1. **Why Janusz Korczak and Yitzhak Katzenelson?**

The twentieth century left humanity with despairing memories. Perhaps the legacy of people like Janusz Korczak and Yitzhak Katzenelson should serve as an anchor of hope, a beacon that guides us into a better world.

Global wars and genocides, the unprecedented slaughter witnessed during two world wars, the dark shadow of the Holocaust during which millions of Jewish people were persecuted, the presence of the atomic bomb and the constant threat of apocalyptic nuclear war… All of this draws a problematic picture of our world and paints dark shadows above human horizons. Furthermore, the healthy future of human civilisation is threatened by religious fanaticism and world terror fuelled by religious radicalism, as well as the political violence and economic crises which have seen global waves of refugees pushed out of their homes. Our acute awareness of these horrors endangers our belief in the basic goodness of human beings and their ability to work towards a better world.

Auschwitz, the peak of human demonic behaviour in the twentieth century, marks the loss of our moral orientation. Its scandalous reality – an industrial complex of death – shatters our basic trust in human morality. Civilised, educated men committed the worst crimes imaginable. They used the words "good" and "evil", spoke about human decency and even led their family lives in close proximity to the camps, and yet none of this prevented their crimes. Unavoidably, we are led to question the very legitimacy and effectiveness of any moral discourse. Language was not a reliable representation of the reality in which it was embedded.[[1]](#footnote-1) The world had gone insane.

1. Steiner, 1986. Is this a complete reference? [↑](#footnote-ref-1)