**Freedom in Jonas thought**

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Hans Jonas develops a new perspective on the concept of freedom by thinking of it as the principle of organic being: through the manifestation of this principle he takes life to have arisen from inanimate matter.

Freedom, as we know, is a phenomenon hitherto attributed exclusively to human beings, since according to our philosophical tradition humans are the only beings who enjoy the possibility of self-determination (or contingency) in a world governed by necessary laws. Jonas, by contrast, believes that all organic beings also have the power – even if only minimally – to self-determine, and therefore that freedom is an inherent principle of all organic existence. In other words, Jonas aims to introduce the concept of freedom into the natural world.

According to Jonas freedom manifests itself primarily in an ascending scale of perception and action, finding its genesis in the most basic process of organic existence: metabolism. The organism’s necessary acquisition of nourishment through something beyond itself leads to the first form of world-perception, for in order to perform metabolic activity the living being must necessarily perceive matter in nearby space: only then could it select the elements that accord with its requirements and so act to carry out its metabolization. However, the primordial freedom manifested in organisms through metabolism also entails the necessity of doing so, since the possibility of non-existence is ever-present: the preservation of the organism depends on its fulfilling its metabolic needs. In this sense, at the lowest level of freedom the exercising of a power is accompanied by necessary action.

This foundation ultimately gives rise to even the most elaborate form of freedom, insofar as freedom, according to Jonas, appears on an evolutionary scale: it manifests in gradated form, beginning at the elementary levels of life and reaching its apex in human beings. Freedom expresses itself, accordingly, in a sharper perception of the organism’s environment, motility, emotion, vision, and finally the capacity for imagination and the exercise of reason.