
HUMANITY IN CRISIS: REREADING HANS JONAS'S *PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS* IN THE AGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND POST-TRUTH POLITICS

International Workshop

22-24th May 2017

Aarhus University Conference Center at Sandbjerg Estate, Denmark

In the introduction to his *Philosophical Essays*, published in 1974, Hans Jonas remarked that an earlier title considered for this collection was *Man in Crisis*. Yet this title was discarded “for fear of shrillness.” In our current political and environmental climate, such a fear, if no other, can easily be discarded. While Jonas was writing during the height of the atomic age and the Cold War, he made no secret that he was far less worried about mutually assured destruction, than by the gradual, yet lethal, effect on humankind on their surroundings. To counteract that, he developed a philosophy of organism which based moral truths on scientifically observed phenomena. In our times, in which those who warn us from the dangerous consequences of climate change are facing post-truth politics and rhetorics, a rereading of Jonas’s essays seems highly apt. This three-days workshop would thus be devoted to such a reengagement – from our own perspectives – with Jonas’s *Philosophical Essays*. As such, this joint rereading will address the three different yet interconnected areas of his work, which are represented in this collection: Science, Technology, and Ethics; Organism, Mind, and History; and Religious Thought of the First Christian Centuries.

The Workshop is funded by The Danish Council for Independent Research Sapere Aude Fellowship as a part of the project *Wrestling with Archons: Gnosticism as a Critical Theory of Culture*. The Project is affiliated with the Centre for the Study of Antiquity and Christianity at the School of Culture and Society of Aarhus University
For further details see <http://projects.au.dk/wrestlingarchons/>

Arrival Day: 22nd May

- 16:00 *Arrival at Sandbjerg*
- 17:30-18:00 *Welcome, Presentation of the Seminar Theme, and Introductions*
- 18:00-20:00 *First Session*
- Lawrence Vogel** (Connecticut College), "Change and Permanence: On the Possibility of Understanding of History"
- Yemima Hadad** (University of Potsdam), "Myth and Mysticism: A Study of Objectification and Interiorization in Religious Thought"
- 20:00 *Reception*

Day 1: 23rd May

- 8:00-9:00 *Breakfast*
- 9:30-11:30 *Second Session*
- Francesca Micheli** (University of Kassel), "Biological Foundation of Individuality"
- Gereon Wolters** (University of Konstanz), "On Racism / The Outcry of Mute Things" and "Biological Engineering: A Preview"
- 12:00-13:00 **Lunch**
- 13:30-15:30 *Third Session*
- Dominika Dzwonkowska** (Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw) "Seventeenth Century and After: The Meaning of Scientific and Technological Revolution."
- Theresa Morris** (Pace University, New York) "Technology and Responsibility: Reflections on the New Tasks of Ethics."
- 16:00-18:00 *Fourth Session*
- Elad Lapidot** (Freie Universität Berlin), "Jewish and Christian Elements in Philosophy: Their Share in the Emergence of the Modern Mind."
- Jonathan Cahana** (Aarhus University), "The Gnostic Syndrome: Typology of its Thought, Imagination, and Mood."
- 18:00-19:00 *Dinner*

Day 2: 24th May

- 8:00-9:00 *Breakfast*
- 9:30-11:30 *Concluding Discussion: Jonas, Climate Change, and Post-Truth*
- 12:00-13:00 *Lunch and farewell*