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The Wisdom of the Ancients. The German-Jewish Revaluation of Ancient Philosophy

Guest Editors:

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Ancient Wisdom and the Modern Temper. On the Role of Greek Philosophy and the Jewish Tradition in Hans Jonas's Philosophical Anthropology

Fabio Fossa

Abstract: The question about the essence of man and his relationship to nature is certainly one of the most important themes in the philosophy of Hans Jonas. One of the ways by which Jonas approaches the issue consists in a comparison between the contemporary interpretation of man and forms of wisdom such as those conveyed by ancient Greek philosophy and the Jewish tradition. The reconstruction and discussion of these frameworks play a fundamental role in Jonas's critique of the modern mind. In the first section I introduce the anthropological problem in Hans Jonas's oeuvre. Moreover, I clarify why it becomes essential for Jonas to resort to different forms of traditional wisdom. In the second and third sections I try to give an account (as complete as possible) of the two generalisations which Jonas shapes in order to criticise the modern concepts of man and nature. In the last section I show how Jonas links these generalisations to his own philosophical assessment of modernity. Finally, I focus on his methodology, which exemplifies how critical thinking may arise from a reconsideration of traditional contents.

Keywords: Hans Jonas, Philosophical Anthropology, Greek Philosophy, Jewish Thought, Value of Tradition.

1. The Anthropological Question in the Philosophy of Hans Jonas

The anthropological question – i.e., the question concerning the essence of man and his relationship to the world – is a topic that caught Jonas's attention since his early writings and kept engaging him until his last works¹. As a student of Martin Heidegger during the 1920s, Jonas was deeply impressed by the existential analysis of *Sein und Zeit* and tried to apply Heidegger's ideas to the study of man in the late antiquity. Both *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem*² (1930) and *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (1934–54) share an interest in historical interpretations of man and the world. After his shift to a more theoretical attitude, in 1963 Jonas gave the subheading *Zur Lehre vom Menschen* to his book *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit*³. The essays there collected flew then into the last section of *The Phenomenon of Life*⁴ (1966), which is dedicated to a "Philosophy of Man". He elaborated further on the anthropological question in his best-known

work, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*⁵ (1979), and in related writings such as *Macht oder Ohnmacht der Subjektivität*⁶ (1981) or *Technik, Medizin und Ethik*⁷ (1987). Finally, Jonas's last book, *Philosophische Untersuchungen und metaphysische Vermutungen*⁸ (1994), starts again with a section dedicated to "Organism and the Theory of Man".

This is just a sketch of the presence of anthropological themes in Jonas's works and it does not claim to be exhaustive. Although the spectrum of Jonas's thoughts on man is extremely wide, I think it possible to recognise two different, yet related patterns of reasoning. On the one hand, Jonas approaches the anthropological question from a phenomenological point of view in order to include man in his general theory of organism or philosophical biology. This pattern draws upon several concepts Jonas developed in *The Phenomenon of Life* and it is not properly understandable apart from those. Essays such as *The Nobility of Sight*⁹, *Image-making and the Freedom of Man*¹⁰, and *Tool, Image and Grave*¹¹ belong to this pattern¹². On the other hand, Jonas tackles the same issues from a cultural and historical perspective as well. The motives that inspire this pattern are the same operating in Jonas's early writings. In so doing, Jonas clarifies the terms by which the anthropological question presented itself to him. At the same time, this kind of considerations enable him to set a specific task to philosophy, the same task that he would try and carry out by developing the former pattern. This second approach reveals all its potential in the essay *Gnosticism, Existentialism, and Nihilism*¹³ (1952).

Although many different studies belong to it, this pattern exhibits an intrinsic unity which stems from the recourse to the same historical-philosophical approach. This sort of argument strategy consists in reconstructing traditional images of man and the world in order to reach a standpoint from which to criticise the modern mind.

As it is well known, Jonas's main targets are the images of man and nature conveyed by Heidegger's philosophy of existence and scientific natural monism. Put briefly, the most significant flaw of the Heideggerian standpoint lies in its incongruous dualism, that is, in the claim that man and nature are ontologically heterogeneous terms. In Jonas's opinion, Heidegger resorts to a specific metaphysical language though depriving it of its own theoretical background. As a result, his interpretation of

man, which is based on the concept of thrownness, is inconsistent. In fact, Jonas claims, while Heidegger fails to properly address the question as to whence *Dasein* is thrown, this is exactly the essential aim of the general mythological framework to which the notion of thrownness belongs. As a consequence, Heidegger cannot but condemn man to be «a project from nothingness into nothingness»¹⁴, which in Jonas's opinion is a false perspective.

A different but equally false standpoint, Jonas believes, lies at the basis of what is addressed as the technoscientific interpretation of nature. According to this framework, nature is brute matter void of any intrinsic meaning over which to exercise full control. As a consequence, the scientific mind denies acknowledgement to any dimension of being other than physical existence. So, scientific reductionism leads to a monistic viewpoint within which living things and human beings are just another physical object to be understood and manipulated. This is, in Jonas's opinion, a misleading interpretation, since it fails to acknowledge the phenomenon of life in general and, specifically, it overlooks the distinctive properties of human life.

In order to overcome these disappointing alternatives, philosophy must follow a path on the edge between Heideggerian dualism and scientific monism. The first pattern of anthropological reflection I mentioned earlier aims to reach this goal by means of an ontological revolution¹⁵ which would reevaluate the theoretical weight of the phenomenon of life over brute matter. However, this is not the only way by which Jonas carries out his task. On and off throughout his entire work he conducts an intense dialogue with traditional forms of wisdom, which helps him bring the whole issue into focus. Why is that so?

In order to develop his criticism, Jonas needs to highlight virtual possibilities which may be still available though hidden by the two dominant views. Then, he must turn to theoretical frameworks the main assumptions of which are entirely incompatible to those of the modern mind. In this situation, in fact, he would get no support by sticking to his own times. So, since he believes that the so-called modern mind derives mostly from Christianity¹⁶, Jonas focuses on classical Greek philosophy and the Jewish tradition with the intention of reconstructing the interpretations of man conveyed by those cultural frameworks. In so doing, Jonas shapes two generalisations which provides him with a guideline to expand on his research. My aim is to follow up his outline of these generalisations and to show how these studies assist him in his philosophical efforts¹⁷. In the next section I take into consideration Jonas's thoughts on the image of man conveyed by classical Greek philosophy. After that, I deal with the image of man which, in his opinion, belongs to the Jewish tradition. Finally, I show the results of such a reevaluation of traditional contents and I make some general observation on Jonas's methodology.

2. Classical Greek Philosophy: the Man as *Polites*

While Jonas's notes on the Jewish tradition are quite gathered, his remarks on the classical interpretation of man and the world are scattered all over his oeuvre. Most

of them can be found in *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* and in *The Gnostic Religion*¹⁸ (1958). The first chapter of *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* is significant in this regard too. Moreover, essays like *Is God a Mathematician?*¹⁹ (1951), *The Practical Uses of Theory*²⁰ (1959), and *Immortality and the Modern Temper*²¹ (1961), as well as the 1970 course *Problems of Freedom*, testify his long-lasting interest in the classical theory of man²². Although Jonas turns back to this topic repeatedly, his main ideas do not vary during the years and, therefore, may be considered together. What Jonas proposes is beyond doubt a generalisation, a scheme that does not apply to every specific case. Historical accuracy is certainly not what Jonas seeks. Before clarifying Jonas's intentions, however, it is necessary to organise his many remarks.

In Jonas's opinion, the primary feature of the Greek mind is a strong belief in the autonomy and perfection of the universe. Our world is a necessary part of the divine whole—even though, to some extent, a deprived and lesser one. This is, Jonas claims, a sort of cultural *a priori* which lasted until the final hour of the Greek civilisation. Plato's ideas, Aristotle's forms, even Stoic *Logos* are thought of as different expressions of this single principle, inasmuch as they are idealisations of contents which belong to this world. This is why Jonas defines classical philosophy as a «self-sufficient intramundane metaphysics»²³. The world as a whole is the main object of the Greek thought. Its attempt to get in touch with the very essence of reality relies on the idealization of this world. As a consequence, there is no place for any anti-mundane idea such as the Stranger God of the Gnosis. In the Greek metaphysical framework every concept is embedded in this world.

The kernel of this outlook is the understanding of the world as *kosmos*, i.e., as a well-ordered, self-contained and everlasting whole²⁴. This is the world the demiurge shapes in the *Timaeus*: a living being, intelligent and divine, an imitation of eternity in time²⁵. For what concerns the temporal dimension, the *kosmos* is eternal, unborn, and undying. Its time flows in a circular, repetitive way. This recurring structure supports the biological experience of time of some of its hosts. However, this limited experience does not spoil the eternal steadiness of the *kosmos*, which absorbs the unstable and futile becoming in its universal order²⁶. Harmony and rationality are embedded in the very essence of the world. The universe is therefore a magnificent example of beauty which inspires reverence and piety. It is a divine being, in the Greek sense of the word. The stars and the skies symbolises its divine essence through their regular, eternal, and law-abiding movements²⁷. They offer a clear image of the *kosmos* itself, of its stability and endurance. Thus, they serve as a persuasive example of the Greek idealisation of the world.

The Greek *kosmos* displays not only quantitative aspects, but also qualities and values that the human mind is able to recognise. Human beings exist in a positive, meaningful context which is not a mere stage at their disposal. Nature is a divine entity and man is a part of it. Humanity belongs to the universal *logos*²⁸. So, there is no gap either between being and values or between nature and man. The universe is a *holon*, a whole whose parts fully exist only in their mutual relationships. For this reason, in the

classical framework the anthropological question can only be addressed properly by considering man's position in the world—or, which is the same, by considering man as a part of a whole. In order to fulfil his own nature, man must adjust his behaviour to the cosmic law. So, although the *kosmos* is not affected by man's deeds, man has the power to achieve a fulfilled existence in this world. The best form of life man could ever live gets him in contact with the world for two reasons. First, the world offers all the information man needs to determine his position and consequently his tasks. Secondly, this world is the only and true dimension where man can reach fulfilment and happiness. Human beings' fulfilment lies in perfecting their natural qualities by playing their role in the *kosmos*.²⁹ Hence, the existential attitude of the Greek theory of man is a sense of belonging to this world.

The proper human space in the world is the *polis*,³⁰ which represents the practical requirement of the classical worldview. The *polis* is the middle term that guarantees an enduring agreement between man and the natural order, thus allowing him to fulfil his own nature. In fact, the city embodies the unity of all the citizens through time. It redeems their limited and suffering lives by raising them to eternal relevance and glory. As a living whole, the *polis* remains identical with itself despite changes in its components. In so doing, it reproduces the eternal recurrence of nature. Indeed, the city is a natural entity, something that does not belong to human initiative entirely, but to the order of things. This is why the Greek citizen believes in immortality³¹. He strives to survive in the everlasting memory of the city and, as a consequence, he acts as if the eyes of the whole city were pointed at him. The *polites* identifies himself with the laws and traditions of the city, *nomos* and *ethos*, which shape the most excellent ways of life³². In so doing, he harmonizes himself to the cosmic order, being the city an expression of that order in the first place. By taking part to the political life of the city, man accomplishes his natural goal. He reaches perfection by becoming a *polites*.

The *polis* is, then, the proper environment for man to endorse a virtuous way of life and fulfil his life on earth. According to Jonas, the Greek mind enjoys a self-confident attitude towards its own possibilities. This attitude, however, stems from neither a sense of powerfulness nor the belief in an ontological privilege. By contrast, it originates from a dispassionate awareness of man's limitations. As a consequence, the ideal of self-accomplishment is kept close to human existence and, at the same time, any feeling of cosmic inadequacy or despair is marginalised. The concept of *arete* is most relevant in this regard³³. The *aretai* represent the most excellent ways of living in the world. In fact, virtues indicate which worldly ends are suitable for man and how to act in order to achieve them. By adopting a virtuous attitude, man can bring to perfection the natural faculties with which his soul is endowed. As man's efforts to put reason in charge consciously reaffirm a natural fact, virtues allow man to meet the demands of his own nature. This is why the *telos* is always within man's grasp. The ideal of the good life does not require any reference to an upper level which may conflict with the laws of the world or which may require a more-than-human dedication. Greek virtues establish a *praxis*, that is, an actualization of the authentic

possibilities imprinted in human nature and embedded in the laws and traditions of the city. For this reason, Jonas thinks, the typical mood of Greek being-in-the-world is a sense of existential belonging and a feeling of disenfranchised self-confidence.

The virtuous life accomplished in and thanks to the city represents the *polites'* perfection, that is, the fulfilment of what his position in the *kosmos* requires. At the same time, as I mentioned earlier, this sort of wisdom shows a negative side. The Greek man does not overestimate his condition nor try to rearrange the order of things in his favour. He knows that his own deeds are nothing compared to the natural order and looks to the *kosmos* with a mixed feeling of sacred fear and resignation. More specifically, he knows that every human project takes place in the unpredictable realm of *Tuche* and that therefore he is not entirely in control of his own life³⁴. Nonetheless, Jonas thinks that this is not a despairing evidence for the Greek mind. It is up to the resourceful man to face the changeable circumstances in which human beings are bound to exist. So, classical fatalism does not conflict with freedom, but describes the context in which freedom can express itself. Consequently, the Greek man is not a stranger in a world he can't cope with. He does not carry the destiny of the world on his shoulder either. The results he achieves are related to his own situation, their effects are bound to disappear soon and their importance from a cosmic perspective is none³⁵.

This fatalistic conception corresponds to the actual size of the ancient Greek man's power of action³⁶. The ancient Greek man is the master of himself within the walls of the city, but this kind of power cannot compete with the *kosmos*. Nature shows human beings the way to fulfilment, sets the general boundaries of human activity, and is by no means modified by human deeds. All man's efforts and conquests drain away in nature's recurring identity. The uncertainty of human affairs is a defining condition of all human deeds, which are bound to dissolve themselves in the cosmic order. So, the human condition is doomed to remain essentially the same forever. That is why the distant future is not a problem in the eyes of the *polites*. Rather, he is concerned with what happens during his lifetime and among his fellow citizens. In his ethical and political worries he's not pressed by irreversible and long-lasting consequences. Proximity circumscribes the range of Greek actions.

3. The Jewish Tradition: the Man as Repository

Before assessing how the Greek framework assists Jonas in his philosophical task, let us take into consideration his thoughts on the Jewish vision of the world. In this case it is much easier to realise where to look, since Jonas addresses this specific topic in *Jewish and Christian Elements in Philosophy*³⁷ (1967) and *Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective*³⁸ (1968). In 1968 Jonas wrote the first version of *The Concept of God after Auschwitz*³⁹ as well. However, the well-known myth appeared for the first time in the already mentioned essay *Immortality and the Modern Temper*, which dates back to 1961 and must be taken into consideration too, since it contains some elements of great interest. Finally, I will

refer also to lesson VII of the 1970 course *Problems of Freedom*⁴⁰.

Whilst the Greek vision of the world is based on the idea of *kosmos*, the cornerstone of the Jewish standpoint is the concept of creation. Yet, creation implies the beginning of time, which in turn rules out the possibility of considering this world as an eternal entity. This means that creation and *kosmos* give birth to mutually exclusive conceptions of the world. In the Jewish framework, necessity and contingency, universals and particulars, will and reason are no more harmonious parts of a general system. On the contrary, they express a duality that stems from the distinction between the Creator and His creatures. For example, the experience of time passing concerns only creatures, which are bound to perish in the same way they were once brought into being. There is of course a relationship between God and the creation. Nevertheless, God and the world are two separate entities and must not be unified or confused. The world cannot be understood as an image of God either, since this is only a man's privilege. Man is the image of God, while the world is God's work. In a word, the Jewish tradition seems to support a dualistic conception of being, with God and Nature as ontologically different entities and man as a middle term which, however, is made in the image of the Creator.

From the glorification of the transcendent God and, to some extent, of man as His own image might very well follow a corresponding underestimation of the world. However, in Jonas's opinion the Jewish tradition does not convey a form of radical dualism. Anti-cosmic beliefs, Jonas claims, do not belong to this framework. For, in this perspective, the world neither exists by itself nor is the outcome of a tragic incident, but originates from an act of will and is shaped according to a divine project that precedes it. Moreover, God expressed satisfaction for his own work: the world met its maker's expectations. Therefore, there are values embedded in the world, even if the world is not the source of them. Despite the difference between God and nature, the goodness of God's work reflects its maker's qualities. Its magnificence inspires admiration and respect. So, since this world is the actualization of God's will, it is provided with an inner meaning.

Let us now turn back to man as an image of God. According to this conception, man is the concretisation of an eternal and divine image. Yet, this image neither is just man's mould nor simply stands for a matter of fact. It represents also an ideal which assigns a life-long task⁴¹. The image shows how man is related to true and objective moral values, as they are revealed by God and embedded in the creation. From a Jewish perspective, man's task consists in approaching to that ideal, or even in actualizing the divine resemblance. Then, a metaphysical dignity belongs to every human being, and it calls for acknowledgement and care. The resemblance, and the dignity that comes from it, establishes an eternal existential attitude. Therefore, moral wisdom is not a progressive form of knowledge as modern science is and the modern man does not stand at the peak of a continuous moral progress. The main contents of morality have been given to mankind once for all and man must preserve their meaningfulness through history⁴². Tradition is the only vehicle of moral wisdom, since it offers the possibility of moral

education. So, the form of wisdom bequeathed by tradition is based on an eternal message to man. Man is the *repository* of such universal and objective wisdom. By studying, pondering, interpreting, and testing it, he may live up to the demands of his own essence. Man's task consists in meaningfully binding together the everlasting message of tradition and the unique historical circumstances in which he exists.

In addition, the Jewish tradition passes on some suggestions about man's relationship to the world. As we have already seen, Jonas claims that the Jewish conception of the world does not imply anti-cosmic beliefs even though it supports a dualistic ontology. From this tenet follows very important consequences for our technological age. Since nature is God's work and bears positive values, creation is not entirely at man's disposal. Of course man's dignity is superior to that of nature, which makes him nature's master. Yet, his authority is not absolute at all. In fact, God entrusted his work to man, expecting him to be a responsible guardian of the wellbeing of the world. Man is not allowed to establish a dictatorship. On the contrary, he is expected to act as a good master who cares for the wellbeing of the subjects. Man must take care of nature, since it mirrors God's splendour: he must acknowledge God's assignment and protect nature's richness. So, the glory of man, which makes him the master of the world, does not consent to his dictatorship, but makes him responsible (and accountable) for nature's safeguard.

These last thoughts match the reflection, which Jonas expressed in *Immortality and the Modern Temper*, on the biblical Book of Life⁴³. In *Psalms 69: 28-29* and in *Malachi 3:16*, for example, the Book of Life is a sort of ledger in which God writes down people's names and merits. In Jonas's opinion, it may be interpreted as a record of all human actions and their consequences on human dignity—or, on the Image of Man—and on the wellbeing of nature. The constantly delayed balance this divine chronicle involves is an evaluation of man's governance. The Book of Life symbolizes the relationship between man and nature, which within the Jewish framework must be one of care, respect and responsibility. As Jonas writes, man is «the eminent repository of this supreme and ever betrayable trust»⁴⁴.

4. Towards a Third Way? Tradition as a Source of Critical Thinking

As noted earlier, Jonas's interest in the Greek and Jewish conceptions of man and the world is essentially theory-laden. Jonas addresses these forms of wisdom while searching for something specific. He is looking for different perspectives which would help him overcome the anthropological dead end sketched in the first section of this paper. He does not aim at a thorough historical account of classical Greek philosophy or of the Jewish culture. By contrast, Jonas shapes two generalisations which serve him as supports for his philosophical task. The frameworks he elaborates, no matter how historically accurate, work as alternative interpretations of man and the world which sustain the critical efforts of the philosopher.

More than revealing something specific about the cultures to which these frameworks are supposed to belong, Jonas puts in practice a method of historical reasoning which is based on (and relies on) the critical power of tradition. Tradition, in Jonas's opinion, is not a set of notions which belong exclusively to a particular moment in the past. Rather, human cultural tradition hands down ideas, the meaningfulness of which the contemporary man can explore in order to understand, define, and criticise his own condition. This means that a plain restoration of the past neither is possible nor desirable. The actual conditions of a particular historical situation must not be overlooked. However, they do not make traditional wisdom useless. The present is a mediation of the past, heavy with future. Man has to carry out this mediation, that is, he has to understand it in order to act responsibly in it. For this is one of man's most important tasks, it is immediately clear how the Jewish conception of man as a repository of a meaningful tradition influences Jonas's mind.

This is not the only aspect which catches Jonas's attention. One of the most important steps in finding out a third way between Heideggerian dualism and scientific monism consists in conceiving a positive idea of nature. This idea, however, has to be compatible with man's specific difference⁴⁵. In order to think man and nature together, without reducing one to the other, it is necessary to locate the foundations of morality within nature itself. In other words, Jonas thinks that the so-called Hume's law must be put aside. Nature is not a value-indifferent object⁴⁶. This is what Jonas aims to demonstrate in *The Phenomenon of Life*.

Now, both the Greek and Jewish frameworks refer to a positive concept of nature which delimits man's will and constitutes a positive context to his activity. Going beyond the modern domination of nature, Jonas seeks the conditions of a being-in-the-world based on the idea of responsible dwelling. Only a world that manifests inner values may be fully dwelled and not just exploited. Likewise, only a positive conception of nature may support man's pursuit of the good life. In fact, man is capable of no satisfaction unless he acknowledges the meaningful context in which he exists. Values are embedded in nature and call for respect and care. The Greek admiration for the beauty of *kosmos* and the related conception of this world as the true dimension of moral fulfilment may still have something to say in this respect. The same goes for the Jewish esteem for God's work and the related commitment to its good administration. Thanks to the mediation of traditional standpoints, the contemporary man may rediscover himself as a part of a whole, as an entity which is not thrown into the world, but belongs to it.

So, this interpretation of nature matches a corresponding interpretation of man. What makes Jonas's task so difficult is the necessity to keep man close to nature without reducing him to its components or functions, that is, to the physical side of existence. In this regard, classical Greek philosophy and the Jewish tradition hint at two different options between which Jonas constantly swings. He is fascinated by the classical idea of man, based on the natural monism of *kosmos*. Yet, in *The Phenomenon of Life* he theorises a metaphysical gap between human and animal life⁴⁷ which cannot but remind the reader of the Jewish idea of man as God's image. Jonas tries to establish man's

full belonging to nature and yet he is always troubled with the actual extent of man's naturality. The problem of the so-called metaphysical gap between man and nature is beyond doubt one of the most complex the critics of Jonas's philosophy have to face. Perhaps deepening our understanding of Jonas's appraisal of the Greek and Jewish anthropological thought may shed an interesting light on this puzzling question.

It has already been said that, in order to unveil their hidden potential, traditional tenets cannot be taken as they are. On the contrary, they must be reread with an eye to the present conditions of man's existence. In this mediation, tradition shows its everlasting meaningfulness. The actual circumstances of a historical situation determine the critical value of tradition. Jonas is very careful in assessing the specific characteristics of his age. He is well aware that technology has essentially modified the human power of action and that modern human agency is very different from that of the *polites*. Similarly, he knows that the modern mind has come into terms with religion and God. Still, tradition may speak to the philosopher and help him developing a critical appraisal of his own situation. Tradition allows the philosopher to put a critical distance between himself and his time without losing connection to it. This is not a conservative attitude towards the present, but a responsible way to dwell in the world and face the future consciously.

Notes

¹ In Jonas's opinion, it is impossible to separate a peculiar image of man from the conception of the world that is held by that man. Man and World are terms which reciprocally define themselves. Cf. H. JONAS, *Problemi di libertà/Problems of Freedom*, Nino Aragno Editore, Torino 2010, p. 337; H. JONAS, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, Teil I*, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen 1988, pp. 12-13. Of course, Jonas follows Heidegger's lesson in this regard. Indeed, Jonas's general understanding of the anthropological problem utterly belongs to the Heideggerian framework, as clearly emerges from his works on Gnosticism and from the presence of Heideggerian-inspired notions throughout *The Phenomenon of Life*.

² H. JONAS, *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem. Eine Philosophische Studie zum pelagianischen Streit*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1965.

³ H. JONAS, *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit. Zur Lehre vom Menschen*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1963.

⁴ H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life. Towards a Philosophical Biology*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 2001; German edition with additions H. JONAS, *Organismus und Freiheit*, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main-Leipzig 1994.

⁵ H. JONAS, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1979.

⁶ H. JONAS, *Macht oder Ohnmacht der Subjektivität? Das Leib-Seele-Problem im Vorfeld des Prinzips Verantwortung*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1987.

⁷ H. JONAS, *Technik, Medizin und Ethik. Zur Praxis des Prinzips Verantwortung*, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1985.

⁸ H. JONAS, *Philosophische Untersuchungen und metaphysische Vermutungen*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1994.

⁹ H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life*, pp. 135-156.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-182.

¹¹ H. JONAS, *Mortality and Morality. A search for the Good after Auschwitz*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1996, pp. 75-86.

¹² I dealt with such pattern in F. FOSSA, "Vision, Image, & Symbol. Homo Pictor and Animal Symbolicum in Hans Jonas's Anthropology", *Aisthesis*, VIII, 2 (2015), pp. 165-182.

¹³ H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life*, pp. 211-234.

¹⁴ *Ivi*, p. 232.

¹⁵ On this see R. FRANZINI TIBALDEO, *La rivoluzione ontologica di Hans Jonas. Uno studio sulla genesi e il significato di "Organismo e Libertà"*, Mimesis, Milano 2009.

¹⁶ See H. JONAS, *Jewish and Christian Elements in Philosophy: Their Share in the Emergence of the Modern Mind*, in ID., *Philosophical Essays. From Ancient Creed to Technological Man*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1974, pp. 21-44.

¹⁷ Although many scholars (and, sometimes, Jonas himself) do not seem to support this claim, I think that also Gnosticism may have played a positive role in this regard. I defended this thesis in F. FOSSA, *Il Concerto di Dio dopo Auschwitz. Hans Jonas e la Gnosi*, ETS, Pisa 2015 by focusing on the link that connects Hans Jonas's reception of Heidegger's philosophy of existence, his research on Gnosticisms, and his own philosophical suggestions.

¹⁸ H. JONAS, *The Gnostic Religion*, Beacon Press, Boston 1963.

¹⁹ H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life*, pp. 64-92.

²⁰ *Ivi*, pp. 188-210.

²¹ *Ivi*, pp. 262-281.

²² For further inquiries into Jonas and ancient philosophy see AA.VV., *Hans Jonas: the Thinker of Antiquity and Modernity*, "Giornale Critico della Storia delle Idee", 14, 2015.

²³ H. JONAS, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, Teil I*, p. 142: «innerweltlich-autarken Metaphysik». See also *ivi*, pp. 140-143.

²⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 146-148; H. JONAS, *The Gnostic Religion*, pp. 241-250; H. JONAS, *Jewish and Christian Elements in Philosophy*, pp. 27-28.

²⁵ See H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life*, pp. 70-71; ID., *Problemi di libertà/Problems of Freedom*, pp. 337-338.

²⁶ See H. JONAS, "Bemerkungen zum Systembegriff und seiner Anwendung auf Lebendiges", *Studium Generale*, 10, 1957, pp. 88-94.

²⁷ H. JONAS, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, Teil I*, pp. 159-161; H. JONAS, *The Gnostic Religion*, pp. 254-270.

²⁸ H. JONAS, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, Teil I*, p. 147 footnote; *ivi*, pp. 238-239.

²⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 140-1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*. See also *ivi*, pp. 238-243, and H. JONAS, *The Gnostic Religion*, p. 248.

³¹ H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life*, pp. 262-266.

³² H. JONAS, *Problemi di libertà/Problems of Freedom*, pp. 262-265.

³³ H. JONAS, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, Teil I*, pp. 24-26, 40-41; ID., *The Gnostic Religion*, cit., pp. 266-269.

³⁴ H. JONAS, *Problemi di libertà/Problems of Freedom*, cit., pp. 267ss.

³⁵ In Jonas's opinion (H. JONAS, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, Teil I*, p. 165), these are the general guidelines to frame classical pessimism. Classical pessimism, we could summarize, is not a form of *intramundane* pessimism such as the gnostic one. By contrast, it is a universal form of pessimism which does not require salvation but acceptance of the way things are. In so doing, it constitutes a proper space for human fulfilment on earth, while *intramundane* pessimism generally advocates retirement from worldly affairs. However, Jonas's account of classical Greek pessimism may very well turn out to be a weak point of his great tableau – see A. MAGRIS, *La logica del pensiero gnostico*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2011, pp. 69ss..

³⁶ H. JONAS, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1979, pp. 15-59.

³⁷ H. JONAS, *Philosophical Essays*, pp. 21-44.

³⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 168-182.

³⁹ H. JONAS, *The Concept of God After Auschwitz. A Jewish Voice*, in A.H. FRIEDLANDER (ED.), *Out of the Whirlwind. A Reader of Holocaust Literature*, Schocken Book, New York 1968, pp. 465-476.

⁴⁰ H. JONAS, *Problemi di libertà/Problems of Freedom*, pp. 337-349. For a general inquiry into Jonas and the Jewish tradition see C. BONALDI, *Hans Jonas*, in A. FABRIS (ED.), *Il pensiero ebraico nel Novecento*, Carocci, Roma 2015, pp. 182-199. See also C. WIESE, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas. Jewish Dimensions*, Brandeis University Press, Waltham 2007.

⁴¹ The idea of the "Image of Man" as a normative and historical content which is endlessly threatened and, therefore, needs to be repeatedly reaffirmed and appropriately reinterpreted is a recurrent concept in Jonas's ethical reflection, from *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit* to *Philosophische Untersuchungen und metaphysische Vermutungen*. However, even if Jonas hints at this notion in crucial passages, he never addresses it specifically. There is no systematic theory of the "Image of Man" in Hans Jonas's works. This notion remains one of the many *Leitfäden* which run through Hans Jonas's entire oeuvre—the writings on Gnosticism included.

⁴² On the relation between what is permanent and what is temporal see the essay *Change and Permanence. On the Possibility of Understanding History*, in H. JONAS, *Philosophical Essays*, pp. 237-260.

⁴³ H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life*, pp. 271-274.

⁴⁴ *Ivi*, p. 274.

⁴⁵ The claim by which man is a peculiar entity in the realm of nature, since he is endowed with distinctive features, originates not only from the conception of man as God's image but also from the outcomes of Jonas's phenomenological analysis of organism. See H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life*, p. 157-174.

⁴⁶ See Chapter VI of *Gnosticism, Existentialism and Nihilism*, in H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life*, cit., pp. 232-234.

⁴⁷ See the last page of the essay *Image-making and the Freedom of Man* (H. JONAS, *The Phenomenon of Life*, p. 175) where Jonas theorizes a *metaphysical gap* between animal and human life.