The Extended, Uncertain Confine of Human Freedom and Hans Jonas' Point of View

Angela Michelis[*]

recebido: 10/2014
aprovado: 12/2014

Abstract: *In ancient times all the actions of man were set against the immutability of nature, which was not greatly altered by human undertakings. Nowadays, the unexpected vulnerability of nature, which has come to light in the consequences we are now witnessing of the environmental disasters caused by uncontrolled technological progress and the burgeoning population, has changed our very perception of ourselves as a causal factor. Therefore, human freedom needs new shared directions. In the 1970s Jonas observed with great foresight that questions were never legislated for in the past have become the competence of laws that the total city has to formulate in order to ensure that we still have a liveable world to pass on to future generations.*
Keywords*: physis, nomos, polis, logos, heimarmene, techne, freedom, consensus generis humani*

Resumo*: Nos tempos antigos, todas as ações do homem foram organizadas contra a imutabilidade da natureza, que não foi muito alterada por atividades humanas. Hoje em dia, a vulnerabilidade inesperada da natureza, que veio à luz nas consequências que agora estamos testemunhando dos desastres ambientais causados pelo progresso tecnológico descontrolado e população crescente, mudou muito a nossa percepção de nós mesmos como um fator causal. Portanto, a liberdade humana precisa de novos rumos compartilhados. Na década de 1970 Jonas observou com grande clarividência que questões que nunca foram legisladas no passado tornaram-se a competência de leis que a cidade total deve formular, a fim de garantir que ainda temos um mundo habitável para passar para as gerações futuras.*
Palavras-chave*: physis, nomos, polis, logos, heimarmene, techne, liberdade, consensus generis humani*

[*] *Ph.D in Philosophy and Philosophical Hermeneutics, Turin University, Lyceum Professor of Philosophy and History and collaborator with Turin University, Italy. Em@il: angmich@tin.it*

Problemata: R. Intern. Fil. v. 5. n. 2 (2014), p. 125-152 e-ISSN 2236-8612
doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.7443/problemata.v5i2.19067

The extension of the ambitus *and the* iter limitare *of the* urbs

The *Chorus* of *Antigone* quoted by Hans Jonas at the beginning of the work devoted to human responsibility [1] highlights how far man has progressed, compared to other living beings, in dominating nature, and the amount of cunning and intelligence he has used to make his own life safer and easier, civilising the world.

The initial form of the human city created a defined space in the environment that had its own equilibrium, separate from and not affecting that of the whole. Jonas prompts us to reflect on the fact that in ancient times all the actions of man were set against the immutability of nature, which was not greatly altered by human undertakings. Human life proceeded between the permanent sphere of nature and its cycles and the changing, transitory character of human initiatives. When it comes to the latter, the city appears the most noteworthy of human creations: by designing and enforcing laws, the city succeeded in ensuring its continued existence[2], even though this artificial continuity soon reveals its inescapably contingent nature and the ever-present possibility of decline, downfall and destruction. The space for self-determination and therefore the freedom that the city carved out and sheltered from natural forces could not banish the instability and transience of the human condition: man's control remained poor, chance combinations and selfish elements functioned like entropy in human events, often pushed to destructive irrationality, which, taken to extremes, could verge on self-destructive madness.

Despite the possibility of degeneration, through the centuries and millennia the city – as the arena of man-made civilisation – remained the main sphere for both self-determination and the exercise of responsibility towards others and the institutions that governed this coexistence. As Jonas highlights, in the artificial and social formation of the city, where people engage with other people, intelligence had to be combined with morality, because the latter is the basis for civil coexistence.[3]

All traditional ethics arise within the confines of these artificial inter-human environments: *nomos,* as distinct from *physis,* came into being as the anthropocentric ethic of co-

existence, and was what enabled civilisations to flourish and endure over time: it presented itself as an effective method of identity, foundation and guidance for individuals in their respective communities. *Nomos* was also a tool for government, albeit necessarily a flexible one, responding to the changes that took place over time.

The relationships that did not in some way regard humans and their possessions were not of interest to the ethical field. With the exception of medicine, the arena of *techne* was regarded as neutral from an ethical point of view, in terms of both the subject and object of this action. Indeed man's art only affected nature to a negligible extent, not inflicting any lasting damage to the integrity of its object, namely natural order as a whole, and *techne* was viewed as an activity designed to limit adverse conditions, and not as a self-serving form of progress aimed at giving man absolute sovereignty of the earth.[4]

The characteristics shown to be common to all men in the community were deemed to be a constituent part of human nature, and permanent, albeit in the inescapable growth curve of the life of each individual and community, and therefore they were not considered to be a legitimate object of *techne*, human manipulation.

The cultural and scientific innovations of the Renaissance and the modern age[5] led to a gradual expansion of the *polis* in ways that were entirely new respect to before, and which can only in part be accounted for by the transition from the Hellenic world to the Hellenistic period. This was followed by the progressive spread of the *polis* in the natural world, to the point where it became difficult or sometimes impossible to make out the dividing line between the artificial and the natural.

As Jonas observes, the human city went from being an enclave in the non-human world to making increasing inroads into the surrounding natural environment, to the point where it took over, contaminating all natural elements with artificial ones and giving rise to a type of 'nature' subjected to constant changes, with which human freedom was confronted in an entirely new way.[6]

Modern science and technology have extended their range of action into the deepest structures of nature, with ramifications that traditional ethics are no longer able to govern. The artificial processes that man is capable of setting in motion

and furthering, cumulatively, in nature as a whole, including in the sphere of human life, have consequences that are still unpredictable and in some cases even irreversible. The unexpected vulnerability of nature, which has come to light in the consequences we are now witnessing of the environmental disasters caused by uncontrolled technological progress and the burgeoning population, has changed our very perception of ourselves as a causal factor. Faced with the increasingly justified fear of apocalyptic catastrophes, we are becoming progressively more aware that nature, entrusted to our care, has become a human responsibility.

In the 1970s Jonas observed with great foresight that questions were never legislated for in the past have become the competence of laws that the total city has to formulate in order to ensure that we still have a world to pass onto future generations[7]. It is therefore a priority to act with a sense of responsibility that reflects these scenarios of new-found freedom, especially in view of the fact that man's applied technology is now capable of controlling the genetics of future human beings, to the point of manipulating evolution itself in line with man's designs for improvement and change.[8]

Before embarking on a one-way journey into the unknown, we must acknowledge the fact that our scope for action now extends beyond every previous limit. The most serious question that could be formulated by the human race, which has suddenly found itself wielding this fatal power, is whether it has the right to do so; whether it is actually qualified to take on this creative role[9]. Unconsidered or unnecessary action could actually damage the world and/or the human constitution, to the detriment of future generations.

Replacing the slow, blind intervention of chance in evolutionary development with fast-acting, reasoned planning introduces entirely new uncertainties and hazards, which increase in proportion to what is at stake, above all when it comes to human beings. We want a few large steps to accomplish what would normally take countless small natural steps, but by reducing the time it takes to accomplish major changes we remove the time needed to correct the inevitable human errors encountered along the way – errors which are no longer insignificant ones when we are wielding the sceptre of hyper-technology with its intrinsic "playing for the whole stake"

approach that is so foreign to the process of evolution. The slow pace of evolution, on the other hand, tends to safeguard life as a whole.[10]

Jonas asserts that moral thinking that aims to respond to these emergencies caused by our power increasing in all directions, and its present and future consequences, cannot escape addressing the practical obligations we bear not only to our neighbours, our peers, near or far in spatial terms, but also to future generations, near or far in temporal terms.[11] We now need a planetary, rather than an anthropocentric ethic, an ethic that centres on future generations rather than our immediate peers: an ethic to govern the unprecedented scope of our knowledge and action.

Knowing the past to anchor and face the present

Hans Jonas reflected greatly on the issues of the contemporary world, and for this very reason he often studied the past to seek stable roots to start out from, to rediscover ancient virtues that can support us in the challenging journeys we have embarked on, something to reassure us, an amulet that has hitherto lent us protection.

Man has always sought and constructed shelter, a dwelling to protect him from the forces of nature, and he has progressively learned to bend the environment to his needs, largely engineering his own life for the time at his disposal.

In the course entitled *Problems of Freedom* held for the students at the New School for Social Research in New York in 1966, and revisited in 1970[12], Jonas argued that man's organic being does not possess absolute freedom, in so far as it is obliged to go in search of food, shelter and clothing and respond to the situations that present themselves. [13] Civilizations themselves are artifices that attempt to offer increasingly effective responses to the needs of the organic human condition, reciprocally accompanied with an increasingly complex development.

Jonas asserts that the formation of a society is connected to the development of technology, and he references Aristotle, whose third book of *Politics* expounds the notion that the division of labour is an important factor in the formation of an

extended society, as opposed to the simpler biologically-based family community. Civilization is a system for the division of labour and the organisation of humans living together under laws that gives rise to the creation and development of the city.[14] It opens up dimensions that are precluded to animals: it is the main way in which human beings relate to the physical needs of their bodies and the outside world. Pure instinct, which is what guides animals in their daily struggle for survival, is regulated and absorbed into civil society thanks to a system of decisions or agreements between individuals.

What makes all human interactions and the division of labour itself possible is language, as a form of communication that enables means and aims to be analysed, tasks to be allocated and the positions in the social order to be determined – therefore tackling physical needs on a different level, in terms of managing a community. Indeed the development of language increases the cognitive abilities of individuals and groups, broadening the range and timescale of mediacy between unconsidered, instinctive, impulsive, compulsive actions that respond to physical needs, and the opportunity to make choices and decisions.

Jonas sees the evolution of human language as a new dimension of freedom, a process that enables us to make decisions and back up those decisions with rational statements[15]; and it is upon this very capacity for discourse that a political body is based and constructed – both the body politic based on the authority of a leader or group and that based on laws.[16]

Freedom, in the political sense, intended as the potential capacity to establish rules and at the same time to accept being governed by those rules, maintains the characteristics of a dialectic rapport, with confines, limits and needs that can be observed in the organic state of the natural world and that become evident at the animal stage of evolution. As the Ancient Greeks saw it, for example, being free meant being governed by laws that the citizens, namely those deemed masters of their own actions[17], could identify with as legislators, in so far as they or their predecessors were involved in establishing them. Jonas takes a moment to underline how the Greek idea of a free man is a dual concept: on one hand freedom is granted by the authority of the regulatory part of the spirit, the rational part, where the power of language resides, conditioning human thought and

motivating action, while on the other hand it entails submitting to the laws of the *polis*, namely accepting being limited and governed by rules issued with the unanimous consent of the free citizens themselves.

These two aspects of freedom appear to be closely connected, due to the fact that both of them – individual and political – are possible in language, by means of cognitive processes in which the validity of the actions or forms of the political system are examined, debated and deliberated, and if need be followed by operations to convince people to implement what has been decided in the communication between the parts of the spirit or the body politic.[18] For the Ancient Greek mentality, reasoning, socio-political order and action were closely connected, and establishing rules for life by forming political systems and civilizations was a necessary step to extend the potential of life itself.

In human decision-making, however, there has always been a tacit reserve, a sacred fear, communicated in expressions like "if it pleases the gods", "if nothing untoward occurs". The Ancient Greeks also acknowledged that not everything follows a linear rational order and that the unpredictable plays a major role: *tyche* often crosses our path, but man can address it and at times bend it to serve his purpose. For the Greeks, however, fate dominated everything, as destiny, Moira, or necessity, Ananke, and whatever man attempts to do, the course of his destiny and the course of major events remains predestined; yet, observes Jonas, their conception of the inner freedom of the rational self is compatible with fatalism, a determinism which the intellect of the free individual can and must be exempt from.[19]

Jonas highlights the two aspects of the concept of freedom: the external aspect, which regards the power to act and change something by means of human action, and the internal aspect, which regards the power to govern oneself through knowledge. The very knowledge that men are not free externally and do not have the power to change fate, can be liberating, if we can govern our desires accordingly.

The classical aspects of the issue of freedom are characterised by the common consideration of freedom as a contemporary problem and not a question for theoretical reflection, though the Epicureans, for example, saw the possibility of freedom even in the capacity of atoms to deviate

from their path, in other words in the indeterminate action of nature. In classical terms, however, the question is not, for the most part, whether the concept of freedom is compatible with the nature of reality, but whether freedom can actually be achieved, going against the opposing power inherent in reality – be it the external power of the cosmos or the power of our sub-rational interior nature.[20]

The tragic hero of the Greek classics is the definitive symbol of the unceasing struggle against an adverse fate, and even as the hero succumbs to his fate he continues to assert his own fundamental opportunity to be free, in the awareness and mastery of the self. "Virtue has no master over her, and each shall have more or less of her as he honors or does her despite. The blame is his who chooses. God is blameless"[21], in the words of Lachesis, the Moira who represents the past and the sister of Ananke, in the Myth of Er from the final book of Plato's *Republic,* quoted by Jonas.[22]

In his reasoning Jonas reflects on Aristotle's analysis[23] of the concepts of free and not free, in particular in the third book of *Nicomachean Ethics*, which examines the arena of practical virtue, action, which is obliged to take account of the given conditions and contingent circumstances, unlike the freer realm of thought and the contemplation of truth.

He notes that the Greek word for freedom, *eleutheria*, is not used: in its place are the terms *hekousios* and *akousios*, forms of *hekon* and *akon*, the former indicating the action taken in accordance with one's free will and the latter standing for what is done without or against one's will. This is connected to Aristotle's conception that the free man is *eleutheros* whether he acts or not, while the terms "with" and "without will" are applied to practice, the man who acts, and it is in this context that Aristotle reflects on the status of actions with regard to attribution and responsibility, and therefore whether they merit praise or blame.[24]

We are free in the measure in which we decide, namely when the principle of the action resides in the actor, who is aware of the particular circumstances surrounding the action.[25] At this point Jonas highlights the fact that Aristotle's voluntary/involuntary and free/not free distinctions are not identical, although they sometimes coincide, in so far as the voluntary action that gives rise to the movement is not

necessarily free: it can for example be the result of strong pressure, or be dictated by instinctive impulse or blind passion.[26]

Aristotle asserts that voluntary and involuntary come into the question at the moment in which we act, in relation to specific situations. Jonas underlines that *kath'hekasta* is a term coined by Plato and used constantly by Aristotle, while *to katholou* is what is common to many things, the universal, and *kath'hekaston* is what is individual, specific. It is in the nature of knowledge to deal with what is common, *to katholou*, the extent to which individual situations can be related to common concepts and universal rules; yet the individual situation always possesses something more than the common construction, as well as containing the universal. Because action is *in primis* individual and carried out in a specific situation, it is possible to find oneself in a situation where no universal rule can tell us what to do in a given case.[27]

Jonas views Aristotle's stance on the responsible freedom of man as a cautious, balanced attitude.[28] He distinguishes between being a responsible agent and not being a real agent, not being really responsible for one's actions out of ignorance or under duress and so on; yet according to Aristotle man is responsible for his own character, in so far as it is his *habitus* – behaviour is the result of the *habitus* but also vice versa.[29] What transpires from this is that the individual can find himself in a situation in which he cannot avoid acting in a certain way, but he is nevertheless responsible for that, in so far as he permitted that inclination to develop.

Based on these arguments Jonas envisages the premise for a common human nature, albeit with individual variants: there is a rational component that governs the soul and can firmly guide it, but can also abdicate due to bad habits or be weakened by incidents that deviate it from the natural life course of a human being.

Yet Aristotle's affirmations on the question of an individual's responsibility in forming his or her own character must be considered together with affirmations that highlight the extent to which character is formed by the education given by the family or body politic.[30] He is well aware that character forms during a period in which the agent himself has no control over himself, namely infancy, and that in actual fact even the most autonomous and self regulating of individuals would not

be what he or she is without having been part of a community that shaped and changed his or her way of thinking and feeling, in line with the models that developed in that group. The formation of the *habitus* is therefore not held to be completely within the individual's power.

Jonas highlights that the particular circumstances that Aristotle refers to are in any case situated against a backdrop of common elements that could be deemed universal in that particular place and time: individual situations that are part of a social context which promotes various general attitudes towards self control, moderation, and the unworthiness and decadence of excessive self indulgence. Just as Aristotle's arguments on virtue reside within a social structure that is to some extent shared, as a consequence so do his doctrine on free and not free acts and voluntary and involuntary actions.

In later periods and in different conditions [31] and conflicting socio-cultural models, such as the period of Alexander the Great, the attempt to extend the Hellenistic lifestyle to a vast geographical area led to a change in political and ethical parameters, factors which influence conceptions of freedom and responsibility.

Jonas invited his pupils to observe how, under the aegis of the Greek ideals of culture and education and thanks to the predominance of their medium, the Greek language, new social systems come into being, as the result of blending and mixing with the new populations and their traditions.

Jonas shows how all of these changes led to an expansion of the concept of *polis*, the political community, which in the vast context of a monarchy or empire was perceived as something remote, and interpreted as power in its various applications, rather than an opportunity for individuals to be involved. Indeed the large, centralised monarchies did not permit an active political life, a direct relationship with the rulers of the city that the citizen himself helped to construct.

The spread of the *polis* across the vast expanse of the Hellenistic world led paradoxically on one hand to this concept being identified with a universal idea of humanity rather than a political community, and on the other the shrinking of *arete* from the collective, political dimension to the individual, interior dimension.

In conditions in which external results, the success of actions, cannot be controlled by the agent due to complex historic and chance circumstances, the inner dimension becomes the sphere where freedom can really be exercised. This dimension continues to allow for self possession and fulfilment, independently of external circumstances, even situations of enslavement: situations in which many previously free men might have found themselves in this period due to its complex, violent historical events.[32]

These changes, affecting very different worlds, led to processes of cultural syncretism: Eastern divinities and mythical and religious elements entered Greek culture in the form of philosophical concepts, and continued to exert an influence from within the terms of Greek ontology, extending the latter in new directions.[33] Eastern culture adapted to and was absorbed by the language of Greek philosophy, often through allegory, which enabled Eastern beliefs, myths and divinities to be imported and integrated into the new rational culture, bringing the languages of mythology and philosophy together once more – something that was set to influence the subsequent developments of Greek philosophy. Philosophy now required the acknowledgement of knowledge handed down from the classical period: in times of great change, identifying elements of continuity significantly aids the process of grounding and stabilisation.

Jonas perceptively observes that in the open, multifaceted world of the Hellenistic era, where people – as free, mobile individuals could move between different places and socio-cultural arenas and come into contact with multiple races – there was a renewed attraction to well-grounded elements, things that retained their validity in different times and places, with hints and traces of common truths identified in a range of different traditions.[34]

And the quest to find common truths, albeit with greater tolerance of diversity compared to the previous, more restricted worlds[35] became one of the trends in rational debate. Thus the *consensus generis humani*, the consensus of the human race, became strong proof of the truth of what was commonly asserted. Individual, specific characteristics found new scope for communication in a renewed universal vision of the human race, all sharing the same *Logos*. Rather than *zoon politikon,* as Aristotle asserted, man was considered by nature to be *zoon*

koinonikon, in the Stoic conception, where *koinonikon* is the social animal, living in a community with others.[36] There was also a rediscovery of our connection with nature as a whole, through the divine *Logos* which is in all of us and which connects us to the constantly evolving world.[37]

According to Jonas, in this context the stance of the Stoics is particularly interesting,[38] with its attempt to reconcile the idea of fate and universal determinism with the idea of virtue as the capacity for self-determination and therefore freedom. The Stoics stress the unity of the universe, that being an intellectual principle, a source of heat and the divine fire that governs and gives life to the processes of the universe, goes in the same direction as the *logos* of an organism, that is towards supreme realisation, and in general towards maintaining and perpetuating cosmic harmony.

Jonas highlights the fact that the *logos* that pervades the universe has an "interest" in continuing to perfect the whole, ensuring the maximum perfection of all the parts serving the whole. In this way, even if there is complete determinism, it is not blind determinism[39]: in Stoic philosophy things that are necessary have two dimensions, one being the efficient cause and the other being the final cause, which strives for perfection; the efficient cause is however subordinate to the final cause, in a sort of teleology.[40]

Heimarmene is the name used by the Stoics to indicate the universal necessity that governs everything and makes everything serve the interests of the whole, as opposed to *ananke*, which indicates constraint. They called destiny *heimarmene* which means assignment, distribution, almost as if everything that happens is part of a universal administration, following the principle of brute need; but if agents, while being part of the system, prove capable of determining their own interior attitudes towards this universal law, then their subjection to this law can be seen as a kind of willing, active acceptance rather than something they are merely obliged to endure.[41]

Human freedom lies in being able to determine, if not one's external destiny, at least one's interior attitude to what takes place, to the surrounding environment, to everything. Man is capable of imagining the idea of the whole and rising above being a simple limited part of that, a given condition, by giving his consent to that necessity with an attitude of *synkatathesis* or

rejection; in man *logos* operates not only as a universal principle, as in the rest of nature, but as an individual, autonomous principle.[42] True freedom lies in being aware of the complete power we have to consent to or reject anything that is offered to us, and in gradually gaining control over increasing areas of one's psyche by constantly exercising freedom by assent or dissent, striving for inner perfection, conscious of being part of a whole.[43]

The Stoic ideas regarding man, at once conscious individual and contingent element of an eternal natural cycle, raise the eternal philosophical question of the individual's power or lack thereof: the influence or lack of influence of subjective purpose.[44] According to Jonas the theoretic issue arises around the compatibility of freedom to give or deny consent, to combat or accept the principle of universal determination, since in so far as it is universal it should also extend to the very act of human will itself. The principle of the Stoic solution consists in distinguishing between what happens in bodily chains of events and what takes place in the interior sphere of our being, namely the sphere of our rational self-determination.

It is natural to ask how these two spheres can be kept separate from each other to the point that one is completely subject to universal determination and the other is capable of autonomy, in a conception of the world, that of the Stoics, in which the course of destiny cannot be altered and human freedom does not have the power to make man master of his own destiny, in so far as his place and role in the scheme of things is predetermined by the needs of the whole. For the Stoics, attempting to combat fate is an attitude arising from a lack of comprehension, from a partial and limited perspective, while the revered comprehension of necessity serving the best outcome, the well-being and perpetuation of the whole, will lead to *synkatathesis*, namely affirming and consenting to what takes place. Identifying the principle that governs the individual self with the principle that governs the cosmos is the path to genuine harmony and authentic freedom.[45]

The Stoics inherited and adapted the enlightening aspects of *theoria*, that infuses Greek natural philosophy and scientific speculation, arriving at the idea that being is a contemplation of the whole. They see it as the capacity to distinguish the identity of one's inner principle from the principle of the whole, in a

more religious sense. Discovering in the whole what is perceived to be the most noble, highest element in man, namely reason, order and form, gives us the liberating knowledge of being guided towards a higher purpose.

In the second half of the course Jonas[46] compares the stance of the Stoics with the Judaeo-Christian perspective of late Antiquity, a comparison that leads to an exploration of the question of freedom in the relationship with God down to the deepest depths of the conscience and tackles the relationship between the existential dimensions of respect for the Law and welcoming Grace.

He drew on his analysis of some of the distinctive traits of philosophy and the Classical Greek and Hellenistic world to examine the Judaeo-Christian tradition, effectively highlighting some key points of diversification and originality. In this context a key role is played by the biblical notion of creation and the dogma of original sin.[47]

After comparing Stoic and Christian positions with regard to human freedom, Jonas examines the paradoxical conclusions of Paul.[48] In the anguish of the soul which stands before God as a sinner, the opportunity to exercise autonomous freedom in one's inner dimension disappears, to the point that in comparison it is now worldly action that appears to be the arena for exercising human freedom. The Stoic conception of inner freedom in the presence of God is undermined by the doubts over pure intention, and is subverted and transformed into the notion of accepting the gift of divine Grace. Freedom is no longer the ethical and aristocratic ideal of peace for the soul achieved through the independence and self sufficiency of the *autarkeia* towards the events of the exterior world, quite the opposite: we now experience the most profound and intrinsic impotence in that very dimension, inside the inner self subjected to the gaze of God, rather than in external action, the success of which in comparison appears easier to ascertain. Paradoxically, the full scale of this impotence emerges in the arena of free will that lies in and draws on the complex, contradictory inner sphere of the individual's impure conscience, held capable of doing nothing without the help of God.

In the inner depths of the conscience freedom is envisaged as free will, which is found to be problematic no longer just with regard to the outside world, but in the first place

with respect to the self, which recognises its inadequacy before God. This leads us to the figure of Saint Augustine, who is presented with a brief biographical and historical/philosophical outline, with references to traditionally acknowledged philosophical influences such as academic scepticism, Manichaeism, neo Platonism, and presenting his novel interpretation of Christianity.[49] Jonas dwells on a number of passages from Augustine's works, taken in particular from *De libero arbitrio*[50], *Ad Simplicianum*[51] and *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum*[52], which range from the conflicting relationship with Manichaeism to the issues raised by Pelagianism. Throughout the history of its thinkers, the vision of the world conceived by Judaeo-Christian religious culture progressed in various stages and nuances, and in his interpretation of Augustine's position Jonas reveals his own affinity with Pelagius, who defends a position which is more comprehensible from a purely Judaic point of view: indeed the latter, while having a problematic conception of free will in relation to divine Grace, grants more space and autonomy to – and trust in – human initiative and man's ability to interpret and implement the Law.[53] Jonas appears to want to take a stand in the debate: by examining some of the main texts and key ideas, such as *gratia, agape-eros, vocation* and *appetitus*, he arrives at the conclusion that Augustine misunderstood the original meaning of Pelagius' theories.[54] In this interpretation the apostle Paul is deemed to be a fundamental point of reference for the most extreme Augustinian ideas developed in the Catholic Church's anti-Pelagian debate. In the last lecture, Jonas highlights the existential aspect that the debate on free will between Augustine and Pelagius appears to imply.[55]

In the reasoning in the second half of his argument, Jonas clearly draws on his 1930 publication *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem*, subtitled *Ein philosophischer Beitrag zur Genesis der christlich-abendländischen Freiheitsidee*, namely a philosophical contribution to the genesis of the Western/Christian idea of freedom.[56] Indeed in the period before he wrote the course *Problems of Freedom*, that as we have already said, he held in New York in 1966, he returned to his 1930 study, republishing it in German once more in 1965, in a revisited but basically similar version, with the publisher of the first edition, namely Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht of Göttingen. In

1965 he changed the subtitle, which became *Eine philosophische Studie zum pelagianischen Streit* – a philosophical study of the Pelagian dispute[57] – thus lending greater emphasis to the key focus of his argument, which regards Paul's *Letter to the Romans*, in particular the passage 7.7-25, and Augustine's interpretation of it. Jonas also added a third appendix[58] which clarifies his own position on Augustine's distinction of four *gradus* in *De diversis quaestionibus*: before the Law, under the Law, under Grace, and in Peace, which are covered in the essay, stressing the stage of obedience to the Law.

In the conclusion to his lectures, held in the Philosophy Department of the New School for Social Research in New York in both 1966 and 1970, where, as we have said, he presented and developed the idea of the scope of freedom starting from the classical Greek world and the Hellenistic world, Jonas returned to examine the intricacies of human will in the relationship with God, returning largely to the contents of his study *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem.* Compared to the previous study, which was developed in 1920s Germany, his new approach to this theme was forged in a different cultural climate, in the New Continent and in English, and this led to him casting off many linguistic categories influenced by Heidegger. Indeed Jonas increasingly sought to distance himself theoretically and existentially from Heidegger, after the rise of Nazism and the Second World War. The historical events in that period led him to critically re-evaluate German and European philosophy and culture of the first half of the twentieth century, leading him to distance himself, first and foremost, from the ethical indifferentism he now believed that Heidegger's existential analysis led to: a fatalist indifferentism, conveyed and masked by a deceptive, etymologically problematic language, that in an inspired and mystical tone intentionally moves away from the history of words and the things they represent, occasioning a subversion that not coincidentally accompanied the development of Nazism, with no possible catharsis.[59] In particular in his American course in 1970, Jonas' arguments exploring the question of freedom, right down to the *abyssus humanae conscientiae*, returning to a direct interpretation of the classics using the language of tradition, gained, compared to *Augustin*, in expressive clarity and originality of interpretation, continuing nonetheless to be

affected by the methodological approach of the historic, phenomenological and existentialist schools he encountered during his studies at the Universities of Freiburg, Berlin, Marburg and Heidelberg.[60]

Responsible human freedom for the world of the present and the future

In his reasoning in *Problems of Freedom*, Jonas draws on the analyses conducted, coming to reflect that in the contemporary period, descended from the theoretical science of the seventeenth century, the two distinct aspects of interior and exterior remain central to the question of freedom. Over time there has been a radical change, in so far as both the interior and exterior aspects are interpreted in the modern and contemporary periods in the light of the scientific principle of causality, which is accepted unconditionally across the full range of human experience. Academic efforts therefore move in the direction of forging, or identifying, a conception of freedom which is logically compatible with causal determinism, while, as Jonas highlights most interestingly, in the history of philosophy the issue of freedom did not arise in the arena of logic.[61]

Freedom does not appear to have a place in the rigidly causal framework of modern science's conceptual schemes. In the exterior sphere the rejection of freedom takes the form of a physical mechanism, while in the interior dimension it is denied by psychological determinism. According to Jonas both of these, when they are elevated to the status of incontrovertible truths, possess more misunderstood metaphysical dogmatism than the pre-scientific arguments on the issue of necessity and freedom. Faced with this monistic, dogmatically materialistic mentality that he deems as unproductive as dualistic stratagems Jonas looks for a new approach, capable of offering answers suited to our times. He looks for convincing new accounts of the distinctive nature of the subjective dimension, which cannot be simplified and reduced to a mere epiphenomenon of matter: we cannot fail to consider that the latter interacts phenomenologically in the world objectively as much as bodily entities do.

Jonas explores these arguments in many texts, coming to the conclusion that subjectivity is the power of self-determination over thought, in thought and action, and therefore in some way we can say that it is the determination of thought over matter, thus establishing an objective role of subjective aims, and recognising that this dynamic has a place in nature. Asserting that nature, in principle, does not concede this space is a hyper-interpretation of its determinism, no longer credited by recent physics.[62]

The demonstration of these affirmations is developed basically in the negative, in so far as the opposing hypothesis of the impotence of the subjective proves to be absurd in relation to our experience of sentient life and *not necessary* for defending the integrity of natural laws. If we restore the primacy of the experience of sentient life as the natural basis of all the observations, reflections, interpretations and theoretical, scientific and cultural constructs of the human race, we no longer force our thinking into artificial and sterile alternatives, incapable of effectively recounting or describing, and even more so in theoretical terms, the life that goes on outside the gates of the ivory towers man has constructed for himself over time. If we consider the phenomena we are aware of in human experience, then the soul in the sense of the inner dimension, and thus the will, cannot fail to be included among the principles of nature, without resorting to dualistic strategems reminiscent of Cartesianism, but in a perspective of psycho-physical interrelation compatible with the validity of natural laws.

In his quest for this innovative model of interpretation Jonas does not claim to be demonstrating an incontrovertible truth, but wishes to show the possibility of psycho-physical interrelation, in so far as it does not contradict phenomena, which it interprets, or contradict itself, intrinsically. Demonstrating this mere possibility in a conceptual experiment suffices to show that we do not desperately need to appeal to the theory of the impotence or apparent nature of the subject and thus deprive the subject of its sole justification[63]. He reflected at length on this possibility, from the perspective of the philosophy of biology, in an original, extremely topical dialogue between philosophy and science, arguing and asserting the possible existence of a dialectic freedom for living beings, which is particularly evident in the subjective sphere of human beings.

Conscious of the fact that life, common to human beings and natural beings, continues to conceal deep-seated issues to resolve, Jonas progresses towards an ontological interpretation of biological phenomena, mainly using the tools of critical analysis and phenomenological description, without avoiding metaphysical speculation on the latter.

Based on the biological knowledge gained in the New Continent, he intuits that the big contradictions that man discovers in himself, such as freedom and necessity, autonomy and dependence, I and the world, relation and isolation, creativity and mortality, are also present in embryonic form in primitive life forms. Jut like more complex forms of life, including man, these primitive life forms are characterised by a precarious equilibrium between being and not being, continually recalling a horizon of transcendence. A non-dogmatic thinker, as Jonas believes himself to be, cannot repress the testimony of life, and right from the start of his post-war career he declared his intention to move in the direction of philosophical research that goes beyond the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, taking account of the fact that even in their simplest forms, organisms are predisposed to the spiritual, while at the same time even the highest expression of the spirit remains part of the organic world.[64]

With the increase in scientific knowledge in the modern period, the organism was found to be a particularly problematic form of extended substance, or matter. It can be said that it combines the Cartesian concepts of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, the thinking being and the extended being, split into two different ontological spheres, but how they come together in the living organism remains a mystery.

Dualism is the theoretical idea that historically mediates between two extremes: the vitalistic monism of ancient times and the materialistic monism of the present day. According to Jonas, if dualism is the first major correction to monistic/animistic unilaterality, materialistic monism, left over as a residue, is the no less unilateral triumph of the experience of death over that of life, in so far as from this perspective it is paradoxically easier to comprehend the phenomenon of death and decomposition than life.

He highlights the fact that evolution in the modern sense, overlooking the original meaning of the process of growth of

individual organisms, makes it more plausible to attribute the production of the realm of life to mere matter, validating the materialistic monism of natural science. The idea of a preformation and a process was replaced by the almost mechanical image of an unplanned sequence, not aiming for anything but nonetheless progressive, the stirrings of which, unlike the germ, reveal nothing about the end result or the stages involved in moving towards it [65].

Darwin's theory of evolution, with its combination of random variation or mutation and natural selection, completes the expulsion of teleology from nature, rendering the idea of purpose superfluous even in the history of life and relegating it to the realm of human subjectivity. In this way it also eliminates the idea of immutable essences from reality.

Jonas maintains that this specifically modern conception of the unplanned, open-ended adventurousness of life, accompanying the demise of immutable essences, is an important philosophical consequence of the scientific theory of evolution. The result is the paradox of progress through chance: any enrichment would be a proliferating growth on the simplicity of the original, which does not in any case solve the enigma according to which this process simulates creativity.

However the triumph of materialism celebrated in Darwinism contains its own downfall. The success of Darwinism lay in its ability to explain the generation of ramified, ascending life forms solely on the basis of an automatic mechanism in the material world of nature. This vision eliminates dualism, but weighs down matter with all the weight that dualism had previously borne, namely the task of accounting for the origin of the spirit too.

The highest level of evolution was reached by means of intermediate stages, raising the question of where the phenomenon of the inner dimension begins. If the inner dimension in its basic forms is "coextensive with life", then a mechanistic explanation of life, an interpretation in mere external concepts cannot suffice. [66] Darwinism was basically dialectic in nature: the coherence of the theory of evolution takes us beyond materialism, raising the apparently solved ontological question once more.

According to Jonas, the very metabolism of every organism demonstrates that living beings, while composed of

matter enjoy a certain degree of freedom with respect to their substance[67]: the fact that they require a constant exchange of matter with the outside world places them in a constant state of flux, that naturally frees them from their own basic needs, making them into something else. He goes as far as to assert that metabolism is the first form of freedom, and that the concept of freedom is therefore relevant to ontological description right from its most elementary dynamics, giving us a clear sign that living beings differ from pure matter.

The privilege of freedom, thanks to which the living detaches itself from the universal integration of inanimate things in the whole of matter, with an original act of separation and identity construction, is undoubtedly encumbered with the burden of need and the risk of not surviving, in a constant oscillation between being and not being.

In every organism, characterised by the dual aspect of the metabolism of capacity and need, not being is an alternative contained in being: organisms threatened with their own annihilation constantly have to assert themselves and in this effort the organism shows its commitment to self-perpetuation, "existence as interest" which entails the acquisition of identity.

Yet this existence, suspended between the potential antitheses of being and not being, the self and the world, form and matter, freedom and need, is inevitably and inherently based on a relational rapport; a rapport that confirms, reinforces and also energises the identity, which is transformed and exalted by the encounter. Jonas underlines that life is mortal because it is life, in its most basic form, because the relationship between form and matter that it is based on is revocable and uncertain. Its paradoxical nature compared to mechanic sphere of nature is in actual fact a constant crisis, the resolution of which is never certain, but merely a continuing, changing form of that crisis. The boldness of this existence, full of anguish and death, places in a dazzling light the original adventure of freedom undertaken by substance in becoming organic[68].

Jonas invites us to reflect that progressively higher forms of freedom develop in animals, up to its highest expression in nature – the human being – where the arrival of self-awareness is intrinsically bound up with responsibility for the order of the living. Life, which at the apex of evolution, namely in human beings, is capable of thinking about itself, cannot but feel part of

a whole that has to be preserved and looked after. This is the prime identity of a human being, deriving from an awareness of human abilities, powers and limits.

In our inevitable role as guardians of the earth, human responsibility can be grounded and conveyed by going back to the objective side of a renewed idea of participatory nature, something we are now obliged to accept, for the very survival of mankind, after so many industrial and techno-scientific revolutions, and nihilisms.

Faced with a power that, as we mentioned at the start of this essay, extends to the ability to intervene inside nature, initiating artificial processes with largely unforeseeable consequences, it is now impossible to avoid the question of possible approaches to implement in the chiefly political issue of taking responsibility for nature and humanity. There is a reawakening of the need to get back to the basic nature of things, to reflect on the roots of phenomena and to accept that limited but important responsibility that falls to us, as human beings, beings in which nature arrives at the point of thinking about itself.

If we address nature we cannot avoid the basic truth that, while free, organisms largely tend to assert being over not being, which thus represents a purpose in being. From this testimony of life Jonas maintains that purpose in general is an inherent part of nature: by creating life nature manifests at least one specific aim, namely life itself[69]. He concludes that the world/nature does not exclude value judgements, and indeed the fact that it pursues this purpose shows: the self-affirmation of being, which asserts itself *in an absolute sense* as better than not being. In every purpose, being makes a statement in favour of itself and against nothingness[70]. The presence of purpose in the self-affirmation of being reveals something we intuitively recognise as good in itself, evidently superior to a lack of purpose.

Jonas therefore asserts that the statement of the self-verification of the purpose of being is self-evident, and he takes this as an ontological axiom with a sort of *argumentum ad hominem*, where a spontaneous preference for one alternative between two possible options is addressed from a purely logical point of view. This favours the very affirmation of the object that no longer manages to holds sway over the irreducibly autonomous processes that theoretical thinking has ventured into

in its long period of isolation[71]. The consequence of this, for the subjectivity of man, an epiphenomenon of nature as a being with conscious will, is the duty to impose the rejection of not being on his faculties[72] in a system which once more acquires a teleological nature.

All ethical theories necessarily have to get to grips with the rational basis of obligation, recognised as "objective", and the psychological basis capable of sparking the will, identified as "subjective". Jonas thus asserts that it is through the sentiment of respect that beings can come to the rescue of that otherwise impotent moral law that demands that we fulfil, by means of our existence, the innate *claim* of being[73].

According to Jonas, the being acknowledged its entirety or in one particular manifestation… can give rise to respect[74], but that respect becomes operative when our sense of responsibility intervenes, namely the feeling that arises from our own existence and makes us willing to concede that others have the right to exist too. He notes that the concept of responsibility implies that of ought to be, first and foremost as the normativity of being of something, and then as normativity of action of someone in response to that normativity of being[75].

For Jonas, moral norms should be linked to proving the existence of an ontological compunction, despite the fact that in contemporary ethics "be" and "ought to be" no longer appear to be connected to units, not even ideals or principles, because in the current period all sources of validity have become problematic: divine sources because their very existence is in doubt, and human sources for their lack of universally recognised bases. Yet Jonas manages to identify an ontic paradigm in which the simple "be" coincides with an "ought to be", rejecting the possibility of "merely being". This paradigmatic example is provided by the newborn baby that addresses its surroundings with an evident imposition of duty.

The beginning of every human life, the newborn, becomes the original example, the archetype of all responsibilities in genetic, typological and gnoseological terms, in virtue of its immediate evidence. Here we find the original nucleus of responsibility, which extends to increasingly broad horizons, in so far as it represents the best *habitus* for responding to the world and taking responsibility for its own existence, turning naturally towards the present and future of

individual lives we come into contact with and inevitably towards their settings and worlds, to accompany the development of life and the growth of responsible action.

In order to guarantee the very existence of present and future generations, namely the world's right to life, today politics must be reconciled with the moral dimension, which it should take as a guide, a source of knowledge and wisdom that can still oversee what we must not and cannot renounce to be "human" and that can motivate shared *reasons* for political action aimed at ensuring the moderate, fair use of the world's resources and prudent governance of technological development.

In this period of environmental crisis we urgently need to get away from the prevailing mindset of nihilistic subjectivity, with its all-engulfing, suicidal, hyperactive individualism: we need to recognise and respect the self-affirmation of life as a whole in nature, namely the ecology of life as a given, as something that pre-constitutes the possibility of every being, including the human race, and for this reason must be religiously protected and structurally preserved.[76]

What is at risk, first and foremost is the very survival of humanity worthy of the tradition that lies behind the word, which is ultimately our finest legacy, our truly essential, constituent patrimony. This awareness, which develops in many of Hans Jonas' texts, from various different perspectives, could represent a common denominator that might be an opportunity for man to re-establish a constructive dialogue with himself, others and the motivations and worlds he encounters, namely an opportunity for the creation of new civilisations, life itself and human freedom.

Notes

[1] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Das Prinzip Verantwortung. Versuch einer Ethic für die technologische Zivilisation, Frankufurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1979, pp. 17-18. The same pages of the Chorus of Antigone are quoted, commented on and referred to by Jonas in the opening essay in H. Jonas, Philosophical Essays, From Ancient Creed to Technological Man, Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Prentice-Hall, 1974, pp. 3-20.*

[2] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Das Prinzip Verantwortung, p. 20.*

[3] *Cfr. ibi, p. 21.*

[4] *Cfr. ibi, p. 22.*

[5] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 21-80.*

[6] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Das Prinzip Verantwortung, p. 33.*

[7] *Cfr. ibidem.*
[8] *Jonas was to devote a 1985 publication to the issues of applied ethics: cfr. H. Jonas, Technik, Medizin und Ethik. Zur Praxis des Prinzips Verantwortung, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1985. In actual fact he had already dealt with these issues, in particular in the Philosophical Essays published in 1974, cfr. pp. 105-167.*
[9] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Das Prinzip Verantwortung, pp. 52-53.*
[10] *Cfr. ibi, pp. 70-71.*
[11] *Cfr. ibi, pp. 84-91.*
[12] *I had the opportunity to see these courses for the first time directly in the hands of Mrs. Lore Jonas in her home in New Rochelle near New York in the winter of 2003-2004; currently they are conserved in the "Philosophisches Archiv" in Konstanz, located at HJ 1-15-6 and HJ 1-3-1 and 1-3-2; for further information cfr. also H. Jonas, Problems of Freedom, edited by E. Spinelli and Italian translation by A. Michelis, Torino: Nino Aragno Editore, pp. X-XI.*
[13] *Cfr. ibi, English text, p. 259.*
[14] *Cfr. ibi, English text, p. 260.*
[15] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 260-261.*
[16] *Cfr. ibi, English text pp. 261-262.*
[17] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 255-260. Jonas, quoting Aristotle's Politics, analyses the pre-political dimension of the family and the village, the different statuses of minors and adults and the distinction between free men and slaves in ancient Greek societies.*
[18] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 262-263.*
[19] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 264-269.*
[20] *Cfr. ibi, English text, p. 270.*
[21] *Plato, The Republic, X, 617d-e. Jonas adds the reference to the following English translation: Cairns-Hamilton edition [1961], p. 841.*
[22] *Cfr. ibi, English text, p. 271.*
[23] *Cfr. E. Berti, La filosofia pratica di Aristotele nell'odierna cultura angloamericana, in «Nuova Civiltà delle Macchine», 10/1 (1992), pp. 19-20. To reconstruct the historical/philosophical framework that can also help us to comprehend Hans Jonas' thinking, cfr. F. Volpi, Tra Aristotele e Kant: orizzonti, prospettive e limiti del dibattito sulla 'riabilitazione della filosofia pratica", in C. Viano (edited by), Torino: Bollati Boringhieri,1995, pp. 128-148; G. Fornero, La riabilitazione della filosofia pratica in Germania e il dibattito fra 'neoaristotelici' e 'postkantiani', in N. Abbagnano, Storia della Filosofia. La filosofia contemporanea, Vol. IV. II, Torino: UTET, 1994, pp. 195-220.*
[24] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Problems of Freedom, English text, pp. 272-273.*
[25] *Cfr. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, III L, 1110a-b, 1111a-b.*
[26] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Problems of Freedom, English text, pp. 273-274.*
[27] *Cfr. ibi, English text, p . 275.*
[28] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 275-278 .*
[29] *Cfr. E. Berti, La filosofia pratica di Aristotele nell'odierna cultura angloamericana , p. 21. He wrote: "By 'human nature' Aristotle does not indeed intend an original conformation, given once and for all, at the beginning of history and therefore outside of history, in opposition to culture,*

civilization and all the values achieved through history. As he himself underlines in Politics, the nature of man is his purpose, namely perfecting himself, something which does not pre-exist his development but is only attained at the completion of the latter. He can therefore assert that man is 'by nature' a political animal, which means a civil animal, capable of complete fulfilment only thanks to culture and civilization". Cfr. Aristotle, Politics, I 2, 1252b31-34.

[30] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Problems of Freedom, English text, pp. 277-278.*

[31] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 281-287 .*

[32] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 292-294.*

[33] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 290- 292.*

[34] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 292-293 .*

[35] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 293-294.*

[36] *Cfr. ibi, English text, p. 297.*

[37] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 298-299.*

[38] *One academic who emphasizes the influence of the Stoics in Jonas' vision of freedom and responsibility is Dmitri Nikulin, Professor of Philosophy at The New School University for Social Research of New York, Graduate Faculty, Department of Philosophy. During the 2003-2004 Fall Semester I took an individual course on these issues, with a final exam, under Professor Nikulin himself, after being awarded a study grant for the United States to further my philosophy doctorate on Hans Jonas. Cfr. D. Nikulin, «Reconsidering Responsibility. Hans Jonas' Imperative for a New Ethics, in Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal – New School for Social Research», 23/1 (2001), pp. 99-118.*

[39] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Problems of Freedom, English text, pp. 300-301..*

[40] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 335-336.*

[41] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 302-303.*

[42] *Cfr. ibi, English text, p. 306 .*

[43] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 324-325.*

[44] *Cfr. H. Jonas, The Imperative of Responsibility. In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age, English translation by H. Jonas- D. Herr, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, pp. 204-231 and notes pp. 241-246. This appendix did not appear in the original 1979 version Das Prinzip Verantwortung, so the essay was subsequently published in 1981 (cfr. H. Jonas, Macht oder Ohnmacht der Subjektivität? Das Leib-Seele -Problem in Vorfeld des Prinzip Verantwortung, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1981), although the original English version dates to 1976 (cfr. H. Jonas, On the Power or Impotence of Subjectivity, in S. Spicker- H.T. Engelhardt Jr. (eds), Philosophical Dimensions of the Neuro-Medical Science, Dordrecht Holland/ Boston USA, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1976).*

[45] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Problems of Freedom , English text, pp. 307-308.*

[46] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 335-424 .*

[47] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 337-349.*

[48] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 351-359.*

[49] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 361-374.*

[50] *Cfr. Augustine, De libero arbitrio, vol. III/2, Latin text, introduction e Italian translation by D. Gentili, Roma: Città Nuova, 1976.*

[51] *Cfr. Augustine, De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum, Latin text, introduction e Italian translation by G. Ceriotti, Roma: Città Nuova, 1995.*
[52] *Cfr. Augustine, Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum, Latin text, introduction by N. Cipriani e Italian translation by G. Ceriotti, Roma: Città Nuova, 1985.*
[53] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Problems of Freedom , English text, pp. 375-398.*
[54] *Cfr. ibi, English text, pp. 399-409.*
[55] *Cfr. ibi,, English text, pp. 411-424.*
[56] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem. Ein philosophischer Beitrag zur Genesis der christlich-abendländischen Freiheitsidee, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930.*
[57] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem. Eine philosophische Studie zum pelagianischen Streit, introduction by J.M. Robinson, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965.*
[58] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem,1965, pp. 93-105. For the final English version cfr. H. Jonas, Philosophical Essays, pp. 335-348.*
[59] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Erinnerungen, Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2003, pp. 299-309 (Abschied von Heidegger, English translation by K. Winston, in H.Jonas, Memoirs,Waltham/Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2008, pp. 187-193).*
[60] *For a detailed explanation I would refer to A. Michelis, Libertà e responsabilità. La filosofia di Hans Jonas, Roma: Città Nuova, 2007, pp. 11-44 and my afterword about the question of freedom as a guiding theme of Hans Jonas' thinking, in H. Jonas, Agostino e il problema paolino della libertà. Studio filosofico sulla disputa pelagiana, ed. and Italian translation by C. Bonaldi, Brescia: Morcelliana, pp. 156-170.*
[61] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Problems of Freedom, English text, pp. 269-270 .*
[62] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Das Prinzip Verantwortung, p. 127.*
[63] *Cfr. ibi, p. 128.*
[64] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Introduction in The Phenomenon of Life. Toward a Philosophical Biology, Evanston –Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001, p. 1 (Rev. by Lore Jonas, originally published in 1966 by Harper & Row of New York). Cfr. German version: Einleitung, in Das Prinzip Leben. Ansätze zu einer philosophischen Biologie, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1994, p. 15.*
[65] *Cfr. H. Jonas, The Phenomenon of Life, p. 43; cfr. German version Das Prinzip Leben, p. 81.*
[66] *Cfr. H. Jonas, The Phenomenon of Life, p. 58; cfr. German version Das Prinzip Leben, p. 101.*
[67] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Philosophical Essays, p. 191.*
[68] *Cfr. H. Jonas, The Phenomenon of Life, p. 5; cfr. German version, Das Prinzip Leben, pp. 20-21.*
[69] *Cfr. H. Jonas, Das Prinzip Verantwortung, pp. 142-143.*
[70] *Cfr. ibi, p. 155.*
[71] *Cfr. ibi, p. 397, n.1.*
[72] *Cfr. ibi, p. 157.*
[73] *Cfr. ibidem*
[74] *Cfr. ibi, p. 170.*

[75] *Cfr. ibi, p. 234.*
[76] *Cfr. A. Michelis, La questione della tecnica: evoluzioni di matrici heideggeriane nel pensiero di Hannah Arendt e di Hans Jonas, in «Problemata. Revista Internacional de Filosofia», Universidade Federal da Paraíba, João Pessoa – PB, Brasil, v. 2, n.1, 2011, p. 27-51.*