

The Threat And Challenges To Technology: Ethical Values According To Hans Jonas

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Received: 11/09/2023; Accepted: 02/01/2024; Published:
12/01/2024

Abstract:

It is certain that the old rules of ethics related to different standards of justice, mercy, moderation and chastity will always remain legitimate and credible within the circle of human interaction with each other, but this circle does not accommodate another field that has witnessed an unparalleled growth of collective activity due to the new system of applications spread by technology and its results. Very recent results. The results of these applications cannot be included in traditional ethics, as there has been a change in the nature of human action, due to the new capabilities, which are simply related, according to Jonas, to modern technology. What it was before, especially since man was not in every era without technology, and therefore Yonas says: "My question aims to explain the difference or contrast of humanity between an advanced technology and another that dates back to earlier times."

Keywords: Moral; Technology; Challenges; Humanity; Nature.

Introduction:

Human interventions in nature, as Jonas confirms, have never disturbed the balance because they have not disrupted the kingdom that he established for himself to bring about a change in the nature of things (Husel and Edmund, 2002). There has been no disruption in the stability and essence of nature since it is a constant system, as human life occurs between what is stable and what is variable. The former is related to nature, while the latter is connected to human actions and production within the city that provides a certain level of stability through the laws created to govern it.

However, all of this was just the beginning of a never-ending path of conquest with no conclusion, and it is precisely here that humanity began to dare to humanize the necessity of nature and subjugate it through its cunning and skill, making it a dream that took control until he felt the tremor of audacity and recklessness engulfing him (Husserl, 1976).

Thus, it can be said that human interventions in nature are necessary because they are vital without desiring to disrupt the natural balance. Today, humans face the consequences resulting from technological capabilities, so it is wise to ask a normative question: What should he do and what should he avoid? To what extent can he reach and where should he stop?

The Interconnection between Human and Nature:

Today is entirely different from yesterday, specifically referring to the ancient Greek era, an idea that Jonas intended to clarify through his interpretation and commentary on the theogony of Sophocles, focusing on the final sections of the poem, which express the extraordinary intelligence of humans by boldly infiltrating the kingdom of nature (Husserl, *La crise de Sciences européenne et la phénoménologietranscendantale*, 1976).

As for the human mind, it has made him the most superior being, not only because of his ability to conquer nature and subjugate its creatures but also because of his self-education, making the city and its laws a confined territory "opposed to others." He is the only one who has tamed circumstances to suit his will and needs, except for death, which stands before him as an impotent force. Despite praising and admiring the abilities of humans and their vast and diverse skills, they are considered, in comparison to other beings, the ones who, out of necessity, venture into the depths of nature. Despite the complete freedom that humans have exercised with the offspring of nature on land, sea, and air, it will not cause any change in it (Husserl, *La crise de l'humanité européenne et la philosophie*, 2012).

The Technological Hazard Era:

In the speech delivered by Hans Jonas on the occasion of receiving the "German Peace Prize for Literature" on October 11, 1987, in Frankfurt, he began his speech with the words of the German poet and philosopher, Goethe, in his poem *Faust*, which represents a model of a human being seeking more power and perfection through means beyond nature to the

extent that he triumphs over it by gaining new land on the producible sea. However, the matter primarily concerns comparing the danger that threatened humanity in Goethe's poem with the danger looming around humans (Husserl & Edmund, 1955). Faust spoke of the raging wave that flows from the outside and threatens to encompass everyone. Whereas the danger that threatens everyone today is a new wave, more dangerous than its predecessor, as it emanates from within and then rushes to sweep away everything in its path, including the prominent power of our actions, which has been produced by technological and scientific culture, even if it is sometimes generated by the wild nature that needs to be tamed. From our perspective as humans, we discover the damages through which our danger spreads to the Earth, as humans have worked to change nature as a whole. It has become a much greater danger to itself compared to the danger it used to pose in the past, and it has become a danger to itself to a far greater extent. It must be realized that the new danger or "the raging wave" mentioned by Jonas relates to genetic manipulation, nuclear interactions, or ecological danger in general. "The beautiful dream of Faust has dissipated with the mere awakening of humans to a cold and frightening daylight" (Husserl & Edmund, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, 1963).

From this perspective, the present must be connected to the reality that has changed significantly from what it used to be. This does not mean that the new social order only needs new ethics, but the entire field of application is considered new, concerning human rights, what should be done, and what should not be done (Husserl E., *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 1969). It is a completely new situation, a highly technological stage to the extent that it has extended to humans themselves to the point where they become part of its subjects.

Thus, the era of consciousness of well-being and improving human life, which technology has interrupted itself, has turned into a threat to existence. Moreover, it tends to confirm the physical threat and its repercussions on human nature itself. Humans now face the surprises resulting from technological capabilities. In addition to that, danger is anticipated by predicting the distortion of the human image, which provides it with a conceptual framework that allows for warning about this danger. The risk does not only concern the fate of humanity but also its essence. "It is the fear that calls for action. Humanity is currently in a situation similar to the end of

the world." There are risks associated with biotechnology that can distort the human species, not in the near term but in the distant future, knowing that the present generations are responsible for the well-being and existence of future generations (Khoury, 1981).

Today, humans face the surprises resulting from technological capabilities. Therefore, it is wise to ask a normative question: What should one do, and what should one avoid? To what extent can one proceed and where should one stop?

Jonas sees the difficulty of stopping technological applications in the liberal democratic society. It is a path that cannot be stopped by intellectual wisdom or political shrewdness. While he initially excludes the extreme mediation of the end of the world due to nuclear interactions, "ethics has nothing to say about the suicide of humanity except unconditional refusal," which everyone would agree upon even in the absence of all philosophies. Although the philosopher is at the heart of the questions posed, he goes beyond merely clarifying the differences between analyses. He defines an approach to thinking that provides individuals with means to contemplate their relationship with life in general on one hand, and their relationship with death on the other. Hence, Jonas considered medical research to be more legitimate and found a fertile ground in which to apply his theory of responsibility.

Jonas perceives the difficulty of stopping technological applications in a liberal democratic society. It is a path that cannot be stopped by intellectual wisdom or political cunning. Although he initially excludes extreme mediation in the face of nuclear interactions as the end of the world, stating that ethics does not have a statement about the suicide of humanity except for unconditional rejection, upon which everyone would agree even in the absence of all philosophies. Despite the philosopher's presence at the heart of the questions he poses, he also determines the approach to thinking that provides the individual with means of thinking about their relationship with life in general on the one hand, and their relationship with death on the other hand. That is why Jonas considered research in the medical field to be more legitimate and found in it a fertile ground to revive his theory of responsibility in practice. Can humans in the field of medicine monitor research progress and regulate medical technologies at the same time, or do they focus on their own research, especially in genetic engineering? And if there is a glimmer of

hope for those suffering from chronic or rare diseases, is it not cruel to tell them then that we cannot continue research on the grounds that these technologies have serious consequences? Jonas does not reject improving the genetic nature of humans, although it is very difficult to draw a distinction between repair and creative transformation, but the danger lies in certain efforts that can alleviate specific suffering.

What is the basis on which it relies to determine whether this matter is permissible or not? Jonas says in this regard: "We can do that thanks to philosophical and metaphysical knowledge of the foundational principles of ethics. The religious person does not need this kind of knowledge, although it is better for ethics to be separate from religion. Duties and responsibilities are supposed to be justified in a way that allows them to be recognized even by atheists." But rational justification is not enough, although it is a pressing necessity. Jonas explains the conditions for direct implementation of medical testing, which include providing justice and freedom, along with all the means that are supposed to ensure protection for humans, especially considering that this era is characterized by the synchrony of research with humanitarian topics seen as a social interest. Additionally, the existing polarity between rights and needs, and the interests of the individual and society in the field of public health, is recorded, especially since basic human rights are threatened in the fields of medicine and biology. What are those rights, and what threatens them?

Secondly: Human Rights in the Field of Medicine and Biology

There is a long list of rights in this regard, which many ethical philosophers strive to defend and discuss (Hanafi, 1990). The most important of these rights are as follows: the right to life and the preservation of one's existence, ensuring continuity of well-being. This includes condemning certain phenomena such as abortion, euthanasia, and risking the lives of specific individuals in the context of their participation in medical tests or experiments. It also encompasses issues like the disposal of surplus embryos in artificial insemination and reproductive cloning, as well as all matters specifically related to the human genome. Furthermore, it extends to "defending the right to humanity's continuity of existence." In this field, according to Jonas, bioethics represents a response to the new threat posed by the advanced capabilities possessed by biotechnology.

Jonas has gone so far as to reject the use of these means that demonstrate their threats to human existence (Hassan, 1980). Prometheus has undoubtedly succeeded in breaking free from his restraints, and science has granted him powers that were previously unknown. Alongside these powers, it has unleashed absolute economic impetus. All of this necessarily calls for new ethics aimed at restraining human capacities before they become a curse upon humanity. These rights must also include "the right to life," which some see as linked to the right to freedom and its necessary components, such as the "right to determine one's destiny and freedom of choice." These encompass the freedom to participate in scientific experiments or refrain from doing so, the freedom to undergo or refuse treatment, or the freedom to choose between continuing life or putting an end to it, among other freedoms demanded by contemporary humans. Hansen Jonas summarizes these rights into three categories: freedom to participate in medical experiments or refrain from doing so, the right to a compassionate death, and the right to preserve the entirety of human nature.

Informed Consent Principle in Medical Experiments:

The participation of individuals in medical experiments is necessary as it allows for the advancement of knowledge and medical research, as exemplified by Louis Pasteur's transition from animal experimentation to human experimentation, starting with Claude Bernard and continuing with George Kanhilham. Acceptance of treatment in our day is increasingly acceptance of experimentation, under strict professional responsibility approved within the framework of informed consent. In this context, Jonas explains that when individuals are encouraged to participate in medical experiments for the sake of knowledge, society is then seeking to improve living conditions rather than simply maintaining a static state, as is the case during times of war. This perspective can be seen as a result of the common good. However, if this view of the ethical concept aimed at ensuring autonomy is insufficient, it should be replaced with a concept that allows society to clarify the choices it has made and determine what it finds acceptable in this field.

So, what category is given priority in biomedical research? First and foremost, attention should be given to the vulnerable and easily influenced category, which includes individuals who do not have sufficient freedom to accept or refuse participation in

biomedical tests. This raises specific ethical problems. Can it be suggested, for example, to involve prisoners in protocols without direct benefit, especially if they perceive that their cooperation will lead to a reduction in their sentence or that they will receive special treatment? It should be noted that the list of vulnerable or incapacitated individuals is extensive, including those with mental illnesses, disabilities, and fetuses (Samaah, 1991). Can these individuals truly have the freedom to choose acceptance or refusal? Therefore, some thinkers warn of the danger of sacrificing vulnerable categories, as they are all victims and thus inherently connected to their weakness and susceptibility, making it difficult to exempt them from the list of incapacitated individuals.

However, it is intuitively possible to accept vulnerable categories to participate in medical studies, provided that ethical standards are adhered to. Jonas addressed this issue, being the first to apply his theoretical research in the field of biomedicine in his work "Technology, Medicine, and Ethics," in which he analyzed the connection between ethics and the array of problems arising from contemporary biotechnology, particularly concerning medical techniques such as reproductive cloning, the implications of brain death criteria, and the issues raised by technologies applied to reproduction. Despite not being a medical specialist, Jonas expressed a deep and clear perspective on these matters (Qannsouh, 1989). He started from the premise that biomedical research is not a social obligation but rather a voluntary choice, except in the case of epidemics where society never risks its own survival. Society also does not have the right to deny individuals the practice of this type of activity because subjecting oneself as a research subject entails exposing the person to a series of risks, obligations, and significant variables such as time consumption, lifestyle patterns, health conditions, and others.

Furthermore, it is noted that in every scientific research, greater importance is given to the means, which diminishes the significance of the fundamental subject that humans economize with. Instead of viewing the individual as a person with inherent dignity that must be preserved, they are regarded as mere objects (Al-Zara'i, 2005).

As for Jonas, participation in medical experiments is considered a voluntary act that entails measures of sacrifice and altruism in order to save the lives of others and contribute to societal progress. In this sense, Jonas emphasizes the ethical

aspiration of conquering disease and the societal right to health, in addition to the availability of necessary means to achieve this benefit. Thus, self-sacrifice becomes a condition that arises from the aspiration for scientific advancement and represents a highly noble ethical quality. Jonas also distinguishes between two types of ethics: the ethics of minimal decency and the ethics of nobility. The ethics of minimal decency involve complete individual obligations that align with the rights of other individuals. These ethics are imposed in the public sphere through rights and duties. On the other hand, the ethics of nobility encourage higher moral values where duties are not imposed as rights but are pursued for the sake of virtue. Accordingly, participation in research is not considered a legal requirement but rather a part of the ethics of nobility. Jonas asserts that such participation holds great moral value and is associated with the sacred, deserving strict protection. To address this, he proposes three principles to safeguard this sacred value: voluntary consent, self-realization, and respect for autonomy. Therefore, the inclusion of an individual in research should be based on the utmost respect for their will and their freedom to participate, as it is not an obligation but a right dependent on their consent.

The first condition, regarding the principle of consent, emphasizes the individual's freedom to participate in the research. However, it does not merely refer to a simple act of giving consent. It is expected that their will be freely given, with complete freedom, and the individual should be fully aware of their participation in the research. "Simple consent, in most cases, is equivalent to mere permission or license."

The second condition relates to voluntariness, which stems from the individual's own will and not from external coercion or domination. Therefore, it is expected to exclude the mentally impaired and individuals subject to military authority.

The third condition, what Jonas calls the "principle of self-realization," means that the choice of an individual to participate in the research should be driven by ethical motives rather than being solely for the sake of the anticipated benefits for the individuals involved in the study. Therefore, the best individuals who meet these conditions are those who understand the risks and benefits of the studies, possess the necessary ethical competencies, and have the ability to align the success of the research with personal interests.

Jonas acknowledges the existence of this dilemma and anticipates the serious consequences that arise from the cessation of bioethical research. This raises the following question: To what extent do the principles of self-realization and the principle of the descending order lead to the limitation or cessation of bioethical research?

It is a question that indicates the difficulty of the ethical task that must be performed and assigns it a crucial role, just as the responsibility of the physician-researcher does. The differences cannot be fully enumerated, and only the physician-researcher clearly understands them: it is the appearance of symptoms that must be decided under conditions determined by his profession. Hence, there are certain categories of individuals who are more vulnerable than others, which requires the protection of these individuals as a physician. It is also supposed that there should be harmony between the specific requirements of preferred issues at the economic level and at the medical level, in addition to the necessity of giving special attention to individuals who are not in a position to freely refuse or accept their consent. This refers to those who have given their consent under pressure or coercion or those who do not derive any personal or selfish benefit from the research, or whose desperate health condition has compelled them to participate. In Jonas' words, "Participation in medical research is supposed to be based on the ethical principle concerning consent and acceptance, which are the two principles that define the social responsibility of enlightened and intelligent research, as well as the elimination of the harsh tests practiced by the Nazis." (Held, 2000).

Therefore, the primary goal of the law is not only to facilitate research but also to protect the individual and to compel the researcher and his assistants to bear responsibility.

It follows from that that participation in medical research should not be subject to any obligation, but rather should stem from voluntary acceptance, as long as the individual is the only being whose existence is inseparable from their freedom. However, the dimensions of humanity lose their significant aspects if freedom is lost. Despite this, there are several objections between the "right to existence" and the "right to freedom" in the field of medicine and biology. Human freedom is limited by the freedom of others, and it is a right among the rights of others. Furthermore, it is linked to another right that

precedes it, which is the "right to existence or life." Jonas considers this right as the source from which all other rights originate. As for death, Jonas considers it an evil or a reality that everyone must submit to. In exchange for the right to life, the duty to live is established, which is considered a condition of human nature. (Ismail, 1998).

Every human being is destined to die, and the law has no authority over this inherent characteristic. In this regard, can we discuss the right to a merciful or peaceful death?

2- The Right to Euthanasia (a Merciful Death):

The discussion about rights and ethical efforts has often revolved around legal rights related to the right to life, the right to happiness, or any other positive matter. However, the discussion about the right to a merciful death is relatively new or a question that arose with new terminologies at the moment when medical efforts, especially advanced technologies, allowed for the postponement of death and the prolongation of suffering. This may have opened the door for the existence of a minimum threshold, thus making it permissible to talk about the right to a death of compassion and mercy. (Basic Phenomenology Milestones by Husserl, 2000) After discussing the consequences of biotechnological advancements, the right to death no longer holds intrinsic meaning, but rather refers to the right to commit suicide or assist others in putting an end to their suffering. From this point on, the right to a merciful death will not be limited only to those who commit suicide but will extend to those who are completely different from them. Despite the individual's suffering from an incurable illness, modern medical techniques can keep the human body alive, thereby increasing their suffering. However, does this necessarily lead others to the point where it becomes necessary to prevent someone from dying when they have the freedom to choose and reject treatment that they see as futile?

In terms of ethical considerations, the right to life encompasses the right to receive medical treatment for everyone initially, as a principle of reciprocity. Here, Jonas clarifies the difference between suicide and not resisting death, which is the subject of the right to a merciful death. "It is supposed to be a right that cannot be fully exercised, just like the right to life. Therefore, no one has the right or the obligation to force anyone to continuously deny their self-determination of

destiny." Hence, there is no duty that overrides the patient's right to choose the most appropriate solution for their death. Thus, the death or non-death of a person falls within the realm of choice. There is also an emphasis on distinguishing between a patient who can decide not to continue treatment of their own free will and a hospitalized person who suffers to the extent that they seek assistance from others to make the choice on their behalf. (Philosophy as a Rigorous Science).

Conclusion:

Today is completely different from yesterday, specifically referring to the Greek era. This is what Jonas intended to clarify through his interpretation and commentary on Sophocles' *Theogony*, focusing on the final passages of the poem, which express the superhuman intelligence of humans as they boldly invade the realm of nature.

Their minds have made them the highest beings, not only because of their ability to conquer nature and subdue its creatures but also because of their self-teaching, which makes the city and its laws an enclosed territory against others. They are the only ones who have bent circumstances to their will and needs, except for death, which stands before them helpless. Despite the praise and admiration for human capabilities and the vastness and diversity of their limited skills, they are considered in comparison to other beings as the ones who ventured into the depths of nature due to their needs. Despite the complete freedom that humans have exercised with the offspring of nature on land, sea, and air, it has not caused actual harm to the creatures when they carved out their small kingdom from their larger kingdom. They plow and cultivate the land every year, yet it does not tire them because it lacks a specific time, just like the sea, which also has no defined time. There are also no oil tankers that traverse the sea's surface, causing pollution through leaks, nor are there any waste settling in its depths.

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