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THE CONTRIBUTION OF HANS JONAS'S ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY TO THE ORIGINAL ETHICAL DISCOURSE OF TIMOR (LULIK) IN THE CARE OF THE NATURE BIOSPHERE

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Abstract

This paper aims to present Hans Jonas' reflections on the ethical challenges posed by the advent of modern technology, as well as the traditional ethical discourse of Timor-Leste, lulik, which acknowledges the sacredness of nature. It seeks to demonstrate how both perspectives can contribute to a reconciliation between humanity and the environment. Jonas' philosophical project proposes a Theory of Responsibility that responds to the threats generated by technological action, whose expanded power now holds the potential both to preserve and to destroy life. In contrast, lulik teaches reverence and care for nature through sacred ritual practices. Modern technology, marked by moral ambiguity - representing technical advancement but ethical decline - poses serious threats to future generations and the biosphere. This necessitates a rethinking of human action, one that integrates responsibility and respect, thereby contributing to an ethical paradigm rooted in care and responsibility.

Keywords: Jonas. Theory of Responsibility. Technology. Lulik. Nature.

INTRODUCTION

Technology is, without a doubt, one of the fundamental elements of modern societies. Can we imagine the functioning of the system we live in without the contributions of the technoscientific apparatus? Every day, we observe that the development and use of technological means are essential conditions for the maintenance of our existence. However, alongside this, it is possible to note, according to Hans Jonas, that the excessive use of these same technological means causes harm to both human beings and the environment.

In his work *The Principle of Responsibility*, Jonas directly expresses his concern about the consequences of technological progress for life in general. The power of technology promised humanity a triumphant and liberating life, but this ideal has proven to be paradoxical and problematic, as it brought with it the extreme risk of the destruction of non-human nature. For Jonas, the impact of modern technology affects not only nature but also human existence and integrity itself, influencing personal and social relationships.

In the face of this vulnerability, Jonas assigns a fundamental role to the concept of responsibility. Nature—that is, all living beings along with the entire biosphere—deserves broader and more effective ethical care in light of the threats posed by technology. Technology is a resource that individuals develop and use in this ambivalent world, and they must learn to harness its benefits while eliminating anything that may cause harm.

Technology has endowed the human being with a new nature of action—a new "continent" of praxis—in which no moral imperative or existing legislation alone has sufficient power to prevent abuses. With the advent of modern science, technology took on a new configuration, significantly expanding human power to intervene in the environment. According to the author, the growth of this power, combined with the disordered and compulsive use of technoscientific tools, disrupts the natural order and threatens the full continuity of life.

To respond to the demands of technological civilization, Jonas proposes an ethics of responsibility, urging the social sciences and philosophy to reformulate traditional ethical questions in relation to technology and contemporary civilization. Given the immense power that humanity has acquired through technological advancement, ethics in a technoscientific society must guide the use of that power, aiming to prevent the degradation of life.

In this work, we aim to present Hans Jonas's reflections on the phenomenon of technology and its implications for both human beings and nature (the biosphere), as well as to introduce the ethics of responsibility and its possible contribution to the original ethical discourse of Timor-Leste, expressed in the concept of *lulik*. *Lulik* represents a form of traditional morality that believes in the sacredness of nature. Therefore, it is understood that nature must be respected, protected, and cared for collectively, with full responsibility in the face of the misuse of technology, so that the life of the ecosystem remains balanced.

In our study, we used as primary sources the works *The Imperative of Responsibility*, *The Phenomenon of Life*, and *Technology, Medicine, and Ethics*, in which Jonas presents his approach to the phenomenon of technology and its implications for sociability and the construction of the ethics of responsibility. We also drew on works by Mircea Eliade, such as *The Sacred and the Profane* and

History of Religious Ideas. More specifically, we sought to understand, in light of Eliade's theory and method, *lulik* as a religious phenomenon that arises from the human experience of religiosity in relation to a supreme or metaphysical reality. We also consulted other sources that engage with the proposed theme.

1. MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Based on his work *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*, Jonas develops an ontology centered on life—on the phenomenon of life as a unified whole—which provides the metaphysical foundation for his ethical theory. The goal of his ethical theory is to raise critical questions about the relationship between human beings and nature, as well as the relationship of humanity with itself (with what it aspires to become in the future). From this theory, it becomes possible for humans to begin viewing nature through the lens of responsibility (Farias Junior, 2015, p. 18), but the main problem and challenge Jonas faces lie in science and modern technology.

In the book *Technology, Medicine, and Ethics*, Jonas begins examining the aspects that characterize modern technology, understood as a "collective enterprise and ongoing process" (Jonas, 2013, p. 14). The author uses the terms "modern technology" and "technique" to refer to the same concept: "the name 'technology,' in which technique is an enterprise and a process" (Jonas, 2013, p. 15). Here, Jonas clarifies the concept of technique, stating that, in general, it can be described as: "The concept of 'technique', roughly speaking, refers to the use of tools and artificial devices in the business of life. Explanation: this brief description applies to technique throughout most of human history; however, not to modern technology" (Jonas, 2013, p. 15). Therefore, the term *technique* refers to pre-modern technique, while *technology* refers to modern technology.

However, we can understand the author's point that technique has evolved throughout a history as old as humanity itself: "[...] from the life of the hunter or nomad, to metallurgy (from the Stone Age to the Iron Age)" (Jonas, 2013, p. 15). Here we see that technology is a practical and characteristic element that has always existed and accompanied human life and existence in all places and times.

For Jonas, this endless process of modern technological civilization occurred, from the 17th to the 19th century, primarily from theoretical perspectives. Yet technology continued to develop and was ultimately solidified by the Industrial Revolution, which was driven not by theory but by social and economic forces. Humanity grew proud of and praised its power over nature, which in turn enabled power over fellow humans, and it became unable to adequately reflect on the moral dimension of its actions. This process advanced to the point of realizing "the optimistic creed in progress which, according to Jonas, came to challenge the pessimism of earlier philosophy and religion. Optimism, confidence in humanity, in its powers and natural goodness" (Oliveira, 2014, p. 109). Technology endowed humans with "a new nature of action, a new continent for praxis, in which no moral imperative or law holds sufficient power to prevent humans from committing abuses" (Farias Junior, 2015, p. 88).

Technology has always brought both advantages and disadvantages: it has the power to build, but also to destroy. This illustrates its inherent ambiguity: technique can be seen as "better" in technical terms, but "worse" in moral terms. Jonas concludes that "an ethics appropriate to technology must comprehend this ambiguity inherent in technical action" (Jonas, 2013, p. 31). In

technological progress, what is technically better is not necessarily morally superior; modern technique values applicability and utility, pushing moral judgment into the background. Ultimately, the ambivalence of modern technology is reflected in its promises and results: within the good lies the bad; within happiness, there is unhappiness.

In his work *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (1979), Jonas explicitly expresses his concern about the consequences of technological progress for life in general: “The starting thesis of this book is that the promises of modern technology have turned into threats, or have become inseparably linked with them” (Jonas, 2006, p. 21). With this statement, Jonas urges us to pay attention to a very serious issue of our time: the grave threat of the destruction of life on Earth through technology.

The power of technology promised humanity a triumphant and liberating life, but this proved to be a paradox and a problem, as it brought with it the extreme risk of the destruction of humanity and human survival on Earth. Technology, which promised to contribute to the liberation of man, turned out to be an illusion. In the modern technological era, human beings live in constant risk, which weakens the conditions for all life on Earth. The dominance of technical power not only threatens but also exposes and destroys nature. In this sense, “technology imposes its extreme risks and has become the most dangerous of temptations” (Jonas, 2006, pp. 22-23). It is this reality that leads Jonas to establish the foundation for his thesis on the principle of responsibility. He states: “It goes beyond the recognition of physical threat. Designed for human happiness and for the subjugation of nature, in the excess of its success—which now extends to the very nature of man—technology has led to the greatest challenge ever posed to humanity by its own actions” (Jonas, 2006, p. 21).

This impact of modern technology interferes not only with non-human nature but also with human existence and integrity, and with personal and social relationships. Technology invades our lives, affecting our privacy, disregarding our psychic and biological rhythms, and even harming our health. It alters the rhythm and natural order of the human condition itself. Technology, in its share of greed for progress, reveals the “feasibilities” it offers—especially the most innovative and ambitious of these goals and paths—that particularly affect the beginning and end of our existence—our birth and our death—touching on the ultimate questions of our human existence (Jonas, 2013, p. 12).

On the other hand, modern technology largely encompasses:

[...] to the natural needs of human beings: such as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and communication for the need for information, etc. [...]. But with this intrinsic paradox: that precisely this civilization threatens its creator with its “superiority,” that is, for example, the increasing automation (a triumph of electronics) removes him from the jobs where he once demonstrated his human condition. And with the threat that his overexploitation of the earthly nature may reach a point of catastrophe (Jonas, 2013, p. 27).

The technological development of the 20th century turned its focus toward the human being, who, in turn, became an object of technology (Jonas, 2006, pp. 57-60). At the same time, the advent of industrial society went hand in hand with a widespread crisis of

human existence and integrity in the context of technological advancement. This modern technological shift, with its impact on both human existence and other forms of life, forced the social sciences and philosophy to reformulate traditional ethical questions in relation to technology and contemporary civilization.

2. THE FUNDAMENTAL REASONS FOR ESTABLISHING THE ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY THEORY

In *The Principle of Responsibility*, Jonas assigns a crucial role to the concept of responsibility, even though it did not play such a role in traditional ethical traditions and moral theories. At the beginning of his work, Jonas analyzes technology and views it as a new nature of action—one that is much more radical and has an entirely new dimension of meaning—given the vulnerability of nature. In other words, all living beings, faced with the threats brought about by technology, along with the entire biosphere, deserve broader and more effective ethical care, capable of dealing with this new nature of human action, as well as the duty to morally consider nature’s vulnerability. “Nature as a human responsibility is surely a novum upon which a new ethical theory must be thought” (Jonas, 2006, p. 39). Thus, the responsibility to preserve extra-human life is a new dimension in the ethical field, while also caring for human life.

The first reason is that the traditional view of ethics is limited to relationships between humans and recognizes man only in his rational capacity, resulting in a distancing from nature. In summary, all traditional ethics possess an anthropocentric character, as Jonas himself states: “all ethics until now” (Jonas, 2006, p. 29), referring to Aristotelian, Kantian, and utilitarian ethics, or generally to the three eras: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern. Jonas’s broad critique of previous ethical models aims to reveal their anthropocentric nature. Ethics primarily focuses on man initially, limiting itself to the sphere of moral philosophy and ignoring the human-nature relationship. “Ethical significance concerned the direct relationship of man to man, including man to himself; all traditional ethics is anthropocentric” (Jonas, 2006, p. 35).

The second reason is that this anthropocentric character, whose concern was limited to regulating actions in the human sphere and self-care, did not take into account care for nature. The goals of ethical actions were limited to the desire for power, control, and dominion over nature for a better human life. For “nature was not an object of human responsibility—it took care of itself and, with the necessary persuasion and insistence, also took care of man: intelligence and inventiveness were useful before it, not ethics” (Jonas, 2006, pp. 33-34).

The third reason is that traditional ethics was concerned only with the present human condition, without considering the continuity of life in nature and extra-human nature in the future. As Jonas states, “thus man’s presence in the world was a primary and indisputable given” (Jonas, 2006, p. 45). Therefore, its concerns were limited to technical innovation capacity, not ethics. The future was not an object of ethics, which confined itself to the present moment in the polis. All concerns were aimed at local actions, based on moral norms established by tradition.

The fourth point of Jonas’s critique of traditional ethics is the consideration of technology as ethically neutral, except for

medicine. In this regard, “acting upon non-human objects did not constitute an ethically significant domain” (Jonas, 2006, p. 35), because the degree of human power in the use of technology was considered insignificant both regarding the object and the subject of action. The extra-human world and future generations were minimized, with ethics restricted to the horizon of the polis (Moreira, 2022, pp. 91-92).

The fifth reason in Jonas’s critique of traditional ethics concerns the value of good and evil. The value of good or evil was considered in the short term, within a limited space and time. As Jonas states, the effective reach of action was small, the interval for prediction, goal definition, and accountability was short, and control over circumstances was limited (Jonas, 2006, p. 35). Therefore, ethics was limited to human actions, individual or public, always within a short time frame. Jonas says: “if an action is ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ this is entirely decided within that short-term context. Its authorship is never questioned, and its moral quality is immediately inherent in it” (Jonas, 2006, p. 37).

Related to the validity of values limited to space and time, Jonas states that “the values of yesterday are not necessarily useful for today and vice versa, the values of today for tomorrow, because tomorrow is different from today. Everything is a ‘possibility’ to change or disappear” (Jonas, 2013, p. 40). Thus, the values and virtues of the past were useful to address the problems of their time, and the values of today and tomorrow depend on circumstances, with demands varying over time and space. The progress of technology, with its apocalyptic potential, impacts the determination of values for the future, especially regarding collective behavior influenced by mutable techniques that affect the old values of individual ethics.

Old values are immutable in themselves but may become unnecessary depending on emerging circumstances that need to be confronted. “We fight for peace” because there is war, and “we fight for justice” because there is injustice. These are traditional ethical values limited to space and the short term, depending on circumstances that demand ethical action both publicly and individually.

Finally, summarizing the limitations of traditional ethics, Jonas recognizes in his work *The Principle of Responsibility* that traditional ethics is no longer sufficient to face the changes in human actions. He analyzes three interrelated assumptions of traditional ethics: [1] By nature, the human condition is fixed and immutable in its fundamental characteristics; [2] To protect this nature, it is necessary to clearly define what is good for man, even if that is difficult; and [3] Human actions have a limited scope, and therefore it is necessary to rigidly define their responsibilities (Jonas, 2006, p. 29). Although traditional ethics is limited and has lost its validity for our present moral situation, Jonas considers it necessary to impose a modification in the ethical domain in light of the confrontation with the consequences of technological action in modern times. The old commandments are insufficient to face the new anthropological reality of technological times. As Jonas states, “ethics was concerned with the here and now” (Jonas, 2006, p. 36), and was established based on relationships among men.

3. THE ORIGINAL ETHICAL DISCOURSE OF TIMOR (LULIK) IN THE CARE OF THE BIOSPHERE NATURE

Before addressing the concept and meaning of *lulik*, it is necessary to analyze the evolution of the *lulik* phenomenon itself in Timorese cultural history through a phenomenological method of analysis that highlights the importance of the term as a social, psychological, ethnological, and historical phenomenon. In the second section, we will clarify the meaning of *lulik*, its function in the field of morality and ethics, and its contribution to protecting human life and nature, understood as the biosphere in its entirety.

Let us begin by remembering that the word *lulik* comes from the Tetum language and, if translated literally, means “forbidden,” “holy,” “sacred,” or even “taboo.” In Timor, each ethnolinguistic community has its own concept of *lulik*: for example, the Bunaq people call it *phôq*; the Naueti people, *luli*; the Fataluku, *tei*; the Makasae, *phalun*; the Mambae, *saunluli*; and there are many other ethnolinguistic communities in Timor that use different terms for *lulik*. However, the meaning and intention remain the same (Trindade, 2011).

3.1 LULIK IN THE HISTORY OF CULTURE

Lulik already existed in Timor before the influx of cultures from other nations and religions from Europe, such as Roman Catholicism, and continental Asian religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Although Timor is surrounded by these cultures and religions, they have not had much influence on it, as Cinatti states:

The Timorese, in more than one sector beyond the artistic, could be said to mark the end of the brief chapter of cultural history common to other Indonesian peoples who, like the Timorese, have not experienced the revitalizing influence of Hindu civilization, which operates in Java, Bali, Sumatra, and in less significant sites on some nearby islands (Cinatti, 1984, p. 63).

Timor, culturally, did not undergo significant foreign influences, and the practice of *lulik* is an expression of indigenous culture and belief, used by the Timorese to organize their lives long before the arrival of the Portuguese colonizers and major religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Catholic Christianity. Therefore, there was already an established social organization. As Belo highlights, “in the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese came into contact with the inhabitants of the Island of Timor, they found an organized traditional society” (Ximenes, 2013, p. 51). This means that traditional Timor already had effective political structures and laws to organize social life. Thus, *lulik* existed and developed alongside the Timorese people since they occupied the island, functioning as a moral and religious law for communal life.

Therefore, *lulik* is closely linked to the Timorese people and was born from the experience of religiosity, becoming the living spirituality of traditional communities. It is an experience of metaphysical reality in relation to the sacred, with the *loro* (sun) as the symbol of the Supreme (Eliade, 1998, p. 103). This concept of the sacred went through different phases, always in harmony with the cultural development stage of the communities, demonstrating its deep connection to the history of Timorese culture. Thus, even with its religious character, *lulik* cannot be separated from the culture and history of Timor. It manifests itself through the mythology of nature, totems, animism, dynamism, and traditional rites (local customs) (Tylor, 1958, p. 270). It is through these elements that the Timorese express their beliefs and give meaning to life.

With this historical outline, we seek to establish the foundations for understanding *lulik* from a historical-phenomenological approach. Thus, in addition to investigating *lulik* as a belief in its historical dimension, this analysis must also highlight its permanent aspects as a religious phenomenon (Filoramo; Prandi, 2010, p. 27). More specifically, the aim is to understand *lulik* in light of Mircea Eliade's theory and method, as a religious phenomenon born from human experience with a supreme or metaphysical reality.

Although the process of degeneration of religiosity began millennia ago, fundamental elements such as religious ethics and morality arose throughout this course (Brandewie, 1983, p. 49). This shows that ethics and morality originated from religion, from belief in one god or many gods. Throughout history, these beliefs transformed according to human cultural development, adapting to new realities. We will further analyze the consequences of this change in perspective in the structure of *lulik*.

Since *lulik* is a traditional phenomenon of belief, created by primitive peoples based on their spiritual experiences, it cannot be reduced to mere superstition or folklore. Whether called "sacred," "holy," or "powerful," it is an experience that underlies all phenomena of belief. Historians of religion seek to understand the nature of these religious experiences based on the data they provide (Allen, 1978, p. 81), while phenomenologists use these data to comprehend their meaning and message, rather than their historical origins.

As *lulik* is a traditional belief phenomenon created by primitive peoples based on spiritual experiences, it should not be reduced in such a way. Call it an experience of the "Sacred, holy, or powerful"—this is something that lies at the base of all belief phenomena. Historians of religion seek to understand the nature of the religious experiences expressed in their data (Allen, 1978, p. 81), and phenomenologists use the historical data of existing beliefs only to understand their meaning and message, not their history (how they arose, their origins, and how they transformed).

In fact, we can observe that the "autonomy" of historians of religion does not mean that the science of religion is an "independent" discipline. It depends greatly on other fields such as linguistics, anthropology, and sociology (Allen, 1978, p. 83). Therefore, these disciplines are interdependent and need one another. However, each has its own fundamental and irreducible character. *Lulik*, in its sacred religious character, is irreducible because this phenomenon can only be understood from the perspective of the history of religions.

The religious character of *lulik* certainly contains ethical values such as respect for the divine or God, for the spirits of ancestors, for the spirit of nature, and for the biosphere. Other values guide life with other living beings, appealing to respect for others, friendship and solidarity, cooperation, and tolerance. These values are preserved in the form of traditional ceremonies, symbols, and ritual practices. From ritual practices arose social structures and basic principles in primitive society to regulate the order of daily life, both individual and social, in order to guarantee unity and harmony in community life (Bakker, 1984). Thus, the concept of *lulik*, in Timorese tradition and culture, can function as a philosophy (or way) of life, beyond also being a "religion," a spirituality, and a moral code. The aim is to regulate the behavior of individuals and communities in order to achieve balance and harmony in relations with all cosmic elements, to maintain peace and prosperity of life now and in the future (Kamuri, 2020).

3.2 The Concept of *Lulik*

After exploring the historical and phenomenological evolution of *lulik*, we now turn our focus to its concept and function. In this discussion, we will examine the meaning of *lulik* as well as its role in regulating human attitudes toward the sacred (religious belief) in moral and legal terms, and in guiding human actions toward others and toward nature.

The concept of *lulik* encompasses all forms of knowledge, beliefs, and understandings about life—both physical and psychological—as well as economic, cultural, spiritual, health, and moral dimensions, serving to guide human behavior based on the principle of *taboo*. *Lulik* can also be understood in terms of traditional thought, with the function of protecting human beings and managing the environment in a sustainable way (Marfai, 2013, p. 35). Furthermore, it can appear in all aspects of life, such that *lulik*, with its religious character, can organize human life in relation to the divine or the sacred. As a moral system, it holds noble values that apply within a given community, aiming to regulate attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors in relation to life systems and the natural environment in a wise and prudent manner.

From this understanding, it can be said that *lulik* is a value system designed to respond to various issues that arise—such as socioeconomic, cultural, spiritual, health, and moral matters—within traditional society. Thus, the Timorese people, in all of their activities—from the inauguration of new land, planting and harvesting, to matters of health and illness, interpersonal relationships, and interactions with natural spirits, from birth to death—always perform *lulik* rituals. Therefore, *lulik* is the spirituality or way of life by which the Timorese people live and carry out their activities, both physically and spiritually, and through which they establish relationships with others, with nature, and with the sacred.

3.3 THE CONCEPT OF *LULIK* IN THE SACRED SENSE IS MANIFESTED IN NATURE.

Lulik, in the sacred sense—that is, as the opposite of the profane—refers to religious life and secular life. Man comes to know the sacred because it "reveals itself; for the act of manifestation of the sacred, we proposed the term *hierophany*" (Eliade, 1963, p. 11). It is a mysterious act, of a different order—of a different reality, one that does not belong to our world but reveals itself in places and objects that are an integral part of our "natural" and "profane" world. Regarding *hierophany*, Eliade states:

It could be said that the history of religions—from the most primitive to the most developed—is made up of a great number of *hierophanies*, or manifestations of sacred realities. From the most elementary *hierophany*—for example, the manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object, such as a stone or a tree—to the supreme *hierophany* (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ). (Eliade, 1963, p. 11).

The traditional Timorese religious belief system consisted of a set of superstitions based on a mixture of "fear and worship of the spirit of the dead, materialized by stones, birds, animals, and even water streams or objects endowed with mysterious magical power, either beneficial or harmful, which they call *lulik*, meaning untouchable sacred" (Casquilho & Martins, 2021, p. 6).

Modern Western man does not accept this form of sacred manifestation—that it can manifest in a house, stones, trees, a

machete (*catana*), or an object. It is not about worshiping the house as a house, the water as water, or the tree and stone, “but precisely because they are *hierophanies*, because they ‘reveal’ something that is no longer just stone or tree, but the sacred, the *ganz andere* [completely other]” (Eliade, 1963, p. 12). That is why the Timorese respected and venerated the *lulik*, because it is there that the sacred reveals itself.

The religious man strives to remain and wishes to live in a sacred universe, but in the course of human spiritual history, he discovers that the world has been desacralized, and that the profane world in its entirety—the cosmos—has also been desacralized. The consequence is a modification of spiritual and human behavior. Modern man has desacralized his world and embraced a profane existence. This occurs when “the world, after first becoming an object of human knowledge, becomes the object of his will, and his knowledge is placed at the service of his will [...]. Thus, the materials of nature are made ready for human use” (Jonas, 2017, p. 124). It is clear here that man’s will is a will to power over the nature of things. He does not understand nor care about the meaning of nature, which “is a necessary consequence of divine nature, in the sense that the essence of the world’s nature is determined by the existence and essence of a divine being or God. God and the natural world have a relationship of analogy, resemblance, or image to the divine original” (Jonas, 2017, p. 61).

Modern man denies the concept of creation, which was once accepted as certain. In the beginning, God created all things, and all that He made was very good—but good or bad are now seen as mere human measures. The consequence of this denial is that modern man loses his sense of wonder for nature, which is inherently good (Jonas, 2017, pp. 274–275). Nature is now seen as an object for the production of necessary materials and can be manipulated or experimented on as a means of knowledge for applied science. Modern man has lost his respect for the sacred, his awe for nature, which is good. He is indifferent and denies it as the work of a divine being. Therefore, nature no longer carries a transcendent image or reflection of the divine—it is reduced to a living, material organism. The sacred is lost, which impacts our attitude of respect toward it.

This modern theory merely contributes to the transformation and exploitation of nature by rejecting the sacred (*lulik*) perspective. The implication is a disregard for the moral essence of nature and its value for human life.

The direct consequences are deforestation and the destruction of forests, as well as the irresponsible disrespect for places considered *lulik* (sacred). These factors pose new challenges to morality and ethics. To face them, it is necessary to clearly define what is good for both humanity and nature; only then can human responsibility for our actions be rigorously established (Jonas, 2006, p. 29).

According to Jonas, there is more to man than merely his responsibility toward the sacred (God) and creation. Furthermore, modern man discards the main idea of human responsibility toward the future of both humanity and nature (Bongardt, 2019, p. 81). He does not concern himself with the future, because the current ethical model—limited by its temporal validity—is focused only on controlling human action in the present. As Jonas puts it, if “ethics dealt with the here and now” (Jonas, 2006, p. 36), humanity would not take the future into account, nor the potential disasters that could affect life, because what matters is immediate benefit.

Modern man no longer sees what is morally good from a long-term perspective that considers future life. He is indifferent to what is to come. Every human action is evaluated based on its usefulness for the present. Does it produce something useful for human life now? The relevance of our actions to the damage they may cause in the future is no longer considered. Nor is there attention paid to balancing human interests with those of the natural world—plants, animals, and forests.

Nature was once honored and respected by traditional societies. For this reason, when someone wanted to cut down a tree, a *lulik* ritual had to be performed, asking permission from the spirit that ruled the forest and the mountain. Even though this action was rooted in respect, it served to preserve a good relationship with nature. And it became an important reason for cultivating a sense of goodness toward nature and the future of humanity. Because nature, given by God, can be considered inherently good and valuable. Furthermore, “nature always expresses something that transcends it” (Eliade, 2023, p. 100). Modern man no longer considers this value as good or meaningful. Hence occurs the “desacralization that characterizes the total experience of non-religious man in modern societies” (Eliade, 1963, p. 13). The fact is that non-religious man denies the transcendence of nature. As such, nature becomes the product of secularization, with no connection to divine work or the sacred. But for believers or the religious person, even if God or the sacred is not the foundation of responsibility, it can be an important reason to be a morally good person. That goodness can become the foundation of morally responsible action.

3.4 The Contribution of the Ethics of Responsibility to *Lulik* in the Preservation of Nature

The urgency of responsibility is based on the limitations of the functions of *lulik* in the face of the radical and accelerated transformation brought about by unrestrained technological progress, which has caused major changes and challenges for humanity and nature in this era. On the one hand, these changes have weakened the role of traditional norms and moral values of *lulik* in guiding community life; on the other, technological society—with its motto of “progress and power”—continues to assert itself over human beings and nature. This power is driven by the doctrine of scientific and technological progress, promoted by the process of industrialization, and exposes humans to numerous risks (environmental, chemical, biological, economic) never before seen in human history—risks so great they constitute a significant threat to life on the planet, creating a scenario conducive to large-scale ecological catastrophe. As a result, “economic, social and environmental damages have worsened, and their harmful effects are felt more intensely in the most impoverished and vulnerable areas of the planet” (Alencastro; Moser, 2014, p. 2).

This situation is well described by Hans Jonas in *The Imperative of Responsibility* (2006), a work in which he analyzes the impact of the power of modern technical action. According to Jonas, this impact necessitates an expansion of responsibility across various dimensions of human relations—educational institutions, politics, legal systems, among others—resulting in a new cultural configuration that demands serious reflection on the fate of humanity and nature. In this context, Jonas’s proposal emerges as a theoretical resource that can support multiple fields of knowledge in the construction of new models for protecting both human and non-human nature.

For Jonas, it is essential to recognize that the effects of human actions, especially through the use of scientific and technological power, require responsibility in our everyday decisions on behalf of nature and future generations. Therefore, it is urgent to make this commitment to responsibility explicit in the face of threats posed by modern technology.

This call for responsibility is not only individual but also collective. Thus, collective mobilization and management are necessary to realize Jonas's ethical theory, especially when articulated with the traditional ethical practice of *lulik*. This task involves the responsibilities of parents toward children, of political representatives, communities, and ordinary citizens. To achieve this, a shift from individual to collective responsibility is essential so that everyone participates across different fields of action. The implementation of the ethics of responsibility cannot remain merely theoretical; it must be integrated with traditional cultural approaches. If awareness of responsibility is broadened, it can become a powerful force for environmental preservation.

In fact, although there is a conflict of interests between modern and local cultures in terms of environmental management, local culture still plays a relevant role in conserving biodiversity in the environments in which it exists. The traditional moral foundation is the respect for sacred things, such as specific places and objects.

Environmental conservation is the duty of all—both individually and collectively. This is because the responsibility to preserve nature is already embedded in the culture of local communities. However, with the ethical theory of responsibility, Jonas contributes to the formation of a new consciousness across all sectors of society, encouraging a collective commitment to preserving nature and biodiversity in this era of modern technology.

In addition to Jonas, *lulik* represents a form of traditional morality that recognizes the sacredness of nature. Therefore, nature must be respected, protected, and cared for collectively, so that the life of ecosystems remains balanced. In this way, even though Jonas's theory of ethical responsibility is applicable to all subjects, both individual and collective, the value of local wisdom still plays an essential role in maintaining environmental ethics. Thus, we can understand that collective responsibility is not exclusive to Jonas's proposal, as it is already incorporated into the values of local wisdom. The collective ownership of an area or region, for example, has very positive implications for shared care and conservation of nature (Jonas, 2006, p. 39). Therefore, the ethics of responsibility proposed by Jonas does not replace traditional values or local wisdom.

Even though the application of science and technology has transformed the relationship between humans and nature into a subject-object relationship—where humans are subjects capable of controlling, dominating, and modifying nature—this transformation represents both a threat and an opportunity. It is a chance for humans to reflect on themselves and embrace new values, more effective in the preservation and protection of nature, in accordance with the principle of responsibility. Hence the importance of a strategy that promotes cooperation among all members of society by encouraging moral values that stimulate a sense of responsibility among individuals and communities.

Moreover, as previously discussed, if *lulik*, as a traditional moral system, is in crisis due to its insufficiency in the face of the “new” dimensions of human action in technological civilization, the

proposal of Hans Jonas in *The Imperative of Responsibility* can be taken as an ethical principle capable of dialoguing with the values of *lulik* in our time. Although the contribution of *lulik* is still limited to values and norms such as honesty, love, and respect for others and nature, it remains within the realm of responsibility, as it can help restrain irresponsible behavior and prevent irreparable harm.

Because, according to Jonas, in such situations, it is not enough for ethics to emphasize our good, honest, and just behavior; it is necessary to develop an ethics of responsibility. The ethics of responsibility is not limited to certain principles beyond positive attitudes, but rather focuses on the consequences of our actions (Tumanggor, 2020, p. 413; Jonas, 2013, p. 46).

The ethics of responsibility, therefore, focuses on the effects of our actions. We are responsible for these actions, not only for the present but also for the future of humanity and nature. Thus, it is not enough for ethics to talk about what is good or right in this moment. The most important thing for ethics is the responsibility for the effects of our present actions on the future, so that human existence and all forms of life within the biosphere are preserved. In this way, the ethics of responsibility can contribute significantly to responsible action, with a commitment focused on the well-being of the human community and nature.

One of the main contributions of the ethics of responsibility to *lulik* is its encouragement to develop and improve care for nature, so as not to put at risk the existence of humanity and other living beings. This can happen, as we know, through the concepts of “comparative futurology” and, even more so, the “heuristics of fear” (Jonas, 2006, p. 71), which are central to Jonas's ethical proposal and also to *lulik*, as both lead to an attitude of respect and responsibility. Through the attitude of responsibility, it is possible to reduce the worst uses of new technological advances that foster the modern mentality of consumerism, as well as the damage caused to nature—which was once only local, but has now become global.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study sought to demonstrate to what extent the theory of responsibility, proposed by Hans Jonas, can contribute to a new ethical order capable of guiding human action in the face of problems raised by modern technology. The advent of technology in contemporary times poses a problem for ethics. Technology, which promised to contribute to human liberation, has revealed itself as an illusion. Human beings live in constant risk, which weakens the conditions for all life on Earth. The domination of technical power not only threatens but also exposes and destroys nature. Particularly, Jonas's recognition of the ambivalence of modern technology use is a relevant theme that cannot go unnoticed by those concerned with the effects of technology on existence. It is common that every action has consequences, regardless of the intention with which it was undertaken. Jonas draws attention to the fact that the responsible subject should not be concerned exclusively with technological activities that pose risks to life, but it is also their task to be aware of the possible harmful latent consequences in every use of technology.

We face a possible paradigmatic shift caused by the latent appeal of a dying environment. In analyzing these issues, Jonas reached a conclusion: the urgency of formulating a theory of responsibility as a new ethical principle that guides today's humanity to preserve the integrity and human essence of future generations. On the one

hand, we have shown the premise, necessity, and significance of Jonas's ethical theory; on the other hand, we have presented *lulik* as a traditional morality based on sacred values—values that can be articulated with Jonas's ethics to reinforce responsibility in protecting nature effectively. Will we be able to use them for comprehensive protection of nature, the biosphere, and human nature in the face of modern man, who denies the concept of creation and rejects the sacredness of nature?

We encounter an anthropocentric ethics incapable of satisfying the needs of the other as a participant in an ecological whole. Will we be able to construct a new ethics that understands all beings as worthy of respect? What is the best way to redirect our actions toward the common good of present and future generations? In the face of modern science and technology, which use reason to question the values of traditional wisdom, is it possible that the values of *lulik* can maintain the balance between humans and their environment—both biotic and cultural—reducing capitalist mentality so as not to exploit or diminish nature's inherent value?

In Jonas's view, the human power to manipulate nature raises the issue of responsibility as a duty. As the entire biosphere becomes dependent on human action, it acquires the moral right to be treated well and not to suffer modifications in its essence.

The change in relations between humans and nature is a threat to ethics and to values most suited to effectively maintaining the protection of nature according to the principle of responsibility. Is it possible to establish a strategy—that is, to create cooperation among all cultural components of society—by encouraging moral values to stimulate a sense of responsibility among individuals and all community groups?

For Jonas, the possibility that individuals become aware of the need to construct a new paradigm in exercising responsibility depends on recognizing that only humans can exercise it. And it is humans who must assume responsibility for their own preservation and for the natural biosphere. Indeed, only humans are capable of assuming this duty to serve the present and future generations, in a harmonious construction with the entire universe. Progress may continue, provided that it is taken into account that every human action must respect the life of all living beings.

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