RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AGE OF CHANGE: PAUL RICOEUR'S PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AS A KEY TO CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

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Introduction

The changes brought about by the broad expansion of Homo sapiens into Earth's ecosystems have led to a global socio-ecological crisis that persists today. The optimism that characterized early 20th-century scholars and thinkers, grounded in faith in human creativity and technological progress supported by the achievements of the industrial revolution, has proven unfounded. In the past, humans had to adapt their activities to the natural world, accounting for seasonal changes or river flows, for instance. However, today, with rapid scientific and technological progress, the surrounding environment increasingly adapts to human lifestyles, which has become a defining characteristic of the new era.Various interpretations of changes in the relationship between society and nature have given rise to numerous terms and approaches to describe the contemporary era. Opinions increasingly emphasize that the pursuit of comfort and abundance, as well as the growing needs of an expanding population fulfilled through technological progress, disrupts the balance of existing systems. This problem has become more complex, encompassing not only the rise in technological capabilities and impact on natural processes but also the cultural, economic, social, and environmental consequences of this influence. Disillusionment with former utopian ideals, the worsening ecological situation due to the irrational use of natural resources, and civilization's inability to correct its own errors have led to a crisis in the idea of human superiority and humanism. From being a supreme being with reason and the power to alter the

planet's face, humans have once again become dependent on external forces. In the past, nature set the direction for development, but now that role is assumed by technologies initially created for global societal and planetary change. Civilization's dependency on technological progress has grown alongside the acceleration of scientific and technological development, and by the end of the 20th century and into the 21st, as global problems have multiplied, this has led to an awareness of humanity's limitations. With this realization, a new concept emerged – the idea of creating artificial superintelligence that might one day solve the accumulated problems. This crisis has underscored the importance of a new form of responsibility, without which civilization may show signs of collapse. This challenge brings us to Paul Ricoeur's thought on ethics of responsibility in the modern age, which considers the historical and collective roots of issues that are global in nature, affecting all, though to varying degrees. While such an ethics of responsibility cannot entirely resolve environmental degradation, it paves the way for more active participation in combating the new vulnerabilities of the anthropogenic age.

From the Anthropological Act to Responsibility

One of Ricoeur's main objectives in his work was to develop a concept of the human being, drawing on key philosophical currents of his time, such as the philosophy of life, phenomenology, existentialism, personalism, psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, structuralism, analytical philosophy, and others. These movements, rooted in ancient thought and based on the ideas of predecessors like Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, have significantly contributed to the understanding of human nature. Throughout his research career, Ricoeur addressed fundamental questions relevant to his contemporaries. He views philosophical anthropology as analogous to the humanities: it does not replace them but rather engages in dialogue with them, avoiding reductionism. He directs his critique not so much at the idea of the "death of man" but at its counterpart – the concept of humanity that has emerged relatively recently *(Prouteau, 2023)*.

Paul Ricoeur began examining key anthropological phenomena early in his philosophical journey. The findings from his initial research laid the foundation for his further reflections and the development of his concept of the "capable human." One of the central phenomena of human existence, according to Ricoeur, is the anthropological act, the nature which he explores in his dissertation *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary (Ricoeur, 1966).* In this work, he pays particular attention to the physical characteristics of human actions.

Ricoeur distinguishes between two types of anthropological acts based on the level of control a person exercises over their actions: involuntary and voluntary. According to Ricoeur, involuntary action is an interaction between a person and the surrounding world, where the body automatically engages in action without requiring further conscious control from the subject *(Ricoeur, 1966: 233).* He classifies automatic acts, performed at the reflex level, such as walking, running, and breathing, under this category.

In his study of intentional actions, Ricoeur defines them as tools for expanding human capabilities: "The more I do on my own and the more I am capable of doing, the broader my possibilities" *(Ricoeur, 1966: 64).* He emphasizes that voluntary action is essential for the core anthropological traits of a human. Voluntary acts express and embody a person's inner aspirations, desires, needs, and motives. For Ricoeur, intentional action is directly linked to the will. Furthermore, he considers the will as a unique form of action that "complements the meaning of external motivators," such as emotions, needs, and habits *(Ricoeur, 1966: 5).*

Ricoeur identifies several stages in the process of executing a voluntary act: decision, action, and reconciliation. At each of these stages, voluntary and involuntary components of human nature interact. Notably, at each stage of an intentional action, a person becomes aware of their responsibility for the future. Ricoeur underscores the significant role of responsibility in the final stage of a voluntary act.

For Ricoeur, the concept of responsibility has a broad meaning. He highlights the connection between a person's ability to act and

their responsibility for their actions. Within his concept of the "capable human", responsibility can be understood as aligning one's actions with the moral norms accepted by society. Later, Ricoeur emphasizes the link between action and responsibility as a crucial ethical thread in developing the concept of the "capable human." Two aspects are particularly noteworthy: the systematic way he presents his ideas and the emphasis on high-ethical qualities in individuals, evident even in his early works.

Ricoeur underscores the close interaction of different types of human activity, pointing out that during the performance of an anthropological act, the line between voluntary and involuntary actions becomes blurred. The intended act is realized through muscular effort, resulting in an event. Ricoeur believes this is possible because "I plan this action" *(Ricoeur, 1966: 54)*. At this stage, involuntary factors, such as habits and instincts, have a significant influence, shaped by previous experiences.

At the stage of reconciliation, responsibility becomes the key element. Analyzing the consequences of action, Ricoeur discusses an important ethical component—responsibility, which he later identifies as a distinct human capacity. He states, "To decide means, first and foremost, to project a practical possibility of action that depends on me and then to take responsibility" *(Ricoeur, 1966: 86)*. The issue of responsibility is a central theme that Ricoeur explores throughout his career. In his works, he uses the model of responsibility as attribution, implying self-ascription of responsibility, which links the individual to their actions. Ricoeur's concept of l'homme capable, or the "capable human," represents the pinnacle of his work on responsibility. In this concept, responsibility as attribution becomes a fundamental capacity directed toward others, while the reflective "I" gains greater influence over itself as both subject and moral agent *(Le Chevallier, 2024)*.

Freedom and Responsibility in the Concept of the "Fallible Man"

Ricoeur also addresses the problem of the "fallible man". In his view, evil arises because of the profound freedom inherent in humans, and it is realized through their abilities to act and exist.

Human actions can take both positive and negative directions, with the latter revealing the essence of the "fallible man". By interpreting freedom, laws, and moral norms in different ways, a person may act in opposition to the established societal order.

Ricoeur writes, "Alongside the capacity to follow a certain law (or what I call a law for myself), I also discover with horror my capacity to act against it. Indeed, the experience of conscience, which speaks of the relationship between freedom and duty, is dual: on the one hand, I acknowledge my duty, that is, the capacity to fulfill this duty, but on the other hand, I recognize my potential to act against the law, which continues to present itself as an obligation. This experience is commonly known as the experience of breaking the law" *(Ricoeur, 1969).* This dual experience exposes the conflict between freedom and obligation.

According to Ricoeur, responsibility is not only an obligation but also a manifestation of human freedom. In this context, he suggests viewing responsibility as a conscious act arising from the understanding of the connections between personal freedom and social duty. Ricoeur emphasizes that individuals should strive for harmony between their own desires and their obligations to society. Responsibility arises from the recognition of the other, from the awareness that we are not alone in this world and that our actions affect the lives of others.

In Fallible Man, Ricoeur primarily reflects on human creativity, through which individuals shape themselves. However, he also asserts that evil, or destructive activity, is an integral part of human nature: "The capacity for evil is embedded in human constitution" *(Ricoeur, 1986: 133).* He views evil as a potentiality, a part of which is the inclination toward sin, referring to it as "potential".

Ricoeur underscores the importance of philosophical and anthropological reflection on human passions as a foundation for understanding fallibility. At the root of anthropological sinfulness lies the limitation of human nature, which aspires to infinity but is conscious of its finiteness. According to many scholars, Ricoeur sees this inner conflict as the primary source of anthropological sinfulness. For example, B. Kristensson supports Ricoeur's view that the

contradiction between finiteness and infinity serves as a source of human fallibility, explaining it through inner limitations and conflicts *(Kristensson, 2010: 21)*. O. Abel and J. Poree also emphasize the importance of this disproportion in the concept of fallibility, identifying it as a fundamental element of anthropological nature *(Abel, Poree, 2007: 36)*.

These studies highlight the significance of the discourse on fallibility within Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology. Summarizing various perspectives and expressing his own, Ricoeur concludes that the contradiction between human desires and capacities is the main reason for anthropological fallibility. This contradiction is especially evident in intentional, voluntary acts, where individuals confront the misalignment between their personal aspirations and objective conditions. By overcoming these internal contradictions, a person affirms themselves as the "capable human" – only by exerting willful effort can one realize an intentional act.

The Role of Other and Ethical Responsibility

In Oneself as Another, Ricoeur examines the role of the "other" in the process of defining various human capacities, including linguistic ones. Here, an evolution in his views can be observed: while he previously regarded "the word" as part of an individual, he now asserts that language abilities are shaped through dialogue. This shift in his thinking reflects an effort to see dialogical exchange as a means of affirming human existence. The response from the Other to our question provides a sense of our own existence.

Analyzing human capacity for action, Ricoeur also explores the issue of self-definition, where the "I" is the author of its actions and the relationship between the acting subject and the action itself. He defines the capacity for action as a form of movement linked to confidence in one's abilities (I can) and control over one's body. These characteristics, in Ricoeur's view, enable a person to become the author of their action, meaning they can perform an act they fully control. This approach reflects the influence of his earlier works, where he examined the voluntary nature of intentional "I" actions. The element of confidence introduced in this analysis highlights Ricoeur's evolving views on the issue of action. The link between

action and its subject is not merely observable; it is a capability in which the subject experiences full confidence. Such a synthesis allows Ricoeur to identify the capacity for action as one of the most significant anthropological characteristics of humans.

According to Ricoeur, the human capacity for action also manifests in interaction with others: "You, by believing in me and counting on me, help me remain a subject endowed with capabilities" *(Ricoeur, 1985).* The need to reveal multiple human capacities leads Ricoeur to further develop his anthropology through ethical issues. The goal is to deepen the question of *homo capax* – a human being capable of taking responsibility for their actions, where a key aspect is the ability to bear responsibility for one's actions. This evolution in his thinking demonstrates his desire to explore the consequences of human actions more deeply, where, in Ricoeur's view, the ethical dimension plays a decisive role *(Renaud, 2024).* It is important to note that responsibility—the ability to foresee and assess actions – becomes a crucial aspect of action. Ricoeur points out that "a kind of uncertainty penetrates the conceptual space, and the modern use and spread of this term raises questions, especially as it goes beyond its legal meaning" *(Ricoeur, 2000).* He defines responsibility as a person's capacity, viewed as an acting and perceiving "I," to rely on others and take responsibility for their actions as their author *(Ricoeur, 1992).*

More specifically, within the concept of the person as vulnerable, self-improving, and possessing a constant identity within "institutionalized socio-cultural structures" *(Helenius, 2016),* responsibility at the individual level is seen as the practical expression of a person who acts freely and consciously, capable of evaluating their actions and being evaluated by others in personal relationships (such as friendship) and in institutional relationships (mediated by organizations). In terms of morality and law, the concept of responsibility is closely associated with the idea of imputation, that is, the notion of "attributing an action to its agent, provided ethical norms that describe the action as proper and wise are followed" *(Deweer, 2016).* Thus, "imputation implies not only attributing responsibility for an action to a specific person but also

responsibility for an action that can be assessed as permissible or impermissible, determining guilt or innocence" *(Ricoeur, 1992)*.

In his early phenomenological study of the will, Ricoeur emphasizes that "the possibility of judging my actions, of receiving praise and blame in the world of sanctions, is rooted in the legitimacy of my responsibility" *(Ricoeur, 1966)*. Exploring the relationship between individual and collective responsibility, Ricoeur distinguishes between moral responsibility, associated with individuals' actions, and political responsibility, concerning society's collective actions *(Ricoeur, 1991)*. His approach to responsibility permeates his entire philosophical anthropology, from his early phenomenological studies on the structure of will and human fallibility to later works on justice, memory, and recognition.

The philosopher highlights the importance of social norms and laws governing anthropological actions. These rules, established by social institutions, provide control and support in performing actions. Ricoeur emphasizes that one person's actions can impact another's life space. People not only rely on each other in carrying out their actions but are also involved in them. In this context, the philosopher notes that action and experience are distributed between two subjects—the agent and the one who undergoes the action. These roles are interchangeable, and each participant is involved either as an active subject or as a recipient. Each agent "takes responsibility for an action based on reciprocity, which turns the rule of justice into a rule of equality" *(Ricoeur, 1990: 382)*.

From this, several conclusions can be drawn. First, Ricoeur views responsibility as a fundamental principle of action that leads to the formation of moral and ethical norms in society. Second, the relationship between the "I" and the "Other" in realizing the capacity for action is based on dialogical interaction. It is also important to note the concept of "action–responsibility" within Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology, emphasizing the systematic nature of his approach to developing the idea of the "capable human." The philosopher often connects anthropological capacities with other capacities of the "I." For example, the capacity for action is achieved through understanding and accepting responsibility for one's actions.

Ricoeur also analyzes the human capacity for narrative, drawing on conclusions from his earlier works. He himself highlighted the connection between Time and Narrative and Oneself as Another. The philosopher examines identity through the process of self-realization via storytelling: through life stories and memories, the "I" forms a sense of self. Narrative identity, according to Ricoeur, serves as a "scaffolding" supporting more complex reflections on personal identity. Without this support, the development of identity would be impossible. Ricoeur also stresses that narrative identity serves as a connecting element between linguistic capabilities and the ethical responsibility of the "I." Narration is closely related to action, as in stories, one describes their actions, thereby creating a space that imitates the surrounding reality, which can be represented in "one or another narrative form" *(Ricoeur, 1985)*.

This evolution in his views demonstrates his desire to delve deeper into the consequences of human actions, where, according to Ricoeur, the ethical dimension plays a crucial role. It is essential to note that responsibility – the ability to foresee and evaluate one's actions – becomes a defining moment in action. Thus, in Ricoeur's understanding, the "capable human" is one who acts responsibly.

Ricoeur emphasizes that human abilities, such as acting, speaking, and storytelling, are seen as preparatory stages for forming an "ethical subject." Constructing this subject, as the philosopher explicitly states, is one of his work's main objectives. A person, as the author of their words, the subject of their actions, and the hero of their own stories, places themselves within the concept of good and evaluates their actions regarding achieving a good life. The capacity to bear responsibility for one's actions and moral accountability to oneself defines the meaning of capacity in Ricoeur's view: "I am a being capable of evaluating my actions, seeing some of them as good, and thereby capable of evaluating myself as good. The discourse of 'I can' is, without a doubt, the discourse of the 'I,'... which, in its ethical aspect, corresponds to the capacity for judgment" *(Ricoeur, 1990)*.

According to Ricoeur, a subject capable of judging their actions forms their identity based on a hierarchy of values that determines their deeds. In his studies, Ricoeur frequently links responsibility for

actions with the relationship between the "I" and the "Other." The "I" retains its value only when it lives in such a way that the Other can rely on it: "Because someone relies on me, I am responsible for my actions toward the Other" *(Ricoeur, 1990).* Thus, responsibility is realized through interactions with others, making it an essential condition for its fulfillment.

The concept of "responsibility" in Ricoeur's philosophy is often associated with the phenomenon of the "Other," which creates a certain paradox: responsibility, while subjective, also possesses an intersubjective nature. Considering responsibility as a phenomenon that connects various temporal aspects of a person's being, Ricoeur emphasizes its importance in the past, present, and future. Responsibility includes commitments made in the past, to be fulfilled in the future, and which are always present. In the context of the future, responsibility is easily understood: "Responsibility implies that a person takes on the consequences of their actions, considering certain future events as their own" *(Ricoeur, 1990).* Although this responsibility is more often governed by legal norms, moral principles also influence the "I's" choices. In retrospect, responsibility is expressed through the awareness of duty regarding the consequences of one's actions. The past and future connect in the present: "To be responsible today means to be the same one who acted yesterday and will act tomorrow" *(Ricoeur, 1990).* In this understanding, human life resembles an "accounting ledger," where all deeds are recorded.

Ricoeur emphasizes that the capacity for responsibility is one of the most humanistic characteristics of the "capable human." Responsibility enables individuals to care not only for themselves but also for the "Other," avoiding harm to them. In these reflections, the philosopher's aspiration for a new spiritual and humanistic paradigm in contemporary philosophical anthropology is evident.

Results

Analysis of the Concept of the "Capable Human": The study revealed that Paul Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology, based on the concept of the "capable human," is a crucial tool for understanding human nature in the modern world. Concepts such as capability,

action, will, freedom, and especially responsibility provide deeper insights into the role of humans as active participants in social processes. The research demonstrated that Ricoeur's philosophy broadens the understanding of anthropological characteristics of humans and their significance for contemporary ethics.

Ethics of Responsibility: The study emphasizes the importance of Ricoeur's ethics of responsibility in the context of current global challenges, such as the ecological crisis, social inequality, and threats related to technological development. Significantly, responsibility is considered not only as an individual trait but also as a collective duty, opening new approaches to addressing societal issues. Ricoeur links human capability for action to the moral obligation to bear responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, a notion that gains special relevance in the era of anthropogenic changes.

Interconnection Between Action and Responsibility: One of the key findings of the study is the establishment of a close relationship between human actions and ethical responsibility. Ricoeur asserts that every voluntary act must be accompanied by an awareness of the potential consequences. This understanding of responsibility includes both moral and political dimensions, making Ricoeur's concept pertinent to both individual ethics and public life.

The Role of Dialogue and the "Other": The study found that the concept of the "other" is central to Ricoeur's understanding of human identity and responsibility. The ability to engage in dialogue, recognize, and interact with others aids in the formation of ethical behavior. Dialogue with the "other" not only affirms an individual's existence but is also a necessary condition for developing responsible behavior. This highlights the importance of interdependence and social interaction in the process of self-awareness and the acceptance of responsibility.

Anthropological Fallibility: An important aspect of the study is the recognition of human fallibility, which Ricoeur views as an inherent part of human nature. Fallibility manifests in freedom that can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. The research confirmed that understanding the limitations and contradictions inherent in human

nature helps to better grasp the necessity of ethical control and self-reflection.

Evolution of the Concepts of Responsibility and Freedom: The study showed that Ricoeur views responsibility as an expression of human freedom. A person is not only free to choose their actions but is also obligated to recognize their consequences. This awareness is tied to reflection and ethical judgment, making Ricoeur's concept a universal tool for analyzing both personal and social ethical problems.

Connection to Contemporary Challenges: In the context of the digital age and ecological crises, Ricoeur's ideas about the importance of responsibility acquire new meaning. The study demonstrated that his philosophy can foster responsible and conscious behavior necessary for building a sustainable and harmonious society. Ricoeur emphasizes that without an awareness of responsibility for one's actions, humanity could face irreversible consequences.

Narrative Identity: The article also revealed that narrative identity plays a crucial role in a person's awareness of their responsibility. Through stories and memories, individuals form their sense of self, which helps them evaluate their actions from a moral and ethical standpoint. This idea is particularly significant in the context of developing a mature personality capable of making thoughtful and responsible decisions.

Conclusion

The modern era is characterized by complexity and uncertainty. Global issues such as climate change, social inequality, migration crises, and technological development demand a high degree of responsibility from individuals. Paul Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology offers valuable tools for understanding and cultivating responsibility, which are especially relevant in the face of contemporary challenges. His ideas on the importance of self-knowledge, empathy, and recognizing others help individuals to understand their place in the world and the significance of their actions. Cultivating responsibility becomes an integral part of forming a mature personality capable of making thoughtful decisions and striving for harmony with the surrounding world.

Understanding responsibility as an expression of freedom and accountability to others enables each of us to contribute to building a fairer and more sustainable world. Ricoeur inspires us to seek answers to the complex questions of our time and to remember that each person can change the world, starting with their own behavior. Responsibility, according to Ricoeur, implies a willingness to accept the consequences of one's actions and consciously engage in society. He emphasizes that the act of responsibility requires both freedom of will and reflection, that is, the ability to analyze one's actions and their impact on others.

The modern age is characterized by complexity and uncertainty. Global problems such as climate change, social inequality, migration crises, and technological development demand a high degree of responsibility from individuals. Paul Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology provides essential tools for understanding and cultivating responsibility, relevant to contemporary challenges. His ideas on self-knowledge, empathy, and recognizing the other help individuals comprehend their place in the world and the significance of their actions. Cultivating responsibility is an essential aspect of shaping a mature personality capable of making thoughtful decisions and striving for harmony with the surrounding world.Understanding responsibility as an expression of freedom and accountability to others enables each of us to contribute to building a fairer and more sustainable world. Ricoeur inspires us to seek answers to the complex questions of our time, remembering that each person can change the world, starting with their own behavior. Responsibility, according to Ricoeur, implies a readiness to accept the consequences of our actions and consciously engage in societal life. He emphasizes that the act of responsibility requires both free will and reflection, that is, the ability to analyze one's actions and their impact on others.

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ASSIGNING TASKS TO GENERATIVE AI: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Introduction

Many articles on the use of generative AI products emphasize their use in completing repetitive or mundane tasks, freeing up time for humans to do the creative ones. But, the choice of which tasks to offload may have implications for a learner whose goal is to master a set of skills that require habits of mind and/or processes that can only be acquired over time and through practice. Further, assignment of these tasks to AI may take away from the process of learning that requires the engagement of the learner in all aspects of the pursuit. DeVaney (2024) asks, "Does extreme offloading elevate us by granting freedom or does it risk eroding the very experiences that shape our humanity?" This presentation will explore the idea that learners are not always well-equipped to determine which tasks or activities should be offloaded to AI. It describes examples of the use of generative AI and asks questions about the potential gains and losses that are experienced by learners. It will close by exploring the