

*M. Abysova, PhD in Philosophy
T. Shorina, PhD in Philosophy
(National Aviation University, Ukraine, Kyiv)*

TECHNOLOGICAL AGE: ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The article is devoted to the ways of problematization of the ethical category of responsibility within philosophy of technology as a response to increasing technological power of the mankind

“Finally liberated Prometheus given the unprecedented strength by science and indefatigable incentive by economy, calls for the ethics constraining his power with voluntary bonds” [3, p. 3] is the beginning of H. Jonas’ book titled “The Imperative of Responsibility. In search of an ethics for the technological age” causing a resonance far outside a circle of professional philosophers.

Lack of interest to the problem of responsibility till the XIX century reveals the peripheral and coordinated status of this ethical notion in philosophical researches. The honor to be called the ancestor of ethics of responsibility could be given to M. Weber, who in his researches opposed it to I. Kant’s “ethics of belief”. In Kant’s ethics responsibility is connected only with the internal life of an actor. In Weber’s ethics of responsibility the main emphasis is placed on expected consequences of actions.

The scope of responsibility in both concepts is limited to present and past without taking into account the remote consequences of man’s activity as one ethical concept deals with the motive of an action while the other – with the direct result. It should be noted that in many ethical traditions (evdemonizm ethics, ethical egoism, utilitarianism) responsibility extends only for the consequences of man’s activity in foreseeable prospect. Thereof the concept of responsibility assumes the moral obligation for interpersonal relationships, as a duty imputed by the moral law in the face of present and past.

In the XXth c. the problem of responsibility is rethought because of changes in nature of man’s activity in technological era. Among apologists of the new concept of responsibility G. Picht, G. Anders, H. Jonas, X. Lenk should be named. The basis of refreshing is man’s new attitude to opportunities of his own freedom guaranteed to him by technology. H. Blumenberg notes that technology is “a new dimension in man – world relationship rather than a realm of definite objects emerging as a result of man’s activity” [1, p. 81].

Activity of The Club of Rome, official declarations and agreements had essential impact on development of the new concept of responsibility. In particular, one can mention the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs urging scientists to reveal hidden dangers concealed in modern unprecedented development of science and technology; Russell-Einstein’s manifesto (1955); Mount Carmel Declaration on Technology and Moral Responsibility (1974); conference in Asilomar, the USA (1975); ethical codes of technical-engineering associations.

X. Lenk distinguishes the types of responsibility, following the theory of a

well-known English lawyer G. Hart. On an equal basis with *causal* responsibility (for done actions), *role* responsibility (caused by duties or competences), X. Lenk mentions *moral* responsibility which has the universal importance [4].

X. Lenk defines relations of responsibility as:

- *somebody*: the subject of responsibility, the carrier (personality/corporation) is,
- *for*: something (acts, consequences of acts, states, tasks, etc.),
- *in relation to*: some addressee,
- *in the face of*: defined (authorizing and taking out judgments) instance,
- *according to*: concrete (prescriptive, standard) criterion,
- *within*: definite area of man's responsibility and his acts [4].

Uniqueness of the modern moral situation is caused by expansion of the sphere of collective actions, accumulation of results of technological change of the world, increase of their scale and irreversibility. All the mentioned demands revision of traditional ethical categories, creation of the new ethics, new scale of responsibility. Classical ethics directly or indirectly is based on several inseparably ideas:

1. The fundamental principle of traditional ethics is the belief that man's nature and the nature of things in their essential properties are invariable and invulnerable. Due to the development of technology the mankind realized that the nature is vulnerable, its resources are limited, including ability to self-restoration. Achievements of modern technology testify that Homo faber has turned himself into the object of technology. Artificial maintenance of life, genetic control of future generations, cloning and transplantation of artificial organs are the things able to change drastically our ideas of man's nature and the boundary between *physis* and *techné* in his life. Almost boundless man's power over the nature and his own essence demands man's responsibility for the invariance of his own nature and existence of mankind.

2. Another fundamental idea of traditional ethics is connected with ignoring of remote effects of man's activity. Preceding ethical requirements, including both golden rule and categorical imperative, foresee certain absolutes or some invariable properties of man's nature, appealing to which it is possible to specify criteria of morality of an act, significant at any temporal and spatial coordinate of the Universe. Theorists of new ethics of responsibility affirm that the kind of ethics focused on the changing world is needed: "If morality is created for man, instead of man for morality, ethics can't deny its orientation to consequences" [5, p. 376].

3. The idea of an invariance and eternity of the nature carved paradigmatic features of the preceding ethical tradition. First of all, its "vertical" orientation on transcendent highest good, the ontological correlate of which is the idea of completeness, true, eternal life. Most fully this theory is presented into Plato's philosophy. The theory reveals itself in Kant's ethical heritage, whose "regulative idea", to H. Jonas' opinion, is an equivalent to Plato's "idea of the good", as well as in Hegel's system, with that only difference that the "vertical" orientation was replaced with "horizontal" aspiration of self-developing spirit to the completeness. This installation is to be overcome with ethics of responsibility: it isn't necessary to look for the good-in-itself somewhere out of the world or at the end of history; it is

necessary to prove the value of present temporary and changeable life.

As the knowledge of consequences acquires the moral sense and becomes a prime debt of the mankind, there is a problem of anticipation of the remote consequences of collective activity and their forecasting. According to H. Jonas' opinion, the principle of "*fear heuristics*" ought to be the decisive principle in science, economy and policy.

Without calling into question the axiological and ontological priority of good and "preferred" values, H. Jonas demands to focus attention of ethics on what we would like to avoid. Heuristic function of fear estimating possible consequences of any action implies the demand to take into account the evil which it can cause. A. Ermolenko says that H. Jonas has represented a new type of fear, "it is both existential fear of anything (*Angst*) which is a source of man's ability to possible freedom, and the fear of something concrete, fear which is tied to the world (*Furcht*). For example, the fear of a nuclear catastrophe" [3, p. 376].

Development of ideas of possible remote consequences of collective practice as well as the moral debt interweaved into it (refusal of actions, consequence of which can threaten mankind's existence) is explications of the fundamental principle saying: "the mankind ought to exist". H. Jonas declares the following formulations of the imperative of ethics of responsibility: "Act in such a way that consequences of your action are in a consent with a continuity of true man's life on Earth"; "Act in such a way that consequences of your action are not destructive for future possibility of man's life"; "Include in your real choice the future man's integrity as a co-object of your will".

H. Jonas states that only this very imperative can apply for the status of the categorical one in Kant' sense, that is really unconditional. First, this imperative doesn't have the formal character; its pithiness is based rather on the consequences of an action taking into account the continuation of man's life in the future than on its self-coordination. Secondly, the new imperative is turned to political activity, in place of private behavior. Thirdly, the imperative demands to provide man's future existence. Thus, along with the imputed responsibility connected with done actions causing the sense of guilt, H. Jonas reveals responsibility of the actions are to be done.

There is the problem of justification of such an imperative. It is beyond both autonomous Kantian ethics, and any heteronomous ethical system. The ethical tradition has been focusing on the concept of moral action for ages. The problem why man in general *is*, is out of discussion for the traditional ethical thought. Being, including man's being, is the subject of the metaphysics. The new imperative – the mankind *ought to be* – is both ethical and metaphysical. As this requirement deals with being and doesn't imply the quality of a moral action, H. Jonas concludes that the justification of his imperative should be found not in traditional ethics, but in metaphysics within which the question why the mankind *ought to be* can be only raised. The attempt of justification is both interesting and vulnerable for criticism the part of ethics of responsibility.

Thus, H. Jonas' philosophical ethics is the ontological theory of values created and developed in contrast to the formal ethics, in particular to discourse, normative one. It means that the problem of justification is connected with a wider

one – the problem of correlation of material ethics of values and formal ethics of norms for the first time initiated by M. Scheler and actualized in the modern discussion of axiological conservatism and discursive ethics.

While H. Jonas justifies responsibility by intuition and metaphysics, in discursive ethics (K.-O. Apel, J. Habermas, D. Beier, V. Kuhlman) responsibility is justified by norms of communication [2]. H. Jonas's concept and discursive ethics – are two paradigmatic answers to the problem of justification of the phenomenon of "responsibility". At the same time, two approaches – transcendent, ontological-axiological and transcendental, normative ones don't exclude each other. In such complementarity ontological ethics of values would be necessary for substantial and motivational components while a reflection concerning the principles and a discourse concerning justification of norms could be a logical component.

This thesis could be operational, in particular, at estimation of consequences of one or another economic, scientific or engineering project. The value of being concerning non-being demands our preference of negative forecasts and fear heuristics. However the procedure of clearing of negative consequences should be carried out in the framework of a discourse which wouldn't appeal to emotions, but look for arguments of dangerous nature of these projects for mankind's future. This is very H. Jonas who agrees with it, noting that ethics isn't the monopoly of the chosen people engaged it professionally. This means there is the need of a wide-ranged discourse of ethical problems.

Unlike H. Jonas' excessively paternalistic type of responsibility, dialogical responsibility of communicative ethics is provided by the democratic horizon starting point of which is the ethos of reciprocity of mature personalities and the regulatory principle of justice foreseeing common responsibility on the basis of reasonable consensus. As discursive ethics considers man's dignity through his communicative freedom, it refuses all the attempts to preserve the view of man only in the biological dimension. Consequently discursive ethics couldn't follow H. Jonas' logic of mankind's preservation basing on his ontological idea, nevertheless, H. Jonas' concept of responsibility within discursive ethics could be considered as a debt of preservation of a real communicative community or as a condition of possibility of an ideal communicative community.

Conclusion

The new concept of responsibility is the answer to crises of the technological civilization. The orientation of responsibility to remote, irreversible and cumulative consequences of man's activity causes the change of its temporal horizon (responsibility is directed on the remote consequences in the future); its object (it includes the entire biosphere in view of principle value of organic life, and also future generations); its subject (it represents both an individual and the mankind). Scales of critical check and legitimation of man's activity are defined within a civil discourse as an instance which is able to control dangerous projects of experimental and technological science.

References

1. *Блюменберг Х.* Жизненный мир и технизация с точки зрения феноменологии // Вопросы философии. 1993. – № 3. – С. 64-93.
2. *Єрмоленко А.М.* Комуникативна практична філософія. – К. : Лібра, 1999. – 488 с.
3. *Йонас Г.* Принцип відповідальності. У пошуках етики для технологічної цивілізації / Г. Йонас. – Пер. з нім. – К. : Лібра, 2001. – 400 с.
4. *Ленк Х.* Размышления о современной технике. [Электронный ресурс] // Центр гуманитарных технологий.
URL: <http://gtmarket.ru/laboratory/basis/6037/6038>
5. Философия техники в ФРГ. Сб. статей. Пер. с нем. и англ. / Ц.Г. Арзаканян, В.Г. Горохов. – М. : Прогресс, 1989. С. 372–391. [Электронный ресурс] // Центр гуманитарных технологий.
URL: <http://gtmarket.ru/laboratory/expertize/3132/3145>