

# The Imperative of Responsibility

*In Search of an Ethics  
for the Technological Age*

Hans Jonas

## The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age

*Hans Jonas*

Download now

Read Online 

# **The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age**

*Hans Jonas*

## **The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age** Hans Jonas

Hans Jonas here rethinks the foundations of ethics in light of the awesome transformations wrought by modern technology: the threat of nuclear war, ecological ravage, genetic engineering, and the like. Though informed by a deep reverence for human life, Jonas's ethics is grounded not in religion but in metaphysics, in a secular doctrine that makes explicit man's duties toward himself, his posterity, and the environment. Jonas offers an assessment of practical goals under present circumstances, ending with a critique of modern utopianism.

## **The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age** Details

Date : Published October 15th 1985 by University of Chicago Press (first published 1979)

ISBN : 9780226405971

Author : Hans Jonas

Format : Paperback 263 pages

Genre : Philosophy, Science, Technology, Nonfiction



[Download The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethic ...pdf](#)



[Read Online The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Eth ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age Hans Jonas**

---

## **From Reader Review The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age for online ebook**

### **Hoerterc says**

This isn't so much a review as how I think the book applies to the world today. The core argument is that when it comes to new technologies, genetically modified organisms, fuel, etc., the burden of proof in deciding to adopt them, despite unknown side effects, should favor caution over commerce. The Bush administration/Global industry position stands in contrast: so long as something has not been affirmatively demonstrated as unsafe, then we should use it for the sake of more efficient commerce, at least until we start having flipper-babies. Long term consequences such as climate change and flooding the ecosystem with carcinogens, be damned. By situating the moral sphere in terms of historical duties that flow from natural commitments to the planet and contractual duties with fellow humans, Jonas develops a cogent theme that belongs in politics as much as in philosophy.

---

### **Edén Mercado says**

La obra cumbre del filósofo Hans Jonas quien nos muestra la importancia de la responsabilidad en un mundo en donde el humano muestra su poderío mediante la tecnología y el abuso por la naturaleza.

---

### **Ivi says**

3,5\*

---

### **Georges Assaf says**

Coming Soon :)

---

### **Bryan Kibbe says**

I have read a number of books in the arena of the philosophy of technology, and many have been suggestive of a technological ethics, but few have offered major substantive proposals. Whether you agree with his conclusions or not, Hans Jonas aims to fill that gap by proposing an ethics built around the concept of responsibility for the continued existence of humankind and is informed by the distinctive ways in which modern technologies have fundamentally transformed the range and effect of human action. I have some reservations/concerns about the ways in which Jonas attempts to ground his ethical imperative of responsibility, but there is much to appreciate in what Jonas has to say. In particular, Jonas is insightful regarding the changed nature of human action in a high tech age, a point that cannot be emphasized enough. Additionally, while many are likely to disregard Jonas as a technological luddite, they would miss the valuable theme of epistemic modesty that he introduces into discussions about the can and should of

technology. Finally, Jonas displays a helpful sensitivity to the weaknesses and shortcomings of human beings as users of technology, which is often lacking in discussions about technological devices. That is, we often focus so much on what technology can do for and give to us, that we fail to consider how the peculiar weaknesses of human persons in combination with the tremendous power and potential of technological devices and systems can sometimes result in tragic events and patterns of behavior. For those striving for an ethical framework that addresses the pressing realities of modern technology, Jonas is a very useful resource (even if only as a dialectical conversation partner).

---

### **Jonathan says**

Hans Jonas, in "The Imperative of Responsibility," argues that the ethical codes that we have inherited are no longer sufficient given the altered nature of human action--its increasing magnitude and impact (especially on nature). Past ethical codes (such as that of Judaism and Christianity or classical philosophy) focus predominantly on interpersonal relations bounded by time and space, but the impact of human actions now extends far beyond that. This new world is also characterized increasingly by \*uncertainty\*--the long-term impacts of new technologies can take on a life/purpose divorced from an original intent. As a German-born Jew (who, wisely and luckily, escaped to England in 1933), he saw the horrible impacts of technology in modern society, and writing during the Cold War, the catastrophic possibilities of nuclear warfare loom in the background. Biomedical advances, fine-tuned mechanisms for behavioral modification, and the ability to manipulate DNA characterized the technological landscape as well. This is very different from the world of C.E.--even 1800 or 1900 C.E.

After laying out the main problem, Jonas provides a thorough, systematic, and humanistic philosophical defense of the precautionary principle, an ethic of responsibility to future generations which he argues should guide human action, particularly around technological advances.

Jonas acknowledges the future-orientation in Marxism but argues that it does not provide the ethic of responsibility needed in the current age because of the characteristics it shares with capitalism (productivism, enshrinement of technology and growth, emphasis on material prosperity as defining the future ideal) and its utopianism (which, despite even the best of intentions, can harbor great danger).

Although climate change was not as prominent an issue when Jonas was writing, his reflections on and delineations of our responsibility to future generations are highly relevant to debates around climate action.

---

### **Whoof says**

Dense and good and imperative (lol), although I found the appendix on the mind/body problem totally incomprehensible

---