



## **Once more on the Fate of Intellectuals in Nazi Camps**

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# Once more on the Fate of Intellectuals in Nazi Camps

Could broad education and the ability for critical thinking offer comfort in Auschwitz?

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**Key Words:** Intellectuals, incarceration, dehumanisation, literature

## Abstract

The fate of the intellectuals in Auschwitz has been the topic of numerous previous essays and whether detrimental or alternately, of even minimal benefit has been repeatedly considered, but not decisively resolved. We discuss whether intellectuality could have offered any relief from suffering in L'univers concentrationair? Observations on four survivors of Auschwitz, all with different personalities will be analyzed, reviewing their pre- and post-war lives and searching for any expression of intellectual moments of respite.



## Introduction:

The capture of one of the architects of *the final solution of the Jewish problem*, in Buenos Aires in May 1960, did not heal the wounds inflicted on those who survived the horrors of the Holocaust, including those intellectuals whose experiences are briefly described in this article. Those individuals lived to share their stories, relating the horrors inflicted upon them from the moment of their transformation from human beings into different forms of existential creatures. They were unable to ever shed the burden of their suffering despite their gifts of mental power.(1-7)

*We travelled here in the sealed wagons; we saw our women and our children leave towards nothingness; we, transformed into slaves, have marched a hundred times backwards and forwards to our silent labors, killed in our spirit long before our anonymous death. No one must leave here and so carry to the world, together with the sign impressed on his skin, the evil tidings of what man's presumption made of man in Auschwitz (8).*

Considerable uncertainty revolves around the proposition of whether individuals in Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps, could have derived a degree of comfort resulting from intellectual activity within their situation of severe physical discomfort and deprivation.

A definition of the notion of *intellectual* is required for this dissertation and the authors adopt the descriptions given by two survivors considered in this review: Jean Amery wrote in a 1966 essay, that an intellectual would be *one educated not only in a high profession (medicine, law, science, economics, etc), but also well versed in poetry, in history, knowledgeable in Renaissance Humanism, in visual arts, in music from Buxtehude to Beethoven.*(7). Primo Levi in 1986 whilst commenting on the above definition added that the *mathematicians, the engineers and architects, all complemented with cultural and philosophical studies*, should also be included in the notion of the intellectuals (8).

Events in the Nazi camps have been extensively described by surviving victims and on occasion contradicted by the perpetrators. Historians, born after the war have offered retrospective interpretations, which have at times been contested by the survivors. Between these two groups of victims and late interpreters there is



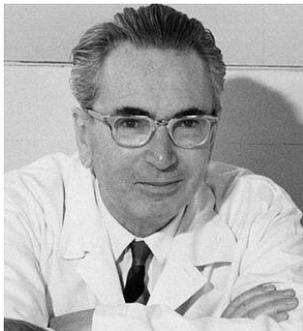
a third, *intermediate* group defined as survivors who matured after the war and their conclusions have at times also been contested by historians and philosophers.

**Prisoner no. 119104, FRANKL Viktor Emil. *Trotzdem Ja zum Leben Ein Psycholog erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (A man's search for meaning). (9-11).**

Frankl was born in Vienna in 1905 to a middle class Jewish family. His father descended from a centuries old family in the Moravian district of the Hapsburg Empire, whilst his mother was from the Bohemian part of the Empire. Both families had a stable financial position until WWI.

Their third child, Viktor, showed talented interest in medicine and psychology and obtained his doctorate in Medicine from Vienna University in 1931, specializing as a neurologist/psychiatrist.

Already by the time he graduated he was well known to both the first psychotherapy school (Sigmund Freud) and to the second psychotherapy school (Alfred Adler). Frankl eventually introduced *the search for meaning* as therapy, termed *logotherapy*, (Greek logos = meaning), to establish the third school of Viennese psychotherapy.



In Vienna, he was employed in the exclusive Am Steinhoff hospital until the 1938 incorporation of Austria into the Third Reich. He then took the post of psychiatrist in the Rothschild Hospital until 1939, was only allowed to treat Jews and was called *Judische Fachbehandler* or Jewish expert. He was involved in questionable experimental treatment of suicidal patients, including pharmaceutical experiments and experimental neurosurgery, for which he was later accused of collaboration with the Nazis. Frankl gave up an opportunity to escape in order to



protect his elderly family, but sadly by the end of the war he remained alone. His parents, brother and wife all perished, whilst one sister escaped to Australia.

Frankl's history of incarceration is long and painful. He was interned in Theresienstadt with his entire family in September 1942 and was there for two years, practicing medicine. This period of somewhat acceptable internment ended with his transfer to Auschwitz in October 1944 and separation from his family on arrival. After a brief period, Frankl was transferred to the Kaufering sub-camp of Dachau and from there to the Turkheim sub-camp in March 1945. He was briefly put to hard labour digging trenches and tunnels, until he volunteered for medical work in the Typhus Sick-bay. He became infected, but recovered and was liberated in a cachectic state in April, 1945, after **944 days of incarceration**. Frankl stayed in a Displaced Persons Hospital in Bad Worishofen, treating survivors until his return to Vienna in August 1945.

Despite his family's extermination, Frankl's post-war physical and emotional recovery was rather rapid and his professional acceptance even more so, being quickly re-admitted into Viennese society both professionally and socially. In 1948 he obtained a PhD in Philosophy. His personal life was healed by a successful second marriage to a Catholic wife, with reciprocal religious tolerance. He joined the academic staff of the University of Vienna leading to a very successful career.

Frankl remained in relatively good health until death at age 92 and is buried in the Jewish section of Vienna cemetery.



Following his return from the camps, by August 1945 Frankl dictated and published his main manuscript: *Trotzdem Ja zum Leben Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager (Man's Search for Meaning)*, which described the three phases of psychological behaviour by the prisoners in Auschwitz. The first phase, on arrival, was *shocked* at the brutality of the selection. Dehumanisation or *Entwürdigung*, (the beating, screaming, head shaving, wearing the striped uniform, gas chambers, the



smell of the crematoria, daily large number of deaths, suicides) followed, leading to the second phase of *apathy*. In that stage they cared only for their slice of bread and cup of soup, their frozen fingers and toes, while attempting to hide their infirmities in order to avoid the subsequent, almost daily selections for the gas chamber. In the third and last stage they became a *muselman*, exhausted, emaciated, barely human, unable to work or even stand, giving up on life. Frankl observed those reactions of prisoners in Auschwitz and recorded them in a manuscript for a future book, *Ärztliche Seelsorge (The Doctor and the Soul)*. The manuscript was discovered and destroyed by a Kapo<sup>1</sup>, but reconstructed soon after liberation and published a year later.

**Prisoner no. 31662 Charlotte DELBO** *Aucun ne reviendra* and *Prose and Poetry after Auschwitz* (12-17).



Delbo was born in 1913 into a middle class Parisien family and was not prominent until after WWII. At the start of the war she was in South America assisting a theatre director/ philosopher and returned home after the Nazi occupation of France. Together with her husband she joined the Resistance, impelled by Marxist ideology and patriotism. The couple were arrested by the French police and handed over to the Gestapo and as a humanitarian gesture were allowed a one hour meeting before the husband was shot . Delbo was detained in the Romainville camp from March 1942 until January 1943 when it was taken over by the SS and she was sent to Auschwitz. Initially in Birkenau, Delbo observed the *degradation of humanity*. She was soon shifted to the satellite agricultural camp, Rajsko, where the prisoners were forced to undertake farming, building, digging trenches, etc. The death and suffering from hunger, thirst and cold endured by the 230 French women was just as severe as that endured by the Jewish prisoners and she termed their experience as *inexplicable*. She was near death when in March 1945 she was transferred from Auschwitz to Ravensbruck with 49 French women

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<sup>1</sup> The kapo was a prisoner selected by the Nazis to oversee other prisoners. They were usually petty criminals or at times Jewish prisoners, behaving with brutality towards their fellow inmates, in exchange for minor favors.



still alive out of the original 230. She was liberated in April 1945 and taken by the Red Cross to Sweden, after **687 days of incarceration**.

Following brief physical rehabilitation, in June 1945 Delbo returned to Paris and soon relocated to Geneva for the next 5 years, working as a translator at a UN centre. She undertook a mission, stating: *I want to write to represent what Auschwitz was, to write a form of tragedy in prose and poetry*. By 1960 Delbo was accepted into the Paris literary world and recalled her pledge as a prisoner: *Should they (i.e. the prisoners) ever return to (normal) life, (they) would try to discover the splendid world of literature which during (their imprisonment) a brief moment of respite presented a golden image. (Pray for forgiveness to be alive)*.

Delbo's first book, *Le convoi de 24 Janvier (The convoy of 24 January)*, described the transfer from the Compiègne concentration camp in France to Auschwitz. After one year back in France, Delbo wrote *Auschwitz et Après (Auschwitz and After)*, and much later published the trilogy: *Aucun de nous ne reviendra (None of us Will Return)*; *Une connaissance inutile (Useless knowledge)* and *Measure des jours (The Measure of Our Days)*. She wrote books, plays, prose, poetry, journal articles and letters during a long career. Delbo was in good general health despite her memories. If *I am not alive*, she stated that *Anyone not there cannot understand, that it only could be described, but not explained*.

Her second great ideological disillusionment after Auschwitz occurred during a visit to the Soviet Union. She became deeply disappointed by the Gulags in an admired country with an admired leader, for whom her husband gave his life and Delbo her liberty. She concluded that *everything was false concerning the Communist Party*.





*Delbo's* autobiography, her last work published shortly before her demise in 1985 from lung cancer, was *Le mémoire et les jours (Days and Memory)* in which she tried to *expliquer l'inexpliquable*

**Prisoner no. 174517 Primo LEVI: *Se questo e un uomo (If this is a man? also known as Survival in Auschwitz)*** (8, 18-26).

Primo Levi was born in 1919 into the Torino based side branch of the large Levi family, widely dispersed throughout Italy. They were non-religious and Primo later on described them as *assimilated non-jewish Jews*. In the early days of fascism in the 1930's, the family included well known professionals, artists, politicians, physicians, (Levi-Montalcini a Nobel laureate). Prior to university studies, Levi absorbed the general culture offered in an Italian Liceo and that was followed by scientific studies. Despite the anti-semitic Fascist Laws enacted in 1938, Levi managed to finish his university studies, obtaining a PhD with distinction in industrial chemistry.

At the age of 23, Levi joined an inexperienced group resisting the Fascist Laws, distributing pamphlets. He was eventually arrested by the Italian police in January 1944, deported to Fossoli camp near Modena and handed over to the Gestapo. As an Italian of Jewish descent, he was given to the SS and transported to Auschwitz in February 1944, where he was forced into hard physical work in atrocious circumstances. His delicate physique declined toward the stage of a cachectic with infected wounds on his feet. He was assisted at work by physically stronger, non-Jewish Italians, and was eventually discovered by the SS to be a chemist. Levi was subjected to a rigorous chemistry examination, found to be knowledgeable.

He was shifted to the IG Farben factory in Buna near the Auschwitz camp with better food and cleaner and warmer accommodation during the last two and a half months. He was liberated in January 1945 by the Red Army after **362 days of incarceration**, having barely escaped a forced march in snow, towards Germany, during which thousands perished. During the next 9 months, Levi undertook a circuitous route through Eastern Europe and crossed the border from Austria to return home in October 1945.

Levi found his family intact, recuperated slowly and soon found work in the chemical industry. He established a family and lived in the same apartment in which he was born, until dying in 1987.



In post- liberation life Levi undertook the mission of becoming a witness and for years he worked as an educator. With the world changing and forgetfulness paralleled with increasing public anti-semitism, his testimony drew less and less interest. His emotional illnesses, (most severe being the numbers on his forearm) combined with physical ill health left him feeling *drowning* and he looked for an exit from life. After years of treatment with various anti-depressants and enduring urological operations he stumbled from a high stair, possibly an act of suicide, but disputed by close relatives. Local Rabbi Artom considered his death to be consequent on Auschwitz and Primo Levi was buried in the local orthodox Jewish cemetery, his grave engraved with name, dates of lifespan and his prisoner number.

**Prisoner no 172364: The philosopher of Auschwitz: Jean AMERY (Hans Mayer). *Jenseit von Schuld und Suhne* (At mind's limits) (7, 27-28).**



Hans Mayer (or Maier) was born in 1912 in Vienna with a combined Jewish and Catholic background. His father descended from a long line of Mayers from Hochenems in Upper Austria, where in the 17-th century, the local Count allowed Jews to settle. His mother Valerie, new Goldshmidt, was a Catholic with Jewish



ancestors and in 1908, when marrying the orthodox Jew Paul Mayer, Valerie was required to re-convert to Judaism. Mayer's father was killed in action in WWI and the family left Vienna for the country town of Ischl. Mayer had only minimal schooling, being a mediocre student and left school at the age of 12. The family moved back to Vienna and at the age of 16 Mayer started to work in the bookstore/library of an Adult Education Center. Self-educating, Mayer acquired a wide range of literary knowledge and attended several courses as a non-registered student at the Vienna University. Eventually, Mayer became a lecturer and teacher at the Education Centre and there came to meet Vienna's elite journalists and writers. He joined the Editorial Board of the *Die Brücke*, a respected art and literary publication, with many well known contributors, all remaining life long supporters and friends. Hans Mayer was not brought up as a Jew, and only learnt about his Jewishness whilst reading the Nazi inspired Nuremberg Race Laws, proclaimed in 1935.

Mayer fled Austria with his newly wed wife, days after the Anschluss in March 1938, managing to escape at night through closed borders, emerging in Antwerp. The war reached Belgium and he was arrested in May 1940 as an Alien (Austrian), detained in Malines and then transferred to Gurs in Southern France. Mayer escaped in June 1941 and returned to Belgium where he became involved in anti-SS propaganda, printing and distributing pamphlets. His first book *Die Schiffbrüchigen (The Shipwrecked)* was followed by political literature.

Arrested by the Gestapo in July 1943 Mayer was sent to the fortress prison of Breendonck, where he underwent severe torture, later described in detail. Refusing to divulge details of friends and their whereabouts, Mayer was hung with his hands tied behind the back, resulting in posterior dislocation of the shoulder, undoubtedly one of the most excruciating types of pain which can be inflicted on a human being. He was whipped into unconsciousness. This resulted in continued pain which persisted as a permanent theme throughout his life.

From the fortress, Mayer was handed over to the SS and transported to Auschwitz, Monowitz III. From January 1944, Mayer was put to construction work for the next six months, but in June he was identified by his German superiors as one of *very few to master German orthography*<sup>2</sup>. With his exquisite knowledge of the German language, he was put to work in the office of the Buna factory (IG Farben Industry) until January 1945 when he was marched 25 miles to the border town of

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<sup>2</sup> The conventional spelling of a language can be described as *orthographic*. *Orthographic* comes from the Greek roots *ortho*, meaning correct, and *graphos*, meaning writing



Gleiwitz, then transported to Buchenwald (Dora) and subsequently to Bergen-Belsen. Mayer was liberated by the British in March 1945, after **994 days of incarceration**.

Mayer returned to Brussels, but his rehabilitation was perhaps the most difficult among the intellectual prisoners considered here. Severely traumatized by not finding his wife, he experimented with an anagram and changed his name to Jean Amery. He had no home, no country, no language and no family. Amery never totally recovered, stating that observing the number imprinted on his forearm every morning would not allow him to forget and he embarked on a mission. In his writings he remained unforgiving, critical and harsh on the new society. He stated that *anyone tortured remains tortured for life*. The shoulder dislocation led to frozen shoulder, eventually becoming progressively more painful.

Along with his physical pain persisting, his psychic pain intensified, expressed convincingly in the book: *At Mind's Limits*. High blood pressure and heavy smoking increased his morbidity. He suffered repeated heart attacks and was also diagnosed with an autoimmune disease, probably lupus, nonetheless lived a fairly long life.

Amery's recognition by the German literary world increased with time but only after some 20 years could he address the German public or visit Germany. He remained a prolific writer of books, reviews and journalism. His essays on *Torture*, *Aging*, *How much home a human needs* and on *Suicide* were all translated into several European languages. His psychological stresses became more and more prominent and as the only way out, led him to an exit that he thoroughly described in his last philosophical essay.

Amery committed suicide in April 1978 in Salzburg and is buried in the Jewish section of Vienna's Central Cemetery, where the strict religious rules against unnatural death was not practiced. His tombstone bears his name, birth and death dates and Auschwitz number.



## Discussion:

Would it be logical to presume that the bodily weaker white collar intellectual suffered more both physically and mentally from the dehumanization inflicted and the harsh prison conditions? They were tortured through the physical degradation of hair shaving, tattooing, wearing of striped uniform and lack of sanitation. Was it the Nazi authorities intention to destroy the intellect? Were there any well known intellectuals who reached the terminal cachectic, apathetic state of the *muselman*, reaching for the electrified barbed wire? Is this a theoretical /philosophical question or rather of more practical application, perhaps even of potential therapeutic value in instances of tortured imprisonment possibly at some future time?

The question of the intellectuals in Auschwitz was considered by survivors (Levi, Amery, Frankl, Rost.) and also by post war intellectual-philosophers (Stille, Ceuppens, Ganeri .Langer and others). If there existed a clear answer to the question of whether *Intellect* was of no benefit or perhaps even of hindrance then why have so many essays been written on this topic?

The following quotations from the writings of *intellectual* survivors are used to support the hypothesis that they obtained some mental respite from the suffering inflicted in the Nazi concentration camps.

The Auschwitz cases resemble those described by Nico Rost, a Dutch political prisoner, in his post-war text of *Goethe in Dachau*. A group of intellectuals in Dachau established the concept of a *humanist canon* in the camp whilst discussing Goethe, Kleist, Schopenhauer or Hegel. Those incarcerated intellectuals found solace by bringing literature into their daily reality as *a way of coping with the unspeakable* (1).

The following explicit quotes are from the four intellectual survivors of the most inhuman camp in history: Auschwitz. They were of different age, different gender and faith and of different education and background. The analyses given by those survivors, as contrasted to those by post-war theoreticians, makes their theses more realistic. They all arrived at the edge of dehumanisation, they all suffered different lengths of incarceration, they all recovered to a different extent, and went through different post-liberation lives.



## **Viktor Frankl:**

Stated that during incarceration he found confirmation of his pre-war theory of *searching for meaning in life*, despite the most dire physical and psychological stress. Frankl used intellectual activity during incarceration to counteract his jailers attempt to annihilate his intellect. Indirectly, perhaps even subconsciously, Frankl reached moments or hours of what could be interpreted as *intellectual respite*, through promoting his logotherapy, whereby he attempted to decrease the number of suicides among the prisoners.

Frankl proposed that *intellectuality* in the camp was of benefit and helped him overcome *intellectual hibernation*. He stated that he found *meaning in suffering*, making the Holocaust survivable, just as the religious expected heavenly intervention and the political (socialists/ Marxists) believers expected Soviet victory.

----- Frankl entertained himself with mental discussions, as detailed in subsequent writings, was able to recite poetry and contemplate Dostoyevsky, Spinoza and Kierkegaard.

----- Frankl found relief in concentrating on *love*, as a justification for living.

----- Frankl found his intellect to be *an anchor* for his and others survival, providing *moments of respite* and offering temporary solace.

-----Frankl stated later on that *I found meaning in my life even in Auschwitz*. I survived better as a person because I had a rich intellectual background.

**The Nazis did not destroy his intellect.**



## Charlotte Delbo:

She was very different and wrote that *I died in Auschwitz, but no one knows it*. Reading her writings, she often refers to artistic and historical events which kept her mind away from the daily misery:

-----Delbo described that while carrying heavy loads during construction, imagined *that the two bricks I am holding to my chest is when I walk on the boulevard and hold two books*. Or whilst standing in roll call for two hours, *I am reciting from the great French satirical playwright Molière (1622-73), Le Malade Imaginaire*. At night, she recited Molière to her compatriots in order to comfort and distract.

----- Delbo stated that *You may take away everything from a human being except the faculty of thinking and imagining*. Once in Ravensbruck in 1945, Delbo exchanged her dinner for a book: *Le misanthrope* by Molière.

----- Quotes such as *Interpreting the humiliation with pictures or recalling poetry gave relief from the brutality, offering moments of intellectual respite*, are all suggestive.

All the above quotes give insight to the effect her intellect may have had on survival. Delbo talked about *a providential faculty that kept me alive in Auschwitz. It was a great victory over the horror, to think and to remember. We wished we could read, listen to music, go to the theatre*. Indeed, during a few hours of Christmas break, she was involved in the production of a Molière play among themselves. This gave her momentary intellectual respite from the misery that remains *Indescribable*.

Her post-war poetry was inspiring: *Prayer to the Living To Forgive Them for Being Alive*, Delbo wrote:

*I have returned from a world beyond knowledge and now must unlearn for otherwise I clearly see I can no longer live. After all better not to believe these ghostly tales for if you do you'll never sleep again.*

Delbo could not forget. After the war she repeatedly stated that: *I remained alive, living next to Auschwitz*. She needed time *like a snake that changes the skin, mine was changed from the beatings, the dryness, the cold, the sores, needed time*



*to get used to talking to people and smile, to get used to cleaning my teeth and to use toilet paper. **The Nazis did not destroy her intellect.***

## **Primo Levi:**

The apparent philosophical differences between the two giants of Holocaust writers, Levi and Amery, on attitude toward Nazis and Germans, on forgiveness, on memory, is both unfortunate and indeed, only apparent. It is unfortunate, because both suffered the same Shoah syndrome, remaining forever in pain. While their social background, age and life experiences were different, their views ultimately converged into suicide.

Primo Levi growing up safely at home, although educated, had minimal life experience and was almost an accidental anti-fascist. Once arrested and found to be a Jew, he was sent to Auschwitz, where he suffered physically, but was supported by non Jewish Italian compatriots.

-----Levi's first intellectual achievement in Auschwitz was the recalling from memory the *Canto of Ulysses* from Dante's *Divina Comedia*. It appeared in his mind with interruptions, offered brief solace and supported him emotionally.

----- Recalling the verses of Dante:

*Consider what you came from  
You were not born to live like mindless brutes  
Excellence and knowledge made it possible to  
reestablish a link with the past... they granted me a  
respite.*

The lines invaded Levi's mind, *made him forget that he was in Auschwitz*, writes Myriam Anissimov, Levi's latest biographer. (18). Levi was deprived of real literary contact until the end, when during the last 10 days of the camp, he was given the French novel, *Remorques* by Roger Verdel, which he devoured, even forgetting his evening meal.

-----Levi, retrospectively, perhaps unintentionally, or even unconsciously, understood the benefit of multilingualism in the camp. He had a better connection with the kapo and understood the orders given in German by the SS: *knowing German at the start meant life.*



Much later Levi stated *culture could be useful even if only in some marginal cases for brief periods, could enhance an hour, establish fleeting bonds with a company, keep the mind alive and healthy.*

----- Levi admitted that he benefited from his intellect whilst in Auschwitz: *Culture was useful to me, it served me well and perhaps it saved me. Nor should I overlook the help I got from my trade as a chemist.*

----- Levi, in a final statement which was reminiscent of logotherapy : *The aims of life are the best defense against death*, remaining rebellious but against both violence and forgiveness. He was in constant pain from his endured dehumanization, but nonetheless: *I remained a son of Enlightenment.*

### **The Nazis did not destroy his intellect.**

*Levi's* sinking into despair started when people became less interested in his story. Shoah fatigue emerged as resurfacing anti-Semitism became obvious, he felt that he fulfilled his mission:

### **Jean Amery:**

For this philosopher, literary exchange in captivity was already a therapeutic escape during the French internment, which was not comparable to Auschwitz, but harsh nonetheless. While still named Mayer, he starts to write a book on Neo-Positivism with a fellow Austrian internee, the philosopher Georg Grelling.

In post war times now called Amery, recalling his time in Auschwitz, he remembered rare intellectual moments. He was nostalgic about the life of the mind in the camp, but found no friends there. Mayer unsuccessfully sought out intellectual contact with a recently arrived Sorbonne professor, but was rejected, as he was by other prisoners, and ultimately remained lonely.

-----Mayer in Auschwitz recalled Holderlin's poetry and shared it with a fellow worker, resulting in repeated *moments of respite.*

----- Mayer disputed with himself on Nietzsche, on Dostoevsky and Spinoza.



----- Amery recalled that after receiving an extra portion of food from a well intended orderly in Auschwitz, he remembered a similar event in Thomas Mann's '*Magic Mountain*.

Undoubtedly, these were moments of respite from the tragedy around him. Suffering more than others during his long days of incarceration. Amery reached his mind's limits and became the least adjusted among the survivors in post-war life, eventually, (paraphrasing Primo Levi) also *drowning into existence*.

In the preface to the second edition of his main book *At Mind's Limits*, Amery wrote in 1976 that *When I set about writing , there was no anti-Semitism, or more correctly, where it did exist, it did not dare to show itself .....The tide has turned*. He raised the conundrum of the prospect of the simultaneous impossibility and necessity to be a Jew. Amery remained rebellious, against forgiveness, nonetheless, despite all his suffering from torture and depression, he remained an intellectual, stating that the philosophy of *Enlightenment*. is *the key word*.

**The Nazis destroyed his health, forced his mind to its limits, but did not destroy his intellect.**

This phenomenon of so-called *delayed drowning* was recognised in a larger group of Jewish writers suffering from the Shoah. At the height of their career, with the support of family they attained public success, but decompensated later in life, described as the *Secondary Guilt Syndrome*. This syndrome in surviving writers, pushed the victims into bouts of depression. Their physical ailments combined with the increasing signs of the general public's fatigue with the Auschwitz topic, paralleled with the rising anti-Semitism, saw them exit from life.(29).



## **Final words:**

The question raised in this essay was whether an intellectual suffered more from the dehumanization (*Entwürdigung*) in Auschwitz, and whether an intellectual's mental powers of recollection could offer even partial defense. It is the authors' proposition that some solace was obtained from the rare moments of relief obtained from intellectual activity and potentially that could have been even life saving.

More than three generations later these words and stories of high-profile survivors must be ingrained into our consciousness if we are to gift their legacy to our descendants.



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