other people's gardens constituted a hint of the existence of vitamins in fresh fruit and vegetables long before their presence could be scientifically established.

How should such children be treated? It's like chicken pox. Suppose we are more severe — the itch which afflicts children reared with insufficient care, neglected, easily yielding to the infection of temptation. A little ointment and all will be well again. No need even for treatment. If a reformatory considers that proportion of its children as

³⁶ First published Oct. 1928 — March 1929.

reformed, it is much mistaken. Neither reform nor treatment is needed here. A good bath suffices.

Chronic temptation is the work of one enemy —hunger. I will not pause to discuss that. He needs money for one thing or another. It is his right. Others have it, others eat. A slight relaxation of willpower, and it is all over. A short stay in an atmosphere of mental hygiene and cheerfulness and these collisions with the law vanish promptly, once and for all.

Is not playing at thieves and bandits, a pastime so common and popular — and, I should add, so eternal — evidence of the real attitude of children to theft, regardless of the moral social aspect of the problem? Children yield to a general suggestiveness, mimicry, vivid imagination, urge for adventure, occasionally ambition. There are boys who steal in order to give a treat to others.

An adventure — interesting, lively, gay, amusing. Healthy, lovable rascals! All concern for man and childish naivete are left intact. It's sufficient to tell him that he does wrong.

How come that soccer is so popular on the outskirts of towns? Three or four are waiting in a line. "Mummy's darling" comes along swinging a fine, brand new ball. That sissy wouldn't even know what to do with it. A bolder one first snatches the ball, passes it to another, on to the third, and the fourth runs off with it.

Reviewing a number of types, we would, finally, arrive at a child who magpielike always takes whatever he can lay his hands on. He cannot help it. If in the first case we are concerned with the will, either excessively strong or weak, here we have a nervous disorder calling for treatment.

I will cite a case from a few score years ago. It was in France. Two boys, shepherds, wanting money for a planned "Robinson Crusoe" voyage, murdered a farmer's whole family. I am omitting the details. Two columns were devoted to the case in the "Matin" and the "Journal." Interviews with the parents, a copy of a letter written from jail` :

"Dear Mummy! I know I have done wrong. I am sorry to have caused you trouble. You may be sure that if I get out nothing of the kind will ever happen again. Once more I beg you not to be angry with me."

The boy's age — ten.

I want to record briefly that dull and mentally deficient children must in the end fall under the control of a really criminal peer or youth. Who will play with them? Who wants to talk to a fool? What has his company to offer to peers? Only one who can get

something out of it will find interest in and associate with him, and a lot can be gotten out of an unquestioning partner and disciplined executor of an order. Probably such children have given rise to the view that one black sheep can easily spoil the whole flock. A sound intellect, a sensitive apparatus functioning efficiently is endowed with tremendous resistance against contagion. Only this way is it possible to explain that not all street and courtyard children follow the downhill road of crime. Let me insist on this most emphatically. Only a retarded one dominated by a normal intellect will yield passively. That is why the mentally retarded account for a considerable percentage of reformatory children. Incidentally, until recently there were no schools for them.

Harmless, charming little brigands. How much more detrimental to society is the chiseler type who cheats at games, exploits by swapping, betting, runs into debt, befogs the moral atmosphere, creates conflicts. Parasitic, usurious types, who may be said to pull up just one step short of the prison gate. They notably poison the atmosphere in schools. They prowl unnoticed in the very midst of the adult community.

Fortunately, only an insignificant number of merry mischief makers, disturbers of the public peace and order are detained. Less fortunately, this number is bound to increase with increased police vigilance.

In mild cases, this fleeting and common ailment needs no treatment. This is why anything will help. But the uncritical are deceived into believing that a change is brought about by a friendly word, a single heart-to-heart talk or even a good smack. Yes, such fortunate cases assuring a quick recovery may not even be harmed by corporal punishment. In the medical world, there is a well-known wisecrack: the patient recovered in spite of treatment.

Let me make it clear that a child who snorts and kicks up his heels is not merely imitating a horse but wants to be one. He wants to identify with the horse's situation. Barking, he is a dog, but obviously he will not be taken to the pound by a dog catcher. Nor would a boy who calls himself general be charged with having planned a coup d'etat. Thus, it would be nonsense to punish a child because he has momentarily played thief.

A violent child. Perhaps the most difficult problem, requiring the greatest consideration. He may kill in anger. It is a serious flaw in character and temperament. It holds danger for the future when alcohol comes into play, when he will be up against injustice and wrong. There is the serious risk of unsuitable treatment intensifying the bitterness if not the disturbance. It is very difficult to cope with these children, and still more so with such adolescents.

This is not the time or place to explain how I came (readers must take my word for it) to have a collection of twenty thousand resolutions to reform. I assert categorically that a child with a vice feels it as a burden, is anxious to rid himself of it; but he finds it difficult. Without guidance, he repeatedly launches unsuccessful assaults against himself and only a number of failures forces him to give up.

Odd. Nobody doubts that a hunchback would like to be rid of his hump, that an armless or legless child would like the missing limb to regenerate. There is no need to urge rectification in such cases; on the contrary, the impetus should be modified. Remember that only patience, persistent small efforts, the most cautious treatment can produce satisfactory results.

It is not easy to win the friendliness and confidence of distrustful children, resentful at being refused treatment, help. Let me only recall that a child regards adults as semigods who know everything and to whom everything is possible. His inevitable deduction — they are unwilling to comfort.

I cannot dwell on a small but interesting percentage of child "pigs." Their quantity is such that it would be termed "a trace" in an analytical laboratory. Those who insist otherwise imbue with their own feelings the entirely uncomprehended world of children's sensations.

Over and above offensive ambition, we find a good deal of defensive pride in children. The experience of past tribulations — at times the result of something inherent, a physical infirmity — turns them into misanthropes. Sulkers, snarling and unfriendly, they are the tragic harvest of crime.

Just one reminiscence. While in Paris, I went to a water sports meeting arranged to mark the end of the school year. A fine swimming pool, the hall filled with some ten thousand school children accompanied by teachers. Sunshine and gaiety. Then the Minister of Education makes an appearance. The orchestra plays the Marseillaise, the children rise, doff their caps. One boy of twelve remains seated. A classmate tries calmly and gently to make him stand up, takes the cap off his head. An angry glance, a threatening gesture. He sits with his cap on. He is demonstrating against the government, against France. Three pairs of eyes converge on the boy — a policeman, a teacher and myself. Then our eyes meet and we all three smile. I was moved with envy that France, rich and secure, could afford the luxury of an indulgent smile.

Wisdom in a nutshell. I am concluding with a general comment. There are pimples, little skin eruptions, ulcers — all harmless; and there is tuberculosis which grasps, spreads and infects. I clearly see and understand the attempts to prevent children of a certain category from being born. I can see the need for the hospital, isolation for a very long time to come. I do not exaggerate, neither do I belittle difficulties. The most menacing problem is to humiliate, arouse hatred, rage, to rear hungry wolves, hunted birds of prey.

Unfortunately, dismal suffering spreads like lice, and sadism, crime, uncouthness and brutality are nurtured upon it. There are three possibilities. The first is a den, a

cesspool where unhappy children will find an inferno of tortures and anguish. The second is therapy. The third (this particular one I saw in Lichtenberg) is mechanical discipline, shutting out all possibility of any independent thought, any decision. I utter a warning against that last, lest, panicked by the results of the den, we might seem to be driven that way. Model — a hospital. It neither accuses nor judges, but examines and treats.

The Incurable³⁷

"NIEPOPRAWNI

The business of a hospital is to cure. In many cases, we settle for mere improvement. The business of an institution for children is precisely that — to bring about an improvement in the inmate. We are satisfied if balance is restored to such a degree that under favorable conditions he may choose a road beneficial, not detrimental, to society.

A TB case is rehabilitated. Subsequent bad living conditions and nourishment produce a relapse and resurgence of the disease.

Therefore, the patient must be helped to change his conditions of life and work. That means training for an occupation, helping the child to earn his living and stay honest, showing him a way of life which will provide for his basic needs. Going to sea may be the answer to wanderlust. A boy with a tendency to cruelty may be directed to a slaughter house. Or perhaps the reverse. Lead them not into temptation.

Will it work or not?

A further consideration of major importance. Does the patient want to recover? What must he pay for the improvement? Will he agree to give up liquor, dancing, sports — all harmful to him. Nothing without his consent and participation.

Stipulations and bargains over the price of improvement are not infrequent among children of the well-to-do. You will get so much pocket money, but don't steal, give up bad company. Live like a decent human being.

We know that, as a rule, demands tend to be stepped up. The mutual agreement falls to the ground. An educational institution has limited means and influence, it cannot pay an exorbitant price for reform. It will teach a trade, help with finding a job. And for long?

It is necessary to husband carefully, to lay out time, energy and cash only where there is a chance of satisfactory results.

Is there any list of diseases and degrees of suffering to facilitate orientation? To guard against disappointments?

³⁷ First published Apr. 1931 — June 1932.

A few suggestions:

1. A "criminal" because he was poor and destitute. He was bribed, dragged in. Like a homeless pup he followed his nose to food. Moral if no one puts him up to tricks, if he finds no uses for his experience in illegal acquisition of essentials. Moral if steered that *way by* others but commits offenses because he cannot help it. A reliable worker in the criminal profession.

Nocturnal operators find it profitable to hire him. They too need conscientious and upright workers.

The prognosis — good.

Was he cured?

No. Rather saved like a drowning man, like one snatched from the wolf's jaws.

Are not precisely such cases the pride (unfounded) and apparent triumph of well-run reformatories?

For in the badly run, they continue to be dependent and trained in crime, increasingly infected by others.

2. A "criminal" because he easily gives way to temptations. He is drawn by changing images, drawn to fun. Boredom and monotony are his enemies.

If in the previous case the intellectual standard is irrelevant, here it is of decisive significance.

An idiot with ambitions cannot so easily be fitted in where he can give good service (and for the underworld he is also less attractive as a partner).

A lively, quick-witted youngster, with initiative, why should he commit crimes? He may be willing to fight them. He will find a place for himself in the police force or in the staff of a penitentiary. If he is bright at school, he may advance in business.

3. A brawler. Quick-tempered. Touchy. Irritable. Avoided by peers since childhood, he grows up resenting the quiet and level-headed; accepted, even singled out by those who see personal profit in exploiting his brains, initiative and courage for their shady activities.

Homeless, spiritually starved, he follows the first to come along who does not brush off and scoff. An active collaborator, perhaps even a ringleader.

But for the brevity implied by my journal, I should have to deal at more length with patients of this category.

Undoubtedly curable, but at odds with life, they may become the brains and muscle of the underworld.

Avengers, confessed enemies of the wishy-washy and phony organization of the "moral" world.

4. The dissatisfied — and their kind.

They differ from brawlers in background and degree of hostility.

Ill-disposition due to bodily ailments (headache, asthma, irritating rash), perhaps epilepsy, incontinence, ugliness, disability — any sort of flaw.

Pursuant to the conception of inferiority complexes (Adler) and Kretschmer's investigations (not completely known to me), it would be possible to apply a particular pathology and therapy to such individuals.

Consciously or unconsciously:

I am sick at heart. Injustice rules the world. I seek allies and focus my ambitions where others equally deprived fight for their right to life and joy.

5. Poisoned by distrust. This type is rebelling against his nearest and dearest, against the first guides of his early childhood. Traumas, not necessarily sexual.

Curable. Show him kindness, goodwill, set an example (no gab), gratify the yearning for truth and the good. The road to reform.

Bending, breaking, enforcing correction — that will infuriate him. It's even risky to hurry him.

This type is perhaps the most feared by educators who are insincere in what they do. Such a child will not be taken in by appearances. He will ring every coin on the counter. He will brutally reject if he smells treachery.

6. Jesters — caricaturists. The world and life in cap and bells. Unruly, restless, artistic souls. This is what a teacher-dogmatist says about them:

"First one must battle a basic fault which vitiates any serious work. This is clowning in class. This defect is fatal not only for the joker himself but also disturbs the work of others. It makes a teacher's task immensely difficult and leads ultimately to the deserved expulsion of the pupil unless the tendency is combatted early."³⁸ *De la*

³⁸ Original by Korczak is in French.

direction des enfants dans un internat de garçons par l'abbé Simon. (Child-Rearing in a Boy's Boarding School, by Father Simon).

Their enemy is any authority, seriousness and pomp. Beware the unsmiling word. They will burst out laughing at a moment only they understand.

Ascertain. Can he draw, sing, dance? Perhaps a cabaret writer, practical joker, attraction at amusement parks.

He collides with the law, gaily, out of curiosity, by accident. He insists. Don't be fools. You know that for each one caught, a hundred get away with it. They self-correct, seek one another out when free. Without us life would not be half so much fun.

They understand that. They do not believe that teachers are so naive.

Do not expect of them either work or formal behavior.

That heading — "Incorrigible"; in the writing it has not worked out. For children's "incorrigibility" is always our fault. To them we represent contemporary knowledge and conditions of life with their inertia and anarchy. Children are entitled to charge us with being incompetent. How ignoble we appear in the role of scolders, branders, how hateful when we resort to violence.

And those innate "evil tendencies?" From the same soil the raspberry draws sweetness and the nettle poison.

Ethical dyscrasia, sick heredity.

But do our forecasts work out? Does not reform appear precisely at that point where we have given up, just when we have thought it to be the least possible? Is it not the outcome of undiscerned stimuli, frequently imperceptible?

Why did this one whom we thought doomed recover, and that one on whom we had pinned our hopes fail?

For over and above the noxious secretions acquired — from the drunkard-father and harlot-mother — there are also the anonymous forces inherited from the grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

We know that surprises are frequent, but instead of allowing them to awaken vigilance and criticism, caution as regards problems and men, judgments and assertions, we allow them to offend and anger us. We want things to be as we know they should be. It disturbs our peace of mind, offends our dignity.

Refusing to look at the dizzy depths of the spirit, we reach for power to control it.

Recognizing such children are difficult to plumb, not worth all the trouble, we disdain them and mistrust the results of our own work. We prefer that they stand in the dock while we play the role of accusers. Not teachers but prosecutors.

Dishonest, even as officials, we reinforce the ranks of the transgressors, weaken the ranks of those who, armed with experience of life and toughened in the fight against their own unruly spirits, could be our allies in maintaining order.

*The Ambitious Teacher*³⁹

"WYCHOWAWCA AMBITNY"

"The right man in the right place." As regards monitoring duties, children's work in an institution, I have reverted repeatedly to the question of how simple it would be to achieve order in communal life, eliminate errors, misunderstandings, accusations, differences, upsets, struggles and tears if each one could be properly placed; so that this idle worker, inefficient and irritating, would become useful — more, devoted — in a different post. He is happy when carrying bricks, dragging logs, digging a deep ditch, swinging an axe. He says he likes it, is in his element, "like a fish in water." If you tell him to saw, peel potatoes, write, memorize poetry, he changes from cheerful and exemplary to disobedient, quarrelsome, spiteful and lying. (Teachers' training colleges should use short films. Fish in and out of water, a boy dragging planks, and the same boy in the classroom over an arithmetic problem.)

I am not unappreciative of the efforts and achievements in the field of characterology; they seem to me, however, excessively *ex cathedra*, too sure of themselves — perhaps even exactly that — rather divorced from the cool observation of minor details of the day. It is not the psychotechnique that disturbs but the overbearing self-assurance. The direction of generalization — only via classifying and comparing numerous observations, thorough analysis of accidental cases. (Patient X. Y., so many years of age, today is thus, in a year's time so and so, otherwise in the morning, when he sits up, pants, coughs, etc.) And of course experimenting and checking of results.

A change of duties, a change of tools, the impact of expert advice, a warning, a change of partner and supervisor — that is the arena for legitimate, admissible endeavors in educational work. We often disregard the fact that the first page in a fresh exercise book is distinguished by neater writing. And what about a good pen? If I provide a good broom, I am entitled to expect the child to tidy up properly. Good pals will do a job without any squabbling. A gruff order produces opposition and upsets. "It's just fun working with him; a good idea." It may also occur that he tries to conceal the fact that ordinary work appeals to him, or that he has grown weary and discouraged before acquiring the necessary experience in controlling expenditure of energy, in the economy of effort. Consequently, before ordering a child to scrub or polish the floor, one should do it repeatedly himself, watch how the children do it, and listen keenly to what they say. It is desirable to know how to wring out a rag; know all about hay-filled mattresses before

³⁹ First published Aug. 1938 — Oct. 1939.

ordering that beds be made according to the artistic daytime barrack standards; and about comfort at night — that the straw may not stick not be worn down too soon, that the boy may not slide onto the floor after many unsuccessful, sleepy attempts to settle himself. (Films would certainly be useful. A dog settling down to a doze and a child sleeping — "you've made your bed, you must be in it.") Even the lavatory monitor's turn of duty at a primitive holiday camp may be made desirable. But it is essential to provide a special shovel for sand and a dust pan to deal with uncleanness, and also to set a good personal example, demonstrating that while there is no such thing as dirty work, negligence will thwart or nullify effort.

I will surely provoke an indulgent smile or a wry grimace when I say that a two-volume work dealing with laundry and washer women would be just as dignified as one on psychoanalysis, that the kitchen and chicken broth call for more intelligence and initiative than a bacteriological laboratory and the microscope. And I would rather entrust a baby to an honest nurse than to Charlotte Buhler. That is precisely what I am talking about.

For many years, I observed the ranks of young stars of the teaching profession. There were all sorts. Of one, I thought sadly: "He won't manage, poor chap, what a pity." Of another, with a troubled sigh: "He will manage, unfortunately, and for many years will rage among the children like a chronic epidemic of influenza, catarrh, gout in the joints and the soul." Not to lose sight of the title of the article, let me refer to the teacher who is devoted — but ambitious.

Shades, varieties, individuals. A theme for a bulky volume. There is one always who is in doubt, pedantic, accusing alternately himself (somewhat rarely), the children (more frequently), working conditions (always). And another — learned, capable and efficient — revels in his own actions and accomplishments, though all around is a shambles of hearts and brains, trampling on the joy of work, the book, and life itself. He is ready to bend or break, uproot — enforce, exort or insist on his own idea of order, cleanliness, good manners, obligation to make progress, and even — on physical growth. "You must eat because it is healthy, because of the strap and discipline. You must not drink water, it is not good for you! You must sleep, play, you son-of-a-bitch, because that's what they told me in the course, because authority says so." He is anxious to shine, to do more and better than his superiors require of him. To mold every child to his own ways of understanding, his own dogmas, to pull, to - rear (ziehen, erziehen)⁴⁰ every child in line with his plans, calculations. Everybody in the class should be able to count up to ten by now, not a scrap of

⁴⁰ Korczak, an excellent linguist, plays on the similarity of two German words: "To pull" and "to rear."

paper on the floor, not a single inkblot in those exercise books. Whoever fails me is a mortal enemy. That teacher is all out for victory, applause, triumphs.

I have sought carefully among children for future teachers. And I watch with great concern how the ambitious ones with the mentality of prison guards, energetic misanthropes, diligent and active careerists (children — call them — apple polisher, holy Joe, fox), and finally hermits anchorites — intellectuals are forced to engage in social activities. "If you wanted to do it, you would know how and be able to." Quite the reverse: "If I knew how and was able to, I should want to."

A child who reads and understands a lot, listens carefully and asks interesting questions but will not pass anything on to his peers, will not help or explain, is looked upon at first merely as a rich curmudgeon (unfriendly, crafty, envious). Resentment toward him will become hate if he is singled out as a model to follow. Allowed to boss, he will demand from the community special privileges for himself.

What is a sound, noble ambition and emulation, and what is warped, false and degenerate? For show, for speculation? How much horsepower does the engine develop — the ultimate aim of the effort?

Again: two volumes — and every second issue of a pedagogic periodical contains observations, statistics, a passionate discussion, casuistry relating to particular cases. The anatomy, physiology and chemistry of ambition: the policy of the social worker, teacher.

B o y A. Age five, seven, ten. Social environment, condition of health, vital forces, outer appearance, personal charm. Plus — minus. Ambition. Eager for friendliness or obedience and leadership either by bargaining or trickery, by conquest (how) or extortion.

B o y B. Age five, seven, ten, Social environment, condition of health, etc. No ambition, willpower in abeyance, keeps aloof. Has he valuable features or none? Does he demand or give? How does he behave when giving, taking — in the event of refusal, resistance, some obstacle?

Just as in medicine — patient A and patient B. Complaints, an objective examination. Diagnosis. And only then the prescription. Diet, treatment, how he is to live and work — and only in the form of a hint, an experiment to be verified.

Penetrating complexes, inhibitions, semiconsciousness (for that exists, too), subconsciousness, through inferiority complex and superiority complex (father's position, good memory, a gift for drawing, singing, sports, a debut in ballet or as an author, or a

pretty dress), among the noisy and the well known — the trained eye of the keen observer will pick out the quiet, meek, colorless and unappreciated children; for there is nothing about them except that they are good, feel sympathy at a classmate's tear, and happiness in his joy.

We know well enough that children quarrel, get in the way, annoy, fight and, of course, spoil, exert a bad influence. "You are a good boy, you should keep out of his way, he will ruin you." A surprised glance, a gentle smile: "And perhaps I'll help him?" — And he did! "Don't play with him, he's a roughneck, a wrecker, fights everybody." — "He suits me."

It happens. The awkward, colorless, artless one seems to be a little fool. Yet he is nimble, vigilant, inventive and observant. Should any of his classmates lose something and be unable to find it, he will be on the spot in a jiffy, no one knows from where. He will undo a knot in a shoelace, carefully, tactfully, and boldly all at the same time. He will approach a rebellious brawler and whisper to him: "What are you crying for?" — and will go off without taking offense if he gets the answer: "What's that go to do with you," or else he will disarm.

But he, too, though rarely, will lose patience. An explosion of justified indignation. I once saw such a fight. He went for a stronger one and because he attacked suddenly, and caught the other by surprise — he won. "So he dared to go for me, the little stinker." The power of wounded ambition in a fight against the audacity of violence, injustice. What a crashing error it would have been to break up this splendid fight, perhaps to be disdainful, to rebuke: "You too? I didn't know that your quietness was just a pretense"; or: "Such a clumsy one and he takes to fighting."

Intuition, not empathy but ability, the quality of being able to share any wrong suffered and in any helpless misfortune — again a subject for a voluminous work. And possibly the study would reveal that such children would make good teachers, not social workers — precisely because they lack false ambition.

A parenthetical comment: various types — a beggar, an unfortunate, a chiseler, an insolvent debtor, a thief and a cutthroat. The first: "Please"; the second: "Don't be a pig, don't refuse a pal"; the third: "You give, and I'll give you something, tell you something"; the fourth will borrow, the fifth steal and the last: "You just wait, I'll break your neck." And altogether different — a leader, a politician, an educational worker, a young pedagogue.

I have developed a diversion of sorts, an exercise for the mind. I looked for educators wherever I went among the craftsmen (shoemakers, bricklayers, peddlers, caretakers,

streetcar conductors) — the common folk. Just a waitress — but her smile, walk, gestures, actions — no training — and yet just right, educational. A long time ago I discovered a nurse among prostitutes. She had worked for many years in a children's hospital and that is much like an institution for the blind and mentally deficient. And at this point — an impression, for I would not dare declare the following outright on the basis of loose, unmethodical observations. The teaching profession attracts the ambitious, retains the colorless and insipid, and isolates the good. The good keep their distance. As for the first, they are overcome by bitterness and disappointment. The second easily grow demoralized and lazy. The third feel that things should be done differently but have no idea how, nobody asks what they think anyway; they are supposed to get on with their job, that's all. If emboldened they could say a lot, pour out their grievances and explain.

If anyone chooses to devote his life to writing such a two-volume introductory study, let him take into account the views of school caretakers, orphanage charwomen, the Cinderellas of child care, and not only of the professional staff.