Hans Jonas on ontology / metaphysics

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What is the ontology or metaphysics of Hans Jonas? Because his ontological view obviously takes a stand in favor of teleology, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Robert Spaemann characterizes him to be Aristotelian or Neo-Aristotelian. However, in my view, there is a significant unignorable difference between Aristotle and Jonas: Aristotelian teleological metaphysics is continuous with physics but not related to ethics, whereas Jonas thinks of metaphysics to be continuous with ethics in such a way that both these two sciences are mediated by his very idea of teleology, in particular, of the purposefulness of Being.

What follows from this pivotal role of teleology as the bridge between ethics and ontology is that Jonas characterizes his ontology as “the ontology of time” in contrast to Platonic “ontology of eternity” (*Das Prinzip Verantwortung* [=*PV*], 226). However, this ontology (or metaphysics) teaches us the following at the same time: For the sake of such fragile Being, there should be humans who have a duty to secure it at present and should bring up and be responsible for those who will have the same duty in the next generation and then should, in turn, be responsible for their own successor who will do this in the generation after next, etc. According to my interpretation, this is what Jonas would like to mean, when he argues that only metaphysics can tell us the reason why human beings should exist and how they should be (cf. *Philosophische Untersuchungen und metaphysische Vermutungen* [=*PUMV*], 136; *PV*, 91f.).

More important, however, Jonas in his later years says that the above-mentioned teaching of ontology is “simply formal metaphysics” and distinguishes it from “non-formal and substantial metaphysics [materiale, inhaltliche Metaphysik]” (*PUMV*, 144). Whether such non-formal metaphysics is sheer dogmatic metaphysics or not is worth considering.