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I've been studying this past year at the bilingual grammar school in Poprad, the town where I was born and, after graduating, I would like to study philosophy at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague.

# If they have the courage to let the colors take them away.

**B**eing nineteen years old, I belong among adults, but what does that really mean? People may be split into two main groups: children and adults. Yet, where does the decisive distinction between them lie? It would be helpful to define what makes a child and what makes an adult. The world of children is full of games, fantasies, desires and dreams. They are constantly dependant on someone. On the one hand, they are vulnerable, but, on the other, they are cunning, sometimes cruel, very demanding and sometimes they can truly get on your nerves. The world of adults is full of facts, duties, worries and responsibilities. They are nervous; they have power, strength, and independence. They can be just as ignorant and cruel as children, but also happy, excited and hopeful. Emotions are what connect these two groups. A person is no longer a child if he is capable of living independently.

There are many people around me who admire the adolescent world. They are sad that their childhood is already behind them. I don't understand why. They speak of purity, youthful purity, and I wonder what purity they mean? A child can fight, hurt their peers and they are willing to use all sorts of means in order to achieve their ends. They can pretend to cry; they yell; and they can emotionally blackmail others by being offended. I am not claiming that children are only bad. With respect to their options, they are capable of being just as good or bad as a person twenty years their elder. Perhaps my friends are not fascinated with moral purity or examples of angelic behavior. More likely, for them, it's about a child's laugh, their joy, and how they can live in the moment. They want to be fascinated by little things just like children, to ask an infinite number of questions, to reflect on things that to us already appear absolute. It is true that a child experiences these things a lot more



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than an adult, but nowhere is it banned for an adult to do so as well. Hence, adults should not forget that the emotions that children usually experience can also be felt by a grownup. They should remember that they have more than children.

I'm thinking of responsibilities. A lot of people think of them as a burden and a disadvantage. They would rather be children that are taken care of. I would like to look at it from a different angle. Children have their limits; they cannot do everything that an adult can. A child can only experience that which his or her parents, or their caretaker at a given moment, can offer them. If they want something, they cannot get it themselves; they are depend-

ant. As an adult I can plan. I can create my own dreams that I can with effort turn into reality. If I want a bicycle, I can find a job and earn enough for it. I don't have to wait for my parents' approval of my desire to own a bicycle, for them to decide that a bicycle is a necessary investment, or for them to finally make the purchase. With my own actions I am capable of making my wishes come to fruition. This freedom is not possible without responsibility. It depends on it. The feeling of having life in my own hands, that I must satisfy most of my desires, the feeling of being responsible is a great one, and one that a child cannot understand.

Yet, what about the negative side of re-

sponsibility? “*Opposition brings concord*”, as Heraclitus said. Without hunger we cannot know what it’s like to be full, without sadness what it’s like to be happy. An idealistic world cannot exist and it doesn’t exist even for children. Adults should realize that they aren’t the only ones who have real problems; a child can suffer just as much. Adults should be more empathetic because they tend to take things too seriously. If someone is depressed, they shouldn’t take out the ruler to measure how much they are suffering. Instead, they should look at the given person, be it a child or not, and try to understand why they are suffering. As Heinrich Heine once said, “*In the bowels of a small man may hide tremendous affliction*”.

I would like to return to the advantages of adulthood. Before children turn into adults, they read numerous books, at least the majority of children do. This gives them a wider understanding and provides them with more opportunities. They are able to read more complex literature, to dive deeper into problems and to more thoroughly understand various subjects. Thanks to experience and a more developed ability to think, they are able to better judge which actions are right and moral, an ability which, in turn, allows them to be helpful. They may walk through numerous doors, and the more they walk through, the more doors they are presented with. Moreover, they can return to a place where they have been as children. On the other hand, a child is not capable of reading philosophy. Yet, as an adult I can read fairy tales. As a child I wouldn’t be able to admire Italian art or architecture as I do now, both because I wouldn’t have the opportunity and be-

cause my ability to comprehend wasn’t fully developed yet. The synapses of my consciousness are now more active and organized. I now know more in regards to what is good and what is bad, what I want and what I don’t.

I now understand words more precisely, or as Wittgenstein wrote: “*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world*.” As a grown person who has been educated for some years now, I have been presented the world of physics, biology and philosophy. I am better acquainted with scientific terminology, thus with the world. I command a foreign language and I can command even more. I can visit all the corners of the world. I can speak to many people from different cultures and I can experience many things. Nothing can be richer than thinking, and new cultures along with new experiences will surely bring excitement, happiness and surprises from what I will see. This is exactly what adults desire, and why they are jealous of children. Yet, they forget that with their independence and responsibilities, they can experience far more.

Adults have in front of them an enormous canvas with numerous colors. Since they are not children, no one is forcing them to paint on the canvas. They use reason, and so they do not eat the paints or hurt themselves with art supplies. An adult can approach a canvas, firmly grab a brush in their hands and let themselves go. They can paint or experiment... and if they mess something up they can fix it or start all over. They can create a beautiful picture that can respond to their feelings and their dreams. Adults should not forget about this canvas, or the ability to live, or the possibility of creating anything, if



they have the courage to let the colors take them away.

Adults can travel, earn, choose and furnish themselves in more ways than children. They can have everything a child can and more. They can create their own world, or start a new one. Their life is made up of various spheres: family, work, sex, study, learning and development. In all these spheres they find so much inspiration and happiness that it can even surpass the excitement of a child.

Let us not forget one more angle, from which we can see an adult. Virtually everyone has seen the symbol of yin-yang, the two elements and two colors. The white symbolizing the day, strength, movement and hardness. The black symbolizing the night, weakness, stillness and softness. Both of them come together to create a harmony. The white representing the man and the dark representing the woman. I would like to tell the adults that men should stay as men and women as women. The man should protect the woman, and the woman should be able to make the man happy. The woman should be creative and offer ideas, which the man can understand. I am not trying to say that a woman should be some weak creature that is waiting for her saviour or that a woman shouldn't do anything practical. I am only saying that some aspects should predominate and in men those aspects should be different than those in women. A man can be sensitive and a woman can be strong, but even if there is a white dot in the black half, the black still dominates. Women should not be afraid to display their femininity, if they receive flowers from a man they should enjoy the smell, instead of worrying about the cost.

I would like to tell the adults not to for-

get about the capacities that they possess. They should step out of the crowd and see if they are going in the right direction, if they don't want to go somewhere else and in a different way. They shouldn't think about what they don't want; they should think about what they do want. They shouldn't lose their passion or their happiness. I would like to tell them to listen to real music, and to stop thinking in words, but with tones and feelings. That they should not forget about the small things, like the taste of chocolate, a hug, sipping wine, the power of surprise, or the peace and quiet of a snowy night. Grownups should protect, respect and understand children, to whom they should offer the best possible conditions for developing their talents and interests. Adults should thoroughly analyze their decisions because we live in a world where thinking about one's self or even of others is not enough, we have to think about future generations.

I would like to tell the adults the following: be critical, but do not unnecessarily criticize people or situations that you know nothing about! Do not judge people by their actions, but consider why they acted in such a way. Do not be afraid to do something new or unexpected! Be creative, smile, go see Mother Nature and from time to time go to work by foot. Last but not least, go and read "*The Little Prince*"!

Perhaps my work may seem a bit too simple for the reader, but ask yourself: "*Is life really complicated or are we making it complicated?*" Maybe my essay seems idealistic or unrealistic. However, I am not writing about what it's like, or that everyone lives like this. I am only writing to let the reader know how it could be.