

### **Hans Jonas and Günther Anders – Agreement in Disagreement**

- Hans Jonas (1903-1993) and Günther Anders (1902-1992) kept their friendship from the 1920s until Anders' death in 1992 and were both their longest and oldest friends
- First met 1921 in Freiburg (lectures of Husserl and Heidegger)
- Sometimes difficult relationship with
- Anders was married to Jonas' close friend Hannah Arendt (1929-1937)
- Correspondence shows an overall respectful exchange of remarks, advices and sympathy

#### **Similarities**

- Anders and Jonas works deal with similar subjects; they both ask for moral obligations in a world that is based on technology (Critiques of Culture) and try to find the human place in a changed world of technology (Anthropology); both discuss the possibility of having faith in God after Auschwitz and link this to the question of the possibility to justify moral obligations (Metaphysics and Ontology)

#### **Differences in Style**

- The differences and similarities between their personalities and ideas can be shown in their ways of writing: in the one hand Jonas as the diplomatic part, on the other hand Anders as the quick-tempered moralist
- Jonas and Anders were arguing about the stylistic device of overstatement:  
For Anders overstatement and distortion in the description of future demonstrate in which state mankind will be by then  
For Jonas overstatement is misleading and not helpful for their shared goal: the continued existence of mankind; Jonas himself describes his own style of writing as pondering
- Style is also related to premises  
Anders' premise is the unjustifiability of moral obligation, he just postulates them  
Jonas justifies moral obligations with arguments as a) the insight of responsibility and b) the essence of human beings

#### **Differences in Anthropological Concepts**

- Anders denies any kind of substantial concept of human beings; he has the idea of a "negative anthropology": the only thing they have as a substance is not to have a substance.  
Jonas understands the essence of humanity as free will and the power to preserve creation in its diversity

#### **Differences in Religious Ideas**

- Anders denies the existence of God and regards Auschwitz as proof  
Jonas tries to vindicate his faith in God by rethinking the attributes of God. The concept of God can be saved with now God being non-omnipotent and ashamed