

Scientists from all over the world took part in an international conference on the Jewish philosopher Hans Jonas at the University of Siegen. The university thus presented itself as the largest centre of Hans Jonas research in Germany.

If you are interested in the Jewish philosopher Hans Jonas (1903 - 1993), you cannot ignore the University of Siegen. The university has been the seat of the Hans Jonas Institute since 2014. The German Hans Jonas Centre and its library have also moved from Berlin to Siegen. The German-language research on Hans Jonas has thus found its new centre here. At a major international conference, scientists from all over the world came to Siegen to discuss the philosopher's work together. The participants came from Japan, Brazil, Norway, Italy and France, among others.

"There has never been such a conference about Hans Jonas before - we are very happy that it now exists," said Prof. Dr. Michael Bongardt from the Department of Philosophy at the University of Siegen in his welcoming address. Together with his colleagues from Siegen, PD Dr. Jürgen Nielsen-Sikora and University Rector Prof. Dr. Holger Burckhart, he has been involved in Hans Jonas research for many years. The scientists at the University of Siegen regularly offer courses on the work of the philosopher, who was born in Mönchengladbach and emigrated in 1933. Hans Jonas' main work "The Imperative of Responsibility", in which he admonishes our responsibility in view of technical progress and increasing consumption of resources to secure the possibility of future "truly human life", had become known to a broad audience. The guiding principle of the University of Siegen, "Shaping the future humanely", also goes back to the philosophy of Hans Jonas.

During the three-day Hans Jonas Conference there were not only keynote speeches but also numerous panels in which the experts were able to exchange views on various aspects of the philosopher's life and work. Around 70 speakers took an active part. "Based on the results, we would like to publish a handbook on Hans Jonas," explained Nielsen-Sikora, who is also chairman of the Hans Jonas Centre. The aim is to give new impetus to German-language Hans Jonas research. "Outside Germany, there is much more vivid research on Jonas. We want him to attract new attention in Germany, because his ideas are still highly topical," said Prof. Bongardt.

Prof. Dr. Micha Brumlik gave the opening lecture at the Hans Jonas Conference. He is educationalist and philosopher, and one of the most influential Jewish intellectuals of our time. The theme of the lecture was Jonas' famous speech entitled "The Concept of God after Auschwitz. A Jewish voice." In it Jonas had dealt with the question why a god allows the Holocaust if he would have the power to prevent such suffering. Jonas came to the conclusion that God is kind and loving, but not omnipotent - according to him, the responsibility for the world therefore lies solely in the hands of men. In his lecture, Brumlik explained the historical and theological background that led Hans Jonas to his concept of God - and the resulting social consequences. "It is a great honour for me to have been invited to such a unique research event on Hans Jonas," he thanked the organisers of the conference.

The long-standing Hans Jonas researcher and former chairman of the Hans Jonas Centre, Prof. Dr. Dietrich Böhler, also expressed his thanks: "I am pleased that the research centre and the library have found a new home at the University of Siegen and that Jonas' life's work is now being further researched here and made accessible to future generations".