# Jonas and Heidegger’s Philosophy

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1. The relationship between Hans Jonas and Martin Heidegger is multilayer and can be presented in various ways. His whole life Jonas valued the academic teacher-student relationship with Heidegger during the years of his study in Freiburg and Marburg as definitely positive. He talked about Heidegger as philosopher with extraordinary esteem and often used superlatives. In his last speech 1992 he compared Heidegger’s philosophy with an “earthquake” and in his opinion Heidegger was “the occurrence of the century in the German and European philosophy”.
2. The personal relationship however became certainly negative with the moral failures of Heidegger during the German National Socialism. Jonas was deeply disappointed by Heidegger and also saw in his behaviour a tragedy, a “debacle” of philosophy, since especially Heidegger as the most meaningful philosopher of time morally failed under the extreme circumstances of Nazi-Germany.
3. For Jonas, the concurrence of the esteem of his teacher as exceptional philosopher on the one hand and the contempt of Heidegger’s behaviour as fellow human being during the German National Socialism on the other hand, lead to an extremely irksome and profoundly ambivalent relationship with Heidegger since 1933.
4. Jonas’ accusations of existentialistic depreciation of the concept of nature and of a deficit of ethics lead to analogies of “Gnosticism and Modern Nihilism”. Central keywords are “anthropological acosmism“, “antinomism“, “cosmic nihilism“, the “authentic freedom of the self“ and his “breathless dynamism“ in relation to an indifferent nature.
5. Meanwhile, some of the early impulses of Heidegger continued to have a metamorphosed effect on Jonas (for instance, the structure of care in “The Phenomenon of Life”). The conclusions, drawn by Jonas of the one-sidedness of the early Heidegger, are partly congruent with Heidegger’s own concerns after his “turn”. However, the ontological explanations differ.
6. Furthermore, Jonas’ personal consternation lead to not only the situation that he did not want to see Heidegger again after the war, but IMHO also understandably to the fact that he did not or could not read Heidegger *sine ira et studio* anymore. Heidegger’s publications after 1945 were received by Jonas in mainly biased and ambivalent ways. Anger, besides at Heidegger sometimes even at German theologian who wanted to continue Heidegger’s ontohistorical thinking in a theological way, and his eagerness to “settle old scores” with Heidegger heavily influenced Jonas’ late judgements of Heidegger, for example in “Heidegger and Theology”.
7. Nevertheless, there are also similarities between both thinkers due to their phenomenological attitude. Those concern partly the presuppositions of modern technologies relating to the history of thought and partly their thereon answering search for a new ontology beyond the subject-object dualism. This speech proposes to understand Heidegger and Jonas in their search for another ontology not only as competitors but also, where possible, as complements.