

## **Unearthing the Unseen: The Plight of Disabled Children during the Holocaust in *Saving Amelie***

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### **Abstract**

Tobin Siebers believes, “Disability is not a physical or mental defect, but a cultural and minority identity”. As part of the cultural ‘defect’, or the so-called ‘euthanasia’ programme, the Nazi authority methodically killed thousands of children with disabilities. They have been treated as *Ausschusskinderer*, or ‘garbage children’. Children in the paediatric wards were often put to death via medication, but it also occasionally happened through starvation. Cathy Gohlke’s novel *Saving Amelie* (2014) explores the awful condition of the children with disabilities whom Hitler targeted for Germany’s racial purification. The novel shows how and why children with disabilities were marginalized during the Holocaust. This paper wants to exhibit that the children with disabilities are more capable and potential than the atrocious Nazis. By evaluating the deaf child Amelie, the novelist shows that people with disabilities may be different, but they are not less than human.

*Keywords:* Holocaust; disability; ableism; racial hygiene; biopower

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### **Introduction to the Racial Hygiene**

“I have reported what I saw and heard, but only part of it, for most of if I have no words” (Biggsby 36)

In a transmission to America, the Journalist Ed Murrow said the above line sharing his experience about Buchenwald concentration camp. There is a saying that the grass suffers the most when elephants fight. In times of war, children with disabilities were stuck in a terrible circle of coercion, social polarization, deteriorating services, and murder. During the armed conflict, since there was so much harm to life, society, and the economy, communities could hardly take care of the security of children with disabilities. The endeavour by the Nazis to destroy the Jews took place during the most catastrophic period of the Second World War (1941 to 1944). The catastrophe is most frequently associated with the term ‘Holocaust’ in English. Within the Jewish community, the Holocaust also went by two other names: ‘Churban’ and ‘Shoah’. Both of these Hebrew words stand for ‘catastrophe’ and ‘calamities’, respectively.

Although it is hard to know how many people were killed, but the best estimates settle on a figure of approximately six million Jews; of whom one million were children under the age of twelve and half a million were between the ages of twelve and eighteen. Elie Wiesel remarks, “No witness is capable of recounting everything from start to finish anyway. God alone knows the whole story” (Biggsby 319). The Nazis' anti-Semitic rowdyism was always followed by orders from the leadership, which instituted a number of administrative and legal procedures meant to persecute the Jews. The goal was to develop a racially homogeneous national community made up of ‘Aryan’ or Germanic *Übermenschen*, who were naturally superior. One of the most important Nazi figures involved in the development and execution of the Final Solution was Heydrich. The term ‘final solution’ is a euphemism for the mass slaughter of non-Germans throughout Europe and the genocide of Jews. Operation Reinhard served as the code name for the extermination attempt. Adolf Eichman and Heinrich Himmler, among other prominent Nazi figures, continued to espy the implementation of the Final Solution.

### **Foucault and the Holocaust**

“Throughout his life, he[Foucault] was haunted by the memory of Hitler’s total war and the Nazi death camps” (Milchman and Rosenberg 101)

The principles, methods, and objectives of political action are affected when life itself turns into a political space. Michel Foucault was the only person to notice this change in the nature of politics with such clarity. An advocate of ‘genealogical’ history is Michel Foucault. He appears to be a writer who is more dedicated than other poststructuralists to historical research. Foucault has written extensively about power abuse in humanist democracies as well as historical

instances of oppression. Instead of the origins of sovereignty, Foucault believes it to be crucial to expose the relationships of dominance. In this view, power is not considered as being fixed into institutions or state apparatuses (police, courts, and prisons), but rather as a name for the interactions and behaviours that force people to adopt to the specific social roles (students, workers, insane people, etc.). Power operates to normalise the context. Power over life, in Foucault's view, is defined by the desire to change human life in order to make it more manageable. How the human body is made 'docile' and useful in the setting of a certain social order is the key issue that Foucault attempts to investigate. Foucault argues, "[T]he body is also directly involved in the political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it [the body]; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs." (Ross 116)

Power over life is the ability to regulate and manipulate the general characteristics of the population on the one hand, and to individualise through surveillance on the other. A system of practises known as 'biopower' is used to control a whole population by manipulating the biological characteristics of people (such as birth rate and fertility). The term 'government' did not simply relate to political structures or the administration of states; rather, it also described the means by which one can guide the behaviour of an individual or a group, including the government of children, souls, communities, and the sick. In this sense, to govern is to exert control over others' potential areas of action. Foucault perfectly said,

"One has an absolutely racist state, an absolutely murderous state...These are necessarily superimposed, and lead at the same time to the final solution(through which the attempt was made to eliminate, through the Jews were, all other races for whom the Jews were the Symbol and manifestation) [decided pm] in 1942-1943, and then to telegram 71, in April 1945, through which Hitler gave the order to destroy the bases of life for the German people itself" (Mitchman and Rosenberg 223).

The Nazis exercised authority over the citizens during the Holocaust for the benefit of their nation. They surveil, coerce, and torture the 'docile bodies' in order to flex their political muscles. They have unconsciously embraced harshness in the name of turning Germany into a place where people with Aryan blood can only live.

### **The Genocide and the Children**

"The German second generation needs to confront a repressed past in which the fate of the Jews is never acknowledged by the perpetrator generation" (Bergel and Berger 2).

The National Socialists and their collaborators in the wartime persecuted, deprived, and relocated millions of children, both Jews and non-Jews. A younger generation of people lost their

traditional childhood. Like them, many of the youngsters in Europe at the time were more familiar with death, hunger, and violence than with toys, flowers, dogs, or meadows. Hitler's attack on the humanitarian foundation of the welfare state was fuelled by his stance, that the considerable expenses for the crippled and mentally ill resulted in a fatal threat to Germany's economic health. Jewish children appear to have been viewed in two different and conflicting ways—as both useless and potentially dangerous. Children were unable to contribute to the German economy, hence they served no purpose. They were dangerous to the Nazis as the future avengers who will impair the 'Aryan' race's reputation. These kids would desire to take revenge on those who wronged their ancestors.

The Jewish children grew up in a situation surrounded by psychic conflicts stemming from the bereavement. They were spending their days with their parents who were experiencing irreparable corporeal and mental damage. There were many children detained in other German camps throughout the war, but in the Łódź camp particularly, Polish children were forced to deal with the bestiality of the sadistic SS guards all by themselves without any assistance or protection from the adult prisoners. Their delicate bodies were completely exposed to the harsh camp system, which was set up to punish, exploit, and dehumanise. Pneumonia, meningitis, tuberculosis, skin, mouth, and throat ulcers, scurvy, bloody diarrhoea, and even paralysis were the most frequent illnesses experienced by the youngsters. Basic medical supplies including cotton wool, bandages, and iodine were absent from the camp clinic. Children were frequently whipped for spreading the diseases. Many kids, including twins, were subjected to medical tests by SS doctors and researchers in concentration camps, many of which often ended in death. SS race experts ordered the kidnapping of hundreds of infants from occupied Poland and the Soviet Union in their quest to recover the 'Aryan blood.' The transfer of the kids to the Reich was mandated. German families that were compatible with their race were supposed to adopt the kids. Blond hair, blue eyes, and pale skin appear to be some of their "race-scientific" characteristics to make them 'Germanized.'

### **Screaming Silence of the (dis)able**

Foucault started to formulate the notion that the state, which had gradually taken responsibility to wield the population, might also murder its citizens. The opposite of biopolitics is called 'thanatopolitics'. Political regimes can exercise a terrifying power of death by causing mass murder among their own people. The Nazi Germany enacted the 'Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases' on July 14, 1933. This law has been created to sterilise all the

people who had mental illness, physical deformities, epilepsy, blindness, and deafness. With the passing of the law, the Third Reich treats them as ‘useless eaters’, ‘life unworthy of life’, or ‘burden’ of society. As per the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Hitler authorizes ‘mercy death’ scheme, code-named ‘Operation T4’. The T4 programme resulted in the mass murder of 70000 Austrian and German disabled individuals between 1940 and 1941. The killings secretly continued until the end of the war, resulting in the murder of an estimated 225000 people with disabilities. According to Robert Proctor, long before Hitler came to power, medical scientists had developed racial hygiene, an extreme kind of German ‘eugenics’. Doctors were authorized to execute their theories after the establishment of a powerful coercive system. The term ‘eugenics’ refers to the scientific movement that led a more pejorative perception of people with disabilities. Francis Galton, a British naturalist and mathematician, first used the word ‘eugenics’ in 1881 and Charles B. Davenport described it as, “the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding” (Ryan and Schuchman 16). To accomplish the decision to kill the disabled, Hitler appointed two plenipotentiaries- Dr. Karl Brandt and Philipp Bouhler. Two of them appointed a senior officer named Victor Brack, to organise and direct the killings of the crippled bodies. Thus, racial otherization was prevalent and carried forward in the then society. Hitler declares, “If necessary, the incurably sick will be pitilessly segregated a barbaric measure for the unfortunate who is struck by it, but a blessing for his fellow men and posterity” (Evans 1).

The Holocaust did not mark the beginning of the dehumanisation of people with disabilities. Additionally, it didn't end with the Nazis' defeat. German medical professionals, including midwives, were required to report any infants in their care who had down syndrome, microcephaly, hydranencephaly, paralysis, congenital deafness, blindness, or other physical or neurological problems in exchange for a nominal reward. Based on these findings, the Reich Committee gave the go-ahead to the transfer of the kids to nearby facilities that were being used as paediatric killing wards by the local public health department. Young German doctors who used Luminal or morphine to kill their young patients committed the majority of the murders that took place in the children's wards. A lethal dose of the drug was injected, occasionally directly into the heart, if a child could not or would not swallow the tablet form of the medication.

### **Conflict between ‘able’ and ‘disable’: *Saving Amelie***

*Saving Amelie* (2014) is a novel about saving a girl child, Amelie. Amelie, who is deaf, is a four-year-old daughter of Gerhardt, SS officer, and Kristine. Kristine, Amelie's mother is undoubtedly beautiful, but the ‘problem’ in her life is that she delivers a ‘deficient’ child which is totally

unforgivable in New Germany. Amelie's deafness makes her unacceptable even to her own father. Kristine begs her childhood friend Rachel to take Amelie with her as her own, "They are going to rid Germany of every genetically imperfect man, woman, and child. Handicapped physically, mentally, emotionally- it doesn't matter. They will all be gone for the greater good of the Fatherland" (Gohlke 34). Kristine discloses that her husband, Gerhardt, wants to murder Amelie for her disability. Adolf Hitler informed Gerhard Wagner in 1935 that he would execute a mass massacre of the disabled if war broke out. The SS *Einsatzgruppen*, assisted by German uniformed police troops, mercilessly institutionalises disabled people. Beginning with the slaughter of the disabled in the winter of 1939-1940, the Nazis began their genocide. The SS and police, or the Reich Ministry of Interior, were the most fitting organisations to oversee this murderous operation. Leonardo Conti was not given this position because Hitler did not want to involve the state bureaucracy, and Heinrich Himmler was not given it either because Hitler did not want to involve the Nazi Party. Hitler assigned Philipp Bouhler, the head of his private chancellery, and Dr. Karl Brandt, his attending physician, to carry out the assassination programme in order to maintain secrecy and to shield state and party from potential public responses.

The notion of 'ableism' not only invades the society, it drives human to perform inhumanity. Ableism, contrary to disability, can be understood through the parameters of able-bodiedness. Campbell defines ableism as a, "networks of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human" (Worth and Mona 41). According to Amundson and Taira, ableism is an ideology that treats disability as being essentially terrible and it condemns the impairments themselves. Being obsessed with this ableism, the Nazis leave no place for the children with 'weak' body or mind. The disabled people used to be the foremost target of Hitler's elimination program which is planned to purify the Aryan Race. After Hitler seizes authority, the Nazis disseminate the law for the prevention of disabled offsprings. Forced sterilization is a kind of racist weapon by means of injections, operations and harmful radiations. Sometimes the sterilization process underwent without even anaesthesia. The Germans want perfect Aryan wives to give birth to the perfect Aryan children for the Third Reich. In *Mothers of the Nation* (2006), Patrizia Albanese represents women's position as nothing but breeders to the Germans,

"What the man sacrifices for his people, the women sacrifices in fighting to maintain this people. The man shows heroism on the battlefield, the woman

shows it in eternal devotion in ever patient sorrow and endurance. Each child that she brings into the world is a battle that she fights for the existence or nonexistence of her people” (Brashler 16-17).

The Nazis used to keep all the details of the family. They encourage the parents to bring their child to them for special training and treatment, but eventually they kill them, “They’ll put them in vans and drive them round, gassing them as they go. Or they’ll use injections. For the infants, they’ll starve them- it’s cheaper and they can starve whole rooms at a time (Gohlke 37)”. Kristine comes to know that her husband is planning to murder her, after killing Amelie.

Sociologist Saad Nagi defines disability as “an inability or limitation in performing socially defined roles and tasks expected of an individual within a sociocultural and physical environment” (Cureton and Wasserman 9). Considering disability as an apparatus means visualising it as an enormous, systemic matrix of power. Disability is a historically contingent network of forced interactions in which everyone is implicated, intertwined, and attains a position. It is not a quality that only some people embody or possess. It indicates that to have a disability or not to have a disability is to possess a particular subject position within the parameters of the apparatus of disability. Shelley L. Tremain claims, “Power relations are not external to impairment and disability and their nexus in the apparatus of disability, but rather are integral to this relationship, constituting the knowledge and objects that these historical artifacts affect, as well as the artifacts themselves” (*ibid* 86). Nazis' technology of power is to normalise the eradication of the people with disabilities. Downie and Sherwin describe the term psychological slippery slope in this way, “Once certain practises are accepted, people shall in fact go on to accept other practices as well. This is simply a claim about what people will do, and not a claim about what they are logically committed to” (*ibid* 96). Germany's residents have come to accept homophobia, mass murder of non-Aryans, involuntary suicide, forced abortion, and the inhumanity towards the people with disabilities. There are many grounds to question the validity of Nazis' brutal medical tests. In-fact, several death camps were established under a regime of totalitarianism with little regard for human autonomy. The bureaucracy appears to have persisted due to the lack of a robust, unified resistance.

### **Biopower and Disability**

A Foucauldian approach to disability shows disability as a result of biopower. Foucault asserts that biopower “endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (Oksala 95). The term ‘biopower’ describes the contemporary political practise or controlling human existence through scientific methods such

as eugenics, sterilisation, statistics. For Foucault, biopower shapes how people see the materiality of their bodies. The management of life by biopower has involved the establishment of a number of strategic metrics, such as the ratio of births to deaths, the population's fertility rate, rate of perfect or imperfect mother, the rate of able or disable people, and others. Foucault's insights on discourse can be deployed to comprehend the Nazi governmentality. He insists, "Discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point for an opposing strategy" (Cureton and Wasserman 87). Power is produced and transmitted by discourse. The biopower and the governmental mechanism propagates disability as an abject identity. Amelie is the victim of the Germans' determination to make a perfect Aryan land. She is biologically deaf and dumb, where Kristine is psychologically dumb as she cannot resist. And in this brutal world, there is no place left for this type of 'docile bodies'.

Rachel seeks to save Amelie taking her to New York as requested by Kristine. But she does not know how to communicate with a deaf child. She has no assurance of her capability to elope with a 'forbidden' offspring of a SS Sturmbannfuhrer Gerhardt Schlick. Accidentally, on the road Rachel meets Jason, a journalist and observes something never seen before. A line of children, between age three to eleven, are walking. A man and a woman are leading them towards a van. Some of them are stiff and stilted in their gait, some are blind. She follows the van and after arriving at their destination, she asks the woman about what is happening with the children. The woman chastises Rachel and she leaves the place consequently. Rachel seems to be so worried about the future of the children that she interrogates her father about them. Her father, who appears to be a doctor, clearly declares, "You carry the Aryan bloodline that all Germany, all the world, craves. By choosing someone of a similar, suitable line and continuing your bloodline, you contribute to strengthening the human race- the ultimate purpose of all our work" (Gohlke 55). This is how regulatory mechanisms are at work in the society which reduces the voices of the disabled. Craze for the Aryan blood was one of the essential requirements of the society which aimed to foreground the societal hierarchy, and thereby conforming to the Foucauldian power/knowledge discourse. Germany was witnessing the political ascendancy of the majority's blind faith in the backdrop of war-related attrition, and unanswered questions about the uncertain future. The Nazis were moving closer to an age of blind belief in what is supposed to be the age of postmodernism (celebration of plurality).

### **Obsession with 'proper' Aryan Bloodline**

Rachel wonders how a sacrifice can justify the punishment of an innocent. "Unusual sacrifices are sometimes called for in order to achieve a greater good. We must all make sacrifices. And



contributions” (Gohlke 55). Rachel realizes that she is just a project or specimen to her father. He wants to use his daughter as a part of ‘contribution’ to Germany, by fixing her life with a man having Aryan blood. Kristine cannot save her deaf child Amelie as all the neighbours and all the people she knows will report her movement if she tries to do something. So, Kristine is under a strict surveillance. The positive side of surveillance is that it turns the watched into a watcher. By surveilling her husband and his fellow officers, she gradually manages to protect her daughter from the monstrous officers. Rachel requests her father to give her the permission to keep Amelie with her, but he orders her to stay away from such affair,

“It’s a fine line. The work I’ve done my entire life- it was to eradicate tuberculosis, to strengthen the human race. It was for good. I meant it for good, and the sacrifice- the sterilization- was only for those who carried disease, so they wouldn’t pass it on again and again” (Gohlke 66).

Her father, Krammer, becomes the voice of the Nazis, who supports the process of annihilating the ‘defective’ children from the Germany for the sake of their high reputation. Rachel is now determined to elope with Amelie. Kristine’s last day with Amelie appears to be so pathetic. She affectionately observes her every smile, every moment during her sleep, every blink, and every blush. Amelie is the light and only hope of her life. Numerous doubts come into her mind regarding the safety of Amelie, whether she will be safe or not. But she is bound to trust Rachel as no other option has been left to keep Amelie alive. Emotion and reason, in the words of Plato, are two horses that pull us in several distinct directions while the charioteer strives to get them to get along. As stated by Aristotle, happiness depends on implementing reason. However, David Hume reverses this and asserts that reason is a slave to the passions. According to Thomas Hobbes, reason stipulates the pursuit of peace, but that peace must be maintained by an all-pervasive Leviathan (irresistible power). The conflict between reason and emotion looks alluring. In an uncertain world, it might be challenging to effectively get what is good and stay away from what is bad.

Within the framework of utilitarianism, what is morally right can be figured out by looking at what makes the most people happy. Kristine embraces utilitarianism in order to make the greatest number of people the happiest. She rejects her emotions in favour of rationality so that Amelie can live longer staying far away from the diabolical crowds. According to the plan, Kristine will leave Amelie at a medical center and from that place Jason, as a mediator, will hide her and give her to Rachel. Kristine feels her daughter, Amelie to the utmost level since she knows that she will never see her again. The nurse praises her as she is helping her country by becoming a ‘perfect’ German mother. Being a mother is something that Kristine obtains just

after the birth of her daughter, but the epithet 'German' before 'mother' is a suffocating burden for her. The Germans celebrate mothers' day in a demeaning way. The women who deliver only healthy children, are awarded on the Mothers' day and the mothers who cannot deliver the children, are insulted. Women who did not accept to deliver multiple children for the betterment of their country, were ridiculed as being self-centred and unpatriotic. The Nazi Party believed that a German woman should be well-groomed, educated, hardworking, nurturing, and more importantly, a mother. To keep women at home and men in the workplace, Nazi party leaders frequently glorify women as the epitome of motherhood and domesticity.

An explosion occurs behind Kristine as soon as she leaves Amelie, which is a part of the plans of the Jewish Resistance group. She and Gerhardt think Amelie is dead because of the explosion, but at Amelie's funeral, Rachel discloses the news of Amelie's well-being to Kristine. Gerhardt, in front of the public pretends to support his wife. The person who wants to murder Amelie, is now lamenting over her accidental death. After less than a week of Amelie's funeral, Kristine's body is found in Spree river. Gerhardt presents the incident as a suicide of a grief-stricken mother. However, such obsession of Gerhardt with Aryan blood propels him to murder his wife and daughter. According to the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, racism can be classified into two categories: 'intrinsic' racism and 'extrinsic' racism. The notion that some people are inferior merely because they belong to a specific race is termed as intrinsic racism. The extrinsic racist, on the other hand, supposes that a particular race is inferior because its members possess unpleasant traits. Racism is the idea that some races' members are lesser human beings. Dehumanisation is the idea that identifies certain races to be less than human beings. Dehumanisation is a possibility as long as racism endures. Racism ends and dehumanisation begins at the boundary, where humans and 'lower' animals split up. Dehumanisation is going to happen as long as racism persists. During the Holocaust period, intrinsic and extrinsic racism co-exist. The annihilation of the German children with disabilities is an example of interior racism, denoting racism within one's own race. Gerhardt's identity is above all based on his racist ideology. His racism leads him towards dehumanisation, the driving force behind the murder of his wife and displacement of his daughter at life risks.

### **Power of (dis)ability**

Jason meets Rachel and gives her comfort by saying, "Your little package is safe" (Gohlke 88). Amelie becomes a package, eventually. She misses the strong warmth of her mother's arms. She is staying at a place where no mothers are found. She must witness the darkness and chaos for the first time who can never see her mother again, "They cut her hair short and dyed it- still

blonde, but darker. Dressed her like a boy. Not sure that will take. She's the prettiest boy I've ever seen" (Gohlke 89). The disguise of a boy will help Amelie to be safe from others but her deafness creates the further obstacles. Rachel escapes from her father and starts staying with her grandmother, Hilde, and her twin sister Lea. She shares her plan of escaping from Germany and settle in the United States of America with Amelie.

"She couldn't understand what had happened, what she'd done to deserve being pulled from her mother's fragrant arms and weeks ago, or shoved into the smoky, smelly woolen blanket, or jostled over bumping roads and finally thrust into the arms of a woman she'd never meet- a woman who immediately cut the curls from Amelie's head and shaped her hair like a boy's" (Gohlke 157).

Amelie has no idea about what is going on in her life. She just misses her mother's smell and afraid of the thought that her staying away from her mother would make her mother amnesic about Amelie. Jason becomes emotional after seeing Amelie who appears to be an adorable child. To protect Amelie, they start calling her by a masculine name-'Herbert'. Jason wins her trust soon and his departure hurts Amelie who has recently lost her mother and is staying with random strangers. Unluckily, she is growing up with so many threats and negligence from her birth without even making a mistake. Rachel, finally gets Amelie in a parcel box with a locket having the photo of Kristine. Rachel, Lea and Oma feel sorry for Amelie's miserable condition. Amelie wears boy's clothes and soils the parcel box as she has been carried since some unknown time.

Rachel opposes Lea and Oma's intention to pamper Amelie thinking her a girl of four years old who can help herself. Rachel wants her to be able to do anything, so that nobody can treat her as a 'handicapped' child. Rachel is so concerned about Amelie that she does not want anybody to show sympathy on her, or to think her stupid for her 'disability'. It can be difficult and time-consuming to fight for the autonomy of kids with special needs. Someone might become overprotective in an effort to boost the child's chances of success, depending on the nature of their needs. Cultivating Amelie's independence and self-assurance is crucial for helping her understand how much she can accomplish on her own. She does not have to be limited by her particular needs. Amelie starts her new life staying in a cupboard as a hidden thing. It's natural to hide if someone commits a crime. Amelie, without committing a single crime, has been suffering the life of a criminal, just because of her deformities. Whenever Amelie is kept in the cupboard alone, she fingers the locket of her mother. Gradually, the memory of her mother fades away. Kristine comes into her dreams sometimes with her soft skin, kisses, and smell. Throughout their lives, all people must perform three primary habilitative or rehabilitative tasks:

get the necessary habilitation from others; polish their own abilities; and, if needed, refine the physical and social surroundings they live in. Ability to handle such essential duties well, is a primary requirement for human survival, and everyone must possess the necessary skills. With these skills, one may say that they have a certain amount of what is aptly referred to as *habilitative health*. Of course, human capacity for habilitative work is constantly constrained. And this is true regardless of how smart, wise, or strong we become or how privileged our circumstances are. The Stoics sarcastically remind us that some things are beyond our control. Even people with much abilities, have a distinct set of weaknesses and strengths as well. Some people with impairments may also have particular abilities. It is not true that disabilities are only a special case of inabilities.

The storyline reveals that Amelie is emotionally stronger than the Nazis in spite of having her physical deformities. In fact, her deafness barely generates a bar in exposing her differently able stature, and it makes her special. Amelie, encapsulates all the children with disabilities during the Holocaust period, who should not be killed mercilessly. A body that has a disability can potentially do much of what a body without a disability can do, if not all of it. Everyone has been raised to believe that anything less than 'normal' is worthless. Consequently, society does not recognise the potentiality of the children with special needs. Despite having physical limitations, Amelie manages to get through a society plagued by the concepts of a cataclysmic apocalypse while living in a war-ridden setting. She makes no demands and has no needs. In a culture of gluttons, Amelie stands out as a unique human being. Efforts to turn her into an insecure, submissive, and depressed 'Other', by the haughty, abusive, and destructive 'Self,' seems futile. One needs to be spiritually strong in order to endure the anguish in the heart of darkness. Amelie shows the entire world her struggle to fit into a highly stratified society. Despite the horrific turbulence of her existence, she nonetheless responds to her misfortunes in a way that is incredibly courageous and laudable going beyond her limited limitations.

### **Unity is strength**

It becomes tough for them to make Amelie understand about the danger her noise can generate. Her deafness becomes an important issue which puts her own life and the lives of her saviours into question. Nazi officers' raid to the house of Oma, Rachel's grandmother, makes their life suicidal, since they have kept Rachel and Amelie at their home in secret. Amelie never likes the men in black costumes which reminds her about the image of her father who never appears to be a humble person to her. Whenever she beholds them from the windows, she starts crying.

During the Third Reich, mainly two categories of anti- Nazi resistance come to the limelight: the active resistance group or *Widerstand* and the passive resistance group or *Verweigerung*, or *Resistenz*. The active resistance group fights against the Nazi regime by distributing their leaflets, spying on the Nazi officers on their plans, or by directly attempting to kill Hitler. The passive resistance group is defined by their refusal. They refuse the crimes of the Nazis, the illegal cultural and political activities and share jokes on Hitler. The people who help the Jews, know that this is suicidal. Still, they are risking their life and trying to save the Jews for the sake of their ethical responsibility. Oma's family is one of them. Humanity is the best policy and this humanity is performed by Rachel, Jason and Oma's family.

On a black day, Gerhardt arrives at their location after getting information about Rachel. The SS officers beat Oma for trying to hide Rachel. The invasion of the Nazis creates many crucial problems, including the lack of food. As officially, Oma has three members in her family, but in reality, she has six members. They start hiding a Jewish girl, Rivka. Amelie cries out in sleep from hunger, and for this Rachel has to share her food with her. Each and every member of them is under surveillance and for this reason Rachel cannot escape with Amelie. She plans to leave Amelie to the childless Lea and Friedrich. Amelie now needs a perfect family, and peaceful atmosphere for her growth. Rachel proposes Rivka to go with her. They want to settle in the United States of America, and find a way for their survival. Rachel promises that she will return to Amelie after the ending of this black time. Amelie is not upset separating from Rachel, as she understands everything. She starts loving Friedrich and Lea, her new parents and finally, her 'family'. Rachel, along with some sensible people surrounding her, could finally fulfil Kristine's promise. The unity of the kind-hearted people spoils the audacity and plan of the SS officers to kill the 'disable' child.

### **Conclusion: the need to remember**

"People with disabilities have been a hidden misunderstood minority, often routinely deprived of the basic life choices that even the most disadvantaged among us take for granted" (Shapiro 20-21)

Joseph P. Shapiro, in his book *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement* (1993) addresses the disable people as "hidden army" (Shapiro 105). According to him, a disabled person lives in a society that is inherently more disabled than the disability itself. Many children are rendered crippled during war, as a result of landmine or gunshot wounds. Due to their smaller size and possibility to pick up landmines to play with, children are more likely to be injured or killed by the landmines than adults. Emotional disturbances have a long-

term impact on a lot of kids. Witnessing family members deaths, being cut off from friends and relatives, and running away to an unfamiliar location, can cause mental stress. They are less able to defend themselves than other kids, making them more susceptible to abuse. Shakespeare states that a disabled person, “is a common-sense category, much as ‘woman’ or ‘black person’ or ‘homosexual’”. These are all words we use with confidence” (Cureton and Wasserman 3). Francis Bacon called for societal and environmental changes to treat infirmities and he rejected the idea that disability is an expression of God’s anger. Both disabled and able-bodied people hold the view that social change is essential for ensuring that disabled people have equal access to opportunities. The most profound social change is brought about by war, but the question is—can this be utilised in a constructive way to improve the lives of disabled people?

The Holocaust was a moral calamity that was overwhelmingly wicked. It is important to commemorate and remember the disabled people who were sterilised, silenced for all time, and killed during the Holocaust. Even though the idea of collective guilt is absurd, the second generation of Germans is left with a troublesome legacy. Elie Wiesel holds that while the criminals' offspring aren't accountable for the crimes they committed, they are accountable for preserving the memory of what their parents did. The Holocaust serves as a warning to the disability community as well as to everyone who cares about liberty, justice, and fairness since it is a part of the shared history of people with disabilities. Cathy Gohlke’s novel *Saving Amelie* substantiates her salutations to the brave men, and women who help in the survival of the most unsustainable period of human history. Disability is still something that needs to be hidden and repaired. It becomes a matter of pity and charity. Academics and Medical professionals should seriously address the mass murder of the disabled children as an ethical matter. Practicing physicians and health policy officials in the twenty-first century can learn a number of valuable lessons from the history of the Nazi campaign to euthanize children. We need to question the influence of the unfavourable perception of the crippled body. Inquiring into ableist constructs that exclude the disabled body is also vital. The flexibility and diversity of impaired subjectivity must be considered when evaluating embodiment and specifically living in the postmodern era.

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### Author's bio-note:

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