

The Example of Antiquity

. In the first chapter of his book *The Imperative of Responsibility*, Hans Jonas writes:

«Let us start with an ancient voice on man's powers and deeds [=acts, doing] which in an archetypal sense [=original pattern, prototype] itself strikes [= to seem to have a particular quality or feature], as it were a technological note -

the famous Chorus from Sophocles' *Antigone*».

[Lines 335-370]

You can read here four Chorus stanzas of this famous ancient Greek tragedy from 5th century B.C.

n. 1

Many the wonders but nothing more wondrous than man.
This thing crosses the sea in the winter's storm,
making his path through the roaring waves.
An she, the greatest of gods, the Earth –
deathless she is, and unwearied – he wears her away
as the ploughs go up and down from year to year
and his mules turn up the soil.

n. 2

The tribes of the lighthearted birds he ensnares, and the races
of all the wild beasts and the salty brood of the sea,
with the twisted mesh of his nets, he leads captive, this clever man.
He controls with craft the beasts of the open air,
who roam the hills. The horse with his shaggy mane
he holds and harnesses, yoked about the neck,
and the strong bull of the mountain.

n. 3

Speech and thought like the wind
and the feelings that make the town,
he has taught himself, and shelter against the cold,
refuge from rain. Ever resourceful is he.
He faces no future helpless. Only against death
shall he call for aid in vain. But from baffling maladies
has he contrived escape.

Group n. 4

Clever beyond all dreams
the inventive craft that he has
which may drive him one time or another to well or ill.
When he honors the laws of the land and the gods' sworn right
high indeed is his city; but stateless the man
who dare to do what is shameful

On this website I transcribed Hans Jonas's original comment at these ancient stanzas, which he wrote in the first chapter of *The Imperative of Responsibility*.

«This awestruck homage to man's powers tells of his violent and violating irruption into the cosmic order, the self-assertive invasion of nature's various domains by his restless cleverness; but also of his building – through the self-taught powers of speech and thought and social sentiment – the home for his very humanity, the artifact of the city. The raping of nature and the civilizing of man go hand in hand»

Awestruck = adj, feeling of great respect for the importance, difficulty or seriousness of someone or something

Insert your concise considerations about these Hans Jonas thought in the forum of the website.