

Ethical Considerations on Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Blerina KARAGJOZI

University of Tirana

Introduction

“Act so that the effects of your actions are in harmony with the permanence of genuine human life.” Hans Jonas

This work examines ethical philosophy and some questions related to philosophical genesis of ecological crisis together with ethical issues raised in the age of technology. Hans Jonas, a German-American philosopher and bioethicist, is known for his work in environmental ethics and the philosophy of technology, particularly concerning the ethical implications of technological advancements. Jonas engaged into various ethical concerns, offering insightful perspectives that continue to shape contemporary discourse. He was deeply worried by the rapid pace of technological advancement and its potential consequences for humanity. Central to his ethical concerns was the concept of “the imperative of responsibility,” which he articulated in his influential work “The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age”. Jonas argued that as humans gain unprecedented power through technology, they also bear an unprecedented responsibility for the consequences of their actions. He elaborates on the need for an ethical framework that prioritizes the long-term well-being of both present and future generations, urging for a profound reconsideration of our relationship with nature and technology.

One of Jonas’s key concerns was the ethical implications of modern biotechnology, particularly genetic engineering. He warned against the “arrogance” of manipulating the very essence of life without fully understanding the long-term consequences. Jonas feared that the pursuit of technological progress without a proper ethical reflection could lead to catastrophic outcomes, such as the loss of human dignity and the erosion of moral values. His ethical stance called for cautiousness, humility, and a deep respect for the fundamental value of life.

Furthermore, Jonas was deeply worried by the environmental crisis and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. He argued that humanity’s relentless pursuit of growth and consumption was leading to ecological devastation and endangering the survival of future generations. Jonas urged for a fundamental shift in values, advocating for an ethic of stewardship and respect for the natural world. He emphasized the connection of all living beings and the moral imperative to preserve the integrity of ecosystems for the sake of biodiversity and the well-being of future generations.

In addition to his concerns about technology and the environment, Jonas dealt with ethical issues related to politics, society, and human freedom. He warned against the dangers of totalitarianism and the erosion of individual autonomy in an increasingly technocratic society. Jonas called for a renewed emphasis on human dignity, freedom, and moral responsibility as essential principles for navigating the complexities of the modern world.

Philosophy and Ethical Considerations as a Path towards a Sustainable Future

In his influential work in contemporary moral philosophy, “The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age”, Jonas explores the ethical implications of modern technology and its impact on human existence, as a response to the ethical challenges posed by modern technological developments. Jonas highlights the ethical implications of modern biotechnology, genetic engineering, and environmental degradation, urging for a fundamental

reconsideration of our values and priorities. He warns against the *commodification* of life and the instrumentalization of nature, advocating instead for an ethic of stewardship and respect for the natural world.

Technology as the subject of ethical considerations stems from the simple fact that technology is a manifestation of human power, meaning an action, and all human actions are subject to moral scrutiny. It is also true that the same power can be for good or ill, and by using it, humans can obey to ethical norms or violate them. (Jonas, 1979). Central to his critique is the concept of the *imperative of responsibility*, which he argues must guide our relationship with technology. He emphasises the need for a moral framework that prioritizes the long-term well-being of both present and future generations, calling for humility, caution, and a deep respect for the value of life in the face of technological power (Jonas, 1979).

In his essay “Reflections on Technology, Progress and Utopia”, Hans Jonas provides an introductory description on the meaning of progress as a term in the Western world reference. Jonas analyses out of historical and geographical references how the progress refers to public rather than private sphere, which is “a peculiarly “Western” fact”. “While there is hardly a civilization anywhere and at any time which does not, or did not, speak of individual progress on paths of personal improvement, for example, in wisdom and virtue, it seems to be a special trait of modern Western man to think of progress pre-eminently as an attribute-actual or potential- of the collective-public realm...” (Jonas, 1981).

Within the technological development, progress as a term, has evolved to a quasi-untouchable concept, given the economic, power, and political gains. But at the same time, the unavoidability of progress and that specifically technological progress is inevitable is itself a *utopic* consideration of the fact that humanity cannot stop at any point the technological development but can only submit to its effects without any power to control it.

Hans Jonas’s reflections on technology, progress, and utopia provide a deep ethical critique of modernity and its belief on technological advancement as a universal solution to human problems. In his works, particularly “The Imperative of Responsibility” and “The Phenomenon of Life”, Jonas presents a different perspective that challenges the until then prevailing optimism about the trajectory of technological progress.

At the core of Jonas’s inquiry is the question of what it means to be alive. Drawing on insights from existential phenomenology and biology, Jonas argues that life is characterized by a unique mode of being, that cannot be reduced to mere physical or chemical processes. He proposes a holistic approach to understanding life, emphasizing its irreducibility and autonomy as a phenomenon distinct from lifeless matter (Jonas, 1966).

Jonas introduces the concept of “ontological priority” to describe the fundamental difference between living and non-living beings. According to Jonas, living organisms possess an inherent drive toward self-preservation and self-realization, which distinguishes them from inert matter. He argues that the essence of life lies in its capacity for autonomy, self-organization, and purpose, which cannot be fully explained by mechanistic theories of nature. (Jonas, 1966)

Building on this ontological framework, Jonas explores the teleological dimension of life, supporting that living organisms exhibit a purposeful striving toward specific ends. Unlike non-living objects, which are governed by deterministic laws, living beings are characterized by a creative freedom that allows them to pursue their own goals and adapt to changing circumstances. Jonas’s teleological account of life challenges mechanistic and reductionistic approaches to biology, offering a more holistic and dynamic understanding of living systems.

Furthermore, Jonas reflects on the ethical implications of his biological ontology, arguing that the autonomy and fundamental value of living beings demand moral consideration. He emphasizes the ethical imperative to respect and protect the integrity of life, both human and non-human, against the threats posed by technological manipulation and environmental degradation. Jonas's ethical stance is grounded in a deep respect for the mystery and complexity of life, calling for a more harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world.

By questioning the assumption that technological progress necessarily leads to human flourishing, arguing instead that it brings about new ethical dilemmas and existential risks, he warns against the *hubris* of human mastery over nature, cautioning that the relentless pursuit of technological progress without ethical reflection could lead to catastrophic consequences for humanity and the planet.

Moreover, Jonas challenges the idea of progress as a certain march toward a utopian future, arguing that it often comes at the expense of human dignity, freedom, and moral integrity. He criticizes the modern obsession with efficiency, productivity, and consumerism, calling for a more holistic understanding of progress that involves not only technological innovation but also moral and spiritual growth.

In disagreement to the technocratic vision of utopia, Jonas suggests for a more modest and sustainable future based in humility, responsibility, and respect for human and non-human life. He calls for a revaluation of our relationship with technology and nature, emphasizing the importance of ethical deliberation, democratic participation, and cultural renewal in shaping a more human and ecologically sustainable society.

Jonas recognizes the unquestionable human power of being at the same time capable to command but also obliged to prevent. Considering technology as a creation and exercise of human power, that is a form of human action, and as all human actions should undergo a moral analysis so that every human action is compliant to ethical norms and doesn't go against. In this duality, human potential can actualize the opportunity to think responsibly and act ethically (Jonas, 1982).

Technology, as a human power, clearly falls under this general truth. But does it constitute a special case that requires an effort of ethical thinking, different from that which accompanies any human action and has been sufficient for all its kinds in the past? (Jonas, 1982) Jonas indeed thinks and tries to argue that it does constitute a novel and special case in human history.

This special case lies on the *human capacities*. Technology has enabled humanity with an unseen and unprecedented power to shape the world, manipulate nature, and alter the course of human evolution. This power asymmetry creates unique ethical challenges, as the consequences of technological interventions can be far-reaching and irreversible.

Within the ethical framework, Jonas stresses the importance of considering the long-term implications of actions rather than just short-term gains. Unlike many ethical dilemmas that have immediate consequences, the impacts of technology often unfold over long periods and across generations. Hans Jonas emphasized the importance of considering the long-term implications of technological developments, as decisions made today can have profound effects on future generations, potentially altering the course of human civilization.

Technological systems are characterized by their complexity and unpredictability, making it difficult to foresee all potential consequences of technological interventions. This uncertainty complicates ethical decision-making, as it is challenging to assess the risks and benefits of new technologies with certainty.

Jonas expressed concerns about the potential threats that technology poses to human

dignity, autonomy, and freedom. He warned against the dehumanizing effects of technology and the erosion of moral values in a technocratic society, calling for a renewed emphasis on human-centred values in the face of technological progress.

Ecological Crisis and the Threat We Pose to the Planet's Ecology

In his essay "Philosophy at the End of the Century", Hans Jonas describes the genesis of the ecological crisis he sees arising from "the threat we pose to the planet's ecology". In this essay he treats philosophical issues not only through a comparative method but rather considered the comparison itself as a holistic overview for matters that can deal with a wide range of anything and everything. Like natural sciences that have a well-defined and clearly recognized method for them to follow, philosophy enjoys the possibility to reflect on the method used by every other science and can identify and possibly produce a binding method of philosophizing, which maybe it never will do so (Jonas et al., 1994).

Jonas considers philosophical views as of a personal nature, as a combination of personal contributions to ongoing discussions by acts of freedom of analyses and invites social researchers to turn their eyes to the past, raise questions on the certainty of the scientific findings so to ensure their accuracy at the present. By doing so, we should treat the past as a subject of historical interest. He underlines the "supremacy" of philosophical considerations versus scientific considerations past the centuries and human development. He argues that while there can no longer be an alchemist or astrologer whom we take seriously, we can still take seriously an Aristotelian or Hegelian because in philosophy we cannot have a binding consensus about what is correct and what is false. Moreover, we cannot even desire one, it would spell the death of philosophy (Jonas et al., 1994).

This approach is quite interesting, in paving the way towards freedom of will and choice, that both determine the responsibility that comes as a result of voluntary actions. Jonas calls for self-examination while taking individual decisions that will affect the state of beings. His views on philosophy, as a subject of thought, as a practice of analysis, as a matter to develop intuition through exploring irrationality and making logical decisions informed by historical lessons and scientific findings, is a combination of human physical sensations (needs) versus the estimations of logical qualitative awareness by posing quantitative questions. He mentions the phenomenology of Husserl while analysing the simple statement of "I am hungry" where the biological needs are questioned by the unphilosophical considerations whether there is enough food and how to obtain it, and consequently raising questions concerning social justice and the concept of the just and unjust distribution of property as well as good and bad form of society (Jonas et al., 1994).

Jonas continues that based on such biological needs, and on such non-philosophical considerations a truth from Bertold Brecht comes strong as Mack says in Threepenny Opera "First comes the grub, then come the morals." in other words "food comes first, and moral interest comes after". In a metaphorical way, the meaning of such saying relates to meeting the survival needs which in the times of Great Depression (1929-39) was stronger than ethical actions. Humans need to eat first, and after that, can pray for the bad deeds caused to feed their hunger. This concept comes in line with Brecht's criticism about capitalism and the bourgeoisie.

In the latter half of the 20th century, Jonas's work moves away from traditional ethical frameworks, particularly from Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, and deals with the unprecedented power that humanity holds over nature through technology. Heidegger's critique of technology (Heidegger, 1977), a complex and deeply philosophical critique rooted in his concern for the impact of modern technology on human existence, culture, and the relationships between humanity and the world, inspired Jonas, especially his criticism of technology as an instrumental force challenging human existence.

Jonas is strongly shaken by the occurrences of the Second World War. The reality of what the world and humanity had been experiencing together with the tasks it left behind could not be ignored. From the heaven of eternal thought, philosophical contemplation descended to earth with its conflicting forces and intervened in the course of affairs. Politics and society became the dual focus of philosophical interest. Noble abstention and distancing from events of the day was not an option any longer, therefore moral engagement permeated theoretical investigation (Jonas et al., 1994).

One of the events that made Jonas rethink the role of technological development in the industrialized Western world was the nuclear bomb thrown over Hiroshima (August, 1945). By using the scientific research combined with technological advantage, this act enabled the end of Second World War but at the same time triggered a whole new concept of fear, anxiety and moral questions posed in the face of a human-developed continuous and collective danger, a real uncontrollable threat for self-destruction. Jonas argues that under these newly arisen circumstances the philosophical critique on the role of technological development found itself covered by shadows of terror (as in the case of Gunther Anders). Jonas was deeply affected by the scripts, terror and realization from his fellow friend writer and researcher Anders. “Yes, it is incontrovertible that August 6, 1945, namely Hiroshima, meant a fracture for me. It has been the deepest rupture of my life, but certainly not the first.” (Anders, 1961).

After a few years in 1954, Anders would be heading towards the establishment of an anti-nuclear movement. This moment - Anders says, - of awareness has served as a Copernican revolution of *hope* (the not-yet) gives way to living *without hope* (the no-longer) to researchers and scientists having witnessed the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Anders attended in 1958 an antinuclear meeting in Tokyo where he presented in a seminar on the topic of “Theses for the atomic age” where he spoke about the nuclear threat that foreshadows a “world without humanity,” highlighting the radical contingency of human life, which is now defined as “suspended”: “we are those who exist-still. The entire humanity is eliminable.” (Anders, 1958).

The unpredictability and uncontrollability of the technological triumph over human race and world of species, suddenly unveiled the real threat of a catastrophe and apocalypse initiated potentially by human factors. Technology has shown its negative sides and activated therefore a whole new basis for new philosophical questions to be asked.

We will continue to raise questions about technology. Asking constructs a way. Therefore, I would advise focusing primarily on the manner and not concentrating attention on isolated sentences and themes. The manner is a way of thinking. All ways of thinking, in the manner of perception, lead through language in an extraordinary way. We will raise questions about technology, and for this, we must prepare a relationship of freedom towards it. The relationship will be free if it opens our human existence to the essence of technology (Heidegger, 1977). While assessing critically Heidegger’s pessimism, Jonas incorporates Heidegger’s insights to develop a more constructive philosophy that acknowledges the double potential of technology for both harm and benefit.

Jonas’s exploration of technology as an ethical subject provides a comprehensive and provocative framework for navigating the ethical challenges presented by technological advancement. His emphasis on the ethics of responsibility, the unpredictability of technological outcomes, the biophysical foundation of ethics, and the principle of responsibility contribute together to a holistic approach to thinking about the future.

Moral engagement and raising people’s awareness continuously – a lesson that comes from Socrates – is a moral duty of the philosopher. Therefore, Jonas considers the task of moral philosophy to discuss the controversial problem of nuclear weapons as a sensitive area

of non-clearly defined boundaries that as a result and product of human mind, together with the previous dreams of power would have to be accompanied with new unforeseen and unforeseeable challenges. For this to be achieved, Jonas proposes a novel cooperation between philosophers, scientists, and representatives of the life sciences, to clarify the new questions that arise from new discoveries for example the advancements in the biological and medical research.

In all he does, man seeks some good as end or means (Aristotle, 1893). What is the good that man seeks as an end scope with these technological advancements, might one ask in the Aristotelian light of ethics? Why is the technological development a concern of philosophy and moral philosophy? Until now – according to Jonas – philosophy has posed questions about the good life of the individual, about the good society, about the good state. Since its beginnings, it has always concerned itself with human actions insofar as these occurred between human beings but scarcely ever with the human individual as an acting force in nature (Jonas et al., 1994).

Is there any dual struggle between good and evil that characterizes this new phenomenon of human development? Suddenly – as Jonas discusses - one of the oldest philosophical questions, that of the relationship between human being and nature, between mind and matter- in other words, the age-old question of dualism- took on a totally new form (Jonas et al., 1994).

The human individual has always tried to describe nature, and then posed questions to understand natural phenomenon, making a good use of it. Inspired by the Enlightenment philosophers who brought faith in human reasoning through rationalism, science, and the growth of industrial economic theories enabled by technological development, humanity fell into the trap of the so-called human right to use natural resources for unlimited benefits and economic development. But to address this problem a new conception of human beings should be developed to discuss on the disastrous impact of human development upon nature.

Jonas poses to the philosophical table a very practical problem, the *urgent threat of extinction*. Such threat is posed to the biosphere and not only to human race and is magnified due to the developments of technology and its impact on the natural environment. He calls for a reconciliation between our special status as humans in the centre of our only world, the planet Earth, as the only source of our life and the universe. Humankind has arrived at the stage of development, when human ambition has caused perhaps unintentionally the threat of a crisis lit by the flashes of an approaching storm. The planet Earth, its present and its future has become the central concern of philosophy.

Perceiving itself as a dominant species, regardless of the destructive consequences for the less favored, humanity now finds itself facing the only way to exist, through a new ecological perspective. Ethical responsibility includes non-human entities and the environment, emphasizing an ecological perspective that highlights the fundamental value of biodiversity and the need to maintain the delicate balance of ecosystems.

By using scientific knowledge, brought to the discussion by natural sciences, Jonas conveys the example from Copernicus. To our knowledge – he says - to our knowledge it is no longer the entire cosmos that is the dwelling place of life but solely our planet Earth. Nothing in the remainder of the gigantic universe guarantees that there must be such a dwelling place at all. Therefore, we must regard ourselves and all life around us as a cosmic rarity, a stroke of luck that caused a potentiality, hidden in matter's womb and as a rule remaining hidden, to become, as an exception, reality (Jonas et al., 1994). As we continue to discuss on the implications of rapid technological advancements, Jonas's insights remain crucial, urging us to maintain an ethical stance that prioritizes responsibility, ecological awareness, and the well-being of current and future generations.

At the core of his discourse is the broad idea of responsibility, asserting that the extraordinary power given to humanity by technological progress requires an equivalent ethical obligation. Jonas's ethical framework brings together responsibility, predictive ethics, biodiversity, sustainable technological development, and the Promethean gap into a comprehensive vision for navigating the ethical challenges of the technological age. In his view, a key component constitutes predictive ethics, whereby a proactive and careful approach to technological progress should be maintained, emphasizing the importance of ethical reflection before embarking on journeys within the new technological frontiers. Jonas expands the ethical scope beyond anthropocentric views, emphasizing the crucial value of biodiversity and calling for a responsible approach that acknowledges the interaction of all forms of life.

Late in the evolution of life we encounter ourselves- human beings. We appeared on the scene only very recently. The span of time from the Paleolithic Age to the era of scientific technology is a long one in human history but very short in evolutionary terms, and since the rise of the modern natural sciences in the seventeenth century the tempo of change has accelerated exponentially. What we are experiencing today is the paradox of excessive success that threatens to turn into a catastrophe by destroying its own foundation in the natural world. In the history of life, our entrance was an event with immense consequences, and it has not yet been determined whether we are equal to them. With us, the power of thought intervened in Earth's further development and severely impaired those biological mechanisms in effect until then that ensured the equilibrium of ecological systems (Jonas et al., 1994).

Environmental Crisis, Climate Change and Sustainable Development

To our generation, living in times when the exploitation of nature, the voracious use of natural resources, the mining operations for mineral extraction, large-scale fishing operations, uncontrolled carbon dioxide emissions, and global consumption practices, driven by rapid economic growth under the guise of capitalism and market dominance, have resulted in massive environmental destruction. Sustainability is a key criterion for responsible technological progress, ensuring the well-being of the planet and future generations. What is the fundamental responsibility of humans towards our planet, the conservation of nature, respect for biodiversity, and the ethical issues that arise from this? How do local social values interact with global powers regarding environmental issues to address the environmental threat to humanity's future? What is required of science, society, and morality in times of environmental crisis and threats from climate change?

Let us consider an example of the Earth's Sustainability Index, an alarm bell for the level of consumption that we as global citizens have embraced without being aware that it is precisely, we who, with our greed for everything and now, are depleting natural resources that are not infinite. In 1970, Canadian ecologist William Rees introduced the concept of the "ecological footprint," a method to measure human demand for products related to ecosystems and biomass. This method quantifies the demand for resources and supply in terms of the necessary natural area to support these needs. Using a zone as a measure of natural capital supporting life was chosen to highlight that many basic ecosystem services and ecological resources are directed from areas where photosynthesis occurs, demonstrating how humanity is constrained by nature's capacity to transform low-quality solar energy into high-quality chemical energy and living matter.

In 1990, inspired by Rees's work and his ecological footprint concept, Swiss regional planner Mathis Wackernagel and American biologist Susan Burns founded the International Footprint Network, dedicated to promoting the concept of the ecological footprint. Thanks to their research, it was possible to calculate in 2006 that Earth Overshoot Day, the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year, was December 19, marking the first time the scale of the planet's natural resource consumption was highlighted. In less than four years, by 2010, this date was recalculated to be August 21, reflecting

a significant increase in the level of global resource consumption. In 2017, the date fell on July 29, indicating the increase in ecological deficit, and by 2019, global calculations touched July 25. During the year 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic, the date underwent a recalculation a few days later, offering a correlation on how the reduction in human activity could delay the date of Earth Overshoot Day. Why is it important to think about the unsustainable way we are using our planet's resources? Let's pause for a moment and reflect on our actions, decisions, way of life and *our responsibility* to future generations and those who have not yet been born.

Scientists who have studied climate issues, through scientific findings, have shown that humans are responsible for almost all global warming over the past 200 years. Through the burning of fossil fuels, greenhouse gases (GHGs) are released (including carbon dioxide and methane) which act as a protective layer around the Earth. This "greenhouse" layer traps outgoing solar heat and has contributed to rising temperatures on the planet's surface faster than at any other time in at least the last two thousand years. (IPCC 2023)

We live in a time when the melting of icebergs poses a real threat. Researchers at the University of Leeds have discovered the dramatic impact of climate change on Greenland's iconic ice sheet. Over the past three decades, approximately 28,489 square kilometres, equivalent to the size of Albania, have melted, leaving behind rugged rocks, boulders, and shrub-covered areas (Grimes et al., 2024).

A risk of global catastrophe lies ahead of us. Ice melting, the rising oceans, disappearing lands on one side, and the burning forests, dried-up rivers, and desertification on the other. Death as an image of extinction combined with the science of loss of life must be reconsidered as a new concept of social change, through sustainable development and the lenses of bioethics for a real future for all.

Climate change poses one of the most pressing challenges of our time, with far-reaching implications for ecosystems, economies, and human well-being. In the face of this existential threat, sustainable development emerges as a crucial framework for addressing the interrelated goals of environmental protection, economic growth, and social equity.

At this point, the key element in Jonas's ethical framework, with the notion of the *Promethean gap* becomes so real. This term refers to the mythical figure Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods to empower humanity. The gap refers to the disparity between the increasing technological power of humanity and its ability to predict and control the consequences of this power. Unlike Prometheus, who faced divine punishment, humans must confront the unintended consequences of their technological advancements.

Using this concept, Jonas presents the need for ethical reflection. Through the Imperative of Responsibility, he seeks to bridge this gap by promoting a reflective and responsible approach to technological progress. Decision-makers must engage in ethical reflection before advancing technologies, emphasizing a proactive and anticipatory mindset, highlighting that ethical reflection must be an integral aspect of decision-making during the development and use of new technologies.

Technology as the subject of ethical considerations stems from the simple fact that technology is a manifestation of human power, meaning an action, and all human actions are subject to moral scrutiny. It is also true that the same power can be for good or ill, and by using it, humans can adhere to ethical norms or violate them (Jonas, 1979). Taking responsibility, for Jonas, means fulfilling the human capacity for *thought* and *ethics*. The human capacity to be "who one is" is achieved not only through language and reasoning but extends to ethical actions of responsibility in the world.

The Earth does not have sufficient resources, and by relying on the myth of Prometheus to illuminate the ethical challenges arising from humanity's unprecedented control over the natural world, we have a glimmer of hope to rekindle the light of the future. But again, in Jonas *Critique of Utopia* "for the first time in the annals of man, thanks to the powers of technology, the dream appears to be capable of turning into a task... Nothing could tempt the might of Prometheus unbound more than the dream of the highest earthly good believed within its reach, and nothing can become more dangerous to mankind than a mistaken pursuit of it." (Jonas, 1981).

Conclusions

In summary, Hans Jonas's work on the ethics of technology challenges society to approach technological advancements with a deep sense of responsibility and consideration for far-reaching consequences on the environment, future generations, and the overall well-being of the planet. Jonas considered technology to be a special case for ethics due to its unprecedented power, temporary scope, complexity, alteration of nature, ethical void, and threats to human dignity. His work underscores the importance of developing an ethical framework to guide technological development and ensure that it serves the well-being of humanity and the integrity of the natural world.

Overall, Hans Jonas's reflections on technology, progress, and utopia offer a profound critique of modernity and a compelling vision for a more ethical and sustainable future. His philosophical insights have had a significant impact on the field of environmental ethics and continue to be important in discussions surrounding the ethical dimensions of technological progress. His work continues to inspire scholars and policymakers to confront the ethical challenges of technological advancement with wisdom, foresight, and a deep sense of moral responsibility. Sustainable technological progress, a cornerstone of his philosophy, supports the integration of ethical considerations into scientific and technological processes, prioritizing long-term consequences for the planet and future generations.

Technology enables humans to intervene in the natural world in unprecedented ways, blurring the boundaries between humanity and nature. Jonas raised ethical concerns about the manipulation of nature and the potential loss of biodiversity, emphasizing the importance of preserving the integrity of ecosystems and respecting the fundamental value of non-human life forms. As society struggles with the ethical dimensions of technological advancement, Jonas's insights offer a compelling framework to ensure responsible and sustainable progress that prioritizes the well-being of current and future generations.

Jonas warned against the *hubris* of technological mastery and the temptation to manipulate the world without fully understanding the consequences of our actions. He argued that with increased technological power comes an increased moral responsibility to act ethically and consider the potential impacts of our decisions on future generations. Jonas argues that as humans gain unprecedented power through technology, they also bear an unprecedented responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Applied to climate change, this principle underscores the moral imperative to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to changing environmental conditions, and safeguard the integrity of ecosystems for future generations. Sustainable development, therefore, requires a fundamental shift in values and priorities, placing the long-term well-being of both present and future generations at the forefront of decision-making.

He emphasizes the importance of humility and precaution in the face of uncertainty. Climate change presents complex and interconnected challenges, characterized by nonlinear and unpredictable impacts. Sustainable development calls for a precautionary approach that recognizes the fundamental limits of human knowledge and acknowledges the complex uncertainties of ecological systems.

In Jonas's view, technology operates within an ethical space, as it is driven primarily by the pursuit of efficiency and profit. He called for the development of an ethical framework to guide technological development, emphasizing the need for values such as responsibility, humility, and respect for life.

Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, intensifying inequalities and injustices within and between generations. Sustainable development requires a commitment to equity, social justice, and solidarity, ensuring that the benefits and burdens of environmental stewardship are distributed fairly across society.

In conclusion, Hans Jonas's insights offer valuable guidance for addressing climate change and advancing sustainable development. We can build a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable world for current and future generations, by embracing the ethic of responsibility, cultivating humility and precaution, and promoting intergenerational justice.

References

- Aristotle (1893). *The Nicomachean ethics of Aristotle* (5th ed.). London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.
- Anders, G. (1962). Theses for the atomic age. *The Massachusetts Review*, 3(3), 493-505.
- Anders, G. (1961). *Essere o non essere: Diario di Hiroshima e Nagasaki*, trans. Renato Solmi.
- Change, O. C. (2007). Intergovernmental panel on climate change. *World Meteorological Organization*, 52, 1-43.
- Grimes, M., Carrivick, J. L., Smith, M. W., & Comber, A. J. (2024). Land cover changes across Greenland dominated by a doubling of vegetation in three decades. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 3120.
- Heidegger, M. (2009). *The question concerning technology*. (pp. 9-24).
- Ruland, R. (1963). The American Plays of Bertolt Brecht. *American Quarterly*, 15(3), 371-389.
- Jonas, H. (2001). *The phenomenon of life: Toward a philosophical*. Northwestern University Press.
- Jonas, H. (1979). Toward a philosophy of technology. *The Hastings Center Report*, 9(1), 34-43
- Jonas, H. (1982). Technology as a subject for ethics. *Social Research*, 49(4), 891-898.
- Jonas, H. (1984). *The imperative of responsibility: In search of an ethics for the technological age*. University of Chicago Press.
- Jonas, H., Hannum, H., & Hannum, H. (1994). Philosophy at the end of the century: a survey of its past and future. *Social Research*, 61(4), 813-832.
- Wackernagel, M., & Galli, A. (2007). An overview on ecological footprint and sustainable development: a chat with Mathis Wackernagel. *International Journal of Ecodynamics*, 2(1), 1-9.

About the Author

Blerina Karagjozi is studying at University of Tirana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Philosophy, Doctoral Program Boulevard “Gjergj Fishta”, Tirana, Albania. Blerina holds a bachelor’s degree (2003) and a master’s degree (2006) in Social Sciences from the University of Tirana, with a focus on Political Philosophy and Social Studies. Since 2022, she is pursuing her doctoral studies in the Department of Philosophy of the University of Tirana focusing in Ethics of Environment, dedicating her research to bridging intellectual ambitions with practical contributions that can benefit her country’s development. Throughout her career, she has been deeply committed to fostering human values, human rights, and sustainable development. She has devoted her professional efforts to supporting Albania’s growth, with a strong belief that ethical research and thoughtful action led by ethical principles can serve as a foundation for meaningful and sustainable progress. Blerina is a writer on social issues, an enthusiast of humanity, arts and culture, embodying the values of human rights. Her work reflects a strong commitment to environmental sustainability, governance, and public accountability, particularly in supporting Albania’s path toward European integration and broader global development goals.

E-mail: bkaragjozi@gmail.com, ORCID : 0009-0004-7583-4445

Similarity Index

The similarity index obtained from the plagiarism software for this book chapter is 1%

To cite this article:

Karagjozi, B. (2024). Ethical considerations on climate change and sustainable development. In S.A. Kiray & O. Cardak (Eds.), *Current Studies in Social Sciences 2024* (pp.91-101). ISRES Publishing.