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

The twentieth century left humanity with dispiriting memories. Maybe the heritage of people like Janusz Korczak and Yitzhak Katzenelson can serve as an anchor of hope, a beacon that guides us into a better world.

Global wars and genocides, unprecedented human slaughter in two world wars, the dark shadow of the Holocaust of the Jewish people, the presence of the atomic bomb and the constant threat of apocalyptic nuclear war, religious fanaticism and world terror fueled by religious radicalism, global waves of refugees pushed out of their homes by political violence and economic crises – all threaten the ongoing flourishing of human civilization. They draw a problematic picture of our world and paint dark shadows above human horizons. Their presence in our consciousness endangers our belief in the basic goodness of human beings and their ability to work for a better world.

Auschwitz, the apogee of human demonic creativity 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. Civilized, educated men committed the worst crimes that can be imagined. They used the words ‘good’ and ‘evil’, spoke about human decency, and even raised their families in the proximity of the camp, and yet none of this prevented their crimes. Unavoidably, we question the very legitimacy and effectiveness of any moral discourse. Language was no longer a reliable representation of reality.[[1]](#footnote-1) The world went out of its mind.

1. Steiner, 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)