



# The Philosopher of Auschwitz: Jean Améry and Living with the Holocaust

*Irène Heidelberger-Leonard*

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Who was Jean Améry? Victim or survivor? Agnostic or Jew? Austrian or exile? Philosopher or journalist? Jean Améry is not easy to classify but what this biography (the first in any language) demonstrates is that he is more -- far more -- than some enigmatic cult figure: he is one of the most influential of Holocaust survivors and one of the most provocative writers and thinkers of the 20th century.

Jean Améry -- born Hans Maier -- is perhaps best known for *At the Mind's Limits*. Heidelberger-Leonard illuminates the turbulent life of this complex figure, from his origins in pre-war Austria; his flight to join the Resistance; his imprisonment in Auschwitz and Belsen; to his eventual suicide in 1978. This definitive biography examines how Améry grappled with being both a victim and survivor of the concentration camps and what his experiences there reveal about the tension between human dignity and the reality of horror.

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