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Ilaria Malagrinò

Adolescents and the New Culture of Risk On-line: a Conceptual Framework for an Ethical Training Pragmatics

Young people, risk and uncertainty: a complex relationship in a complex society

It is widely accepted in public discourse that youth are prone to taking risks[1]. In recent years, there has been heightened concerns for young people as a social group at risk due to their risky behaviors[2].The reason for this is that when young people partake in risky behaviours, they jeopardize not only their own futures but also, by extension, that of society as a whole.

Adolescence has long been considered as a period of immense transition, a time for exploring new identities, and a shift in focus from parents to peers in relationships[3]. The tendency of young people to engage in seemingly reckless behaviour has been categorized as extremist conduct, which may stem, at least partially, from their struggle with identity uncertainty and their desire to resolve it[4]. Consequently, uncertainty is a fundamental aspect in the understanding of youth risk-taking[5].

In recent literature, studies have documented a strong correlation between the search for popularity, risk behaviours, and uncertainty. Adoles-

[1] J.O. Zinn, *Understanding Risk-Taking*, Palgrave Macmillan, Switzerland 2020, p. 182.

[2] L.E. Ponton, *The Romance of Risk: Why Teenagers Do the Things They Do*, Basic Books, New York 1997, p. 2.

[3] J.T. Siegel, W.D. Crano, E.M. Alvaro, A. Lac, D. Rast, V. Kettering, *Dying to Be Popular A Purposive Explanation of Adolescent Willingness to Endure Harm*, in M.A. Hogg, D.L. Blaylock (eds.), *Extremism and the Psychology of Uncertainty*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Oxford 2012, pp. 115-130, p. 118.

[4] J.O. Zinn, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

[5] J.T. Siegel, W.D. Crano, E.M. Alvaro, A. Lac, D. Rast, V. Kettering, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

 DOI: 10.4454/ve3y3b33

cents who prioritize popularity may be more willing to harm themselves as a means of gaining acceptance and minimizing uncertainty[6].

According to this perspective, it has been argued that the root cause of adolescent risk-taking behaviour is not a lack of rationality, impulsiveness, or because they perceive themselves as invincible. Rather, purposeful risk-taking is motivated by a specific intention, and the goal of the apparently reckless behaviour is not self-destruction but the reaching a desired objective.

Therefore, risk-taking has been interpreted as a practice that adolescents engage in as a response to a specific state of vulnerability. Risk-taking requires skills, is linked to one's identity and the desire for social recognition and may be a last resort when basic needs or feelings of ontological security have been threatened or already affected.

Nowadays we live in a society of increasing complexity. This is contextualized by considering the current period as an age of ongoing and increasing uncertainty, where the very definitions of young and youth become problematic[7]. Young people today seek to establish their identities in a complex globalized socio-economic environment, where new ecological and technological challenges have arisen. The current state of global affairs, from the 2008 global crisis to economic and pandemic uncertainties, the Russian-Ukrainian and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, and climate change, only serve to heighten feelings of instability and uncertainty. Thus, the notion of risk is one of the most significant and timely concepts that contextualizes young people's uncertain lives[8]. In this context, the experience of identity faces

[6] As Hogg argues groups reduce uncertainty because they provide their members with a clear, unambiguous, and distinct sense of self and social identity built around the group's prototype (M.A. Hogg, *Subjective uncertainty reduction through self-categorization: A motivational theory of social identity processes*, in «European Review of Social Psychology» 11 (2000), pp. 223-255; M.A. Hogg, *Uncertainty-identity theory*, in M.P. Zanna (ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Academic Press, San Diego (CA) 2007, pp. 69-126). Thus, as popular people are seen as being socially knowledgeable, then by becoming popular, the adolescents may believe they will become socially knowledgeable. As popular people are seen as attractive, then by becoming popular, adolescents likely believe they will become attractive as well. As popular people have certain desirable personality characteristics, and more favorable levels of self-concept, then by becoming popular, adolescents likely believe they will gain a more favorable personality, and a more positive sense of self.

[7] R. Huq, *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth and Identity in a Postcolonial World*, Routledge, Abingdon 2006.

[8] Two of the most important contributions to the issue of "risk society" are those of Beck and Giddens (U. Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London 1992; A. Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age*, Wiley, Hoboken 1991).

new risks. Old certainties are challenged; the crisis young people are experiencing is not only socio-economic, but also a crisis of values. What has emerged is a less predictable world characterized by insecurity. One of the most prevalent features of the risk society is that dangers have become globalized to the point where the consequences of risk surpass the limitations of time and space. At the same time, people's sense of risk has become more personalized. In this sense, as Sørensen[9] argues, the new risks reinforce the general individualization process characterizing modernity.

In an uncertain globalized environment, individuals must find their own ways to manage the challenges posed by these risks.

Yet, according to Giddens, it is the wide number of possibilities to which individuals are exposed, and the associated returns which they have to calculate, that generates further anxiety. In this context, personal decisions are intertwined with worldwide social changes, making it even harder to deal with any feelings of uncertainty. It could be argued that in today's culture, self-identity is formed in a way that seems to offer young people more options, but doesn't always shield them from the risks associated with those choices.

Thus, in the context of fluid experiences, the feeling of uncertainty is particularly intense for young people. According to Bauman and Raud: «For better or worse, uncertainty has become our fate: for worse, because uncertainty is an un-drying fount of our misery, and for better, because it is also the prime cause of our glory – of human inventiveness, creativity, and our capacity of transcending one by one the limits it sets to human potential»[10]. In addressing uncertainty in today's socio-economic context, young people come to accept the need to embrace or at least live with precarity. Uncertainty has been normalized. It seems that young people attempt to regain some control by "embracing uncertainty", but this approach actually amplifies the feeling of uncertainty. As a result, they seek a way out from everyday lives by emigrating or escaping into the digital world in search of what they hope to be a better life.

The digital space thus becomes crucial when trying to analyse the lives of young people today.

The internet is significant as it provides a platform for social experimentation and the development of interpersonal relationships. It's a unique and

[9] M.P. Sørensen, *Ulrich Beck: exploring and contesting risk*, in «Journal of Risk Research» 21 (2018) n. 1, pp. 6-16, p. 14.

[10] Z. Bauman, R. Raud, *Practices of Selfhood*, Polity, Cambridge 2015, p. viii.

inclusive social outlet, reaching far and wide. A number of studies have shown that adolescents' internet usage can lead to increased identity exploration, self-expression, and positive development. Online interactions have a positive impact on reducing social anxiety and loneliness. They create an environment where adolescents can express their true selves and gain acceptance in positive ways. For this reason, social media practices allegedly bring a sense of connection and belonging.

The advent of the internet has undoubtedly resulted in a profound change in people's life experiences[11]. But it is precisely this transformation that never ceases to worry. Indeed, it is possible that social media is changing not only our personal identity, but also our broader sense of moral responsibility towards our fellow humans. In this way, social media is at the centre of many of our greatest public policy debates; however, its role in shaping the future of humanity is still uncertain. Nevertheless, it is important to evaluate some of the ethical consequences of moving our personal identity online and how we might create the conditions for moral responsibility and the new forms it takes on through and because our virtual reality.

This study aims to explore how risk is expressed and understood online, as well as how social media acknowledges and responds to the connection between risk and uncertainty. The ultimate goal is to comprehend how social media influences the way we perceive and accept moral responsibility and its impact on younger generations. It is important to question the inherent moral value of social networking technologies not just based on their political significance, but also to rethink how we understand and define our own moral values. Technologies don't just shape our perceptions, but also our praxis, introducing a novel set of considerations to the moral issues that are central to the study of technology and its impact on our lives.

Risk online as a shared narrative

In a world filled with captivating visuals, such as in the digital realm, risk is often depicted and shared narratively through images and representations. Risk is carried out in real time for an audience that observes the performer. In the context of being showcased online, risk can be seen as an artifact, a lasting result of a performance for others to observe at their own

[11] As Verbeek explains technology acts upon us as we act with it (P.P. Verbeek, *Moralising Technology: Understanding and Designing the Morality of Things*, University of Chicago, Chicago 2011, p. 8).

pace. One can intentionally present a certain image to a particular audience and monitor their responses through direct replies, even if the communication is not happening in real time.

In this way, when participating in social media young people may become part of the spectacle instead of just being passive spectators.

In the world of social media, people create and consume their own content, whether it's text-based or visual. Thus the notion of prosumption, i.e. the integration of production and consumption[12], is especially important for examining the nature of online risk. As per the findings of Gabriel and Lang, «consumption becomes substantially a consumption of images or a consumption for the benefit of generating images»[13]. The intersection of digital spaces is where young people both create and consume content, and it is here that they define their identities among their peers.

Since a large portion of online self-expression involves visual elements, it is important to examine how camera phone usage contributes to the perception of risk. Second-generation camera phone practices involve the use of social media sharing applications (apps) such as Instagram and Snapchat. This has resulted in an increase in the number of images and videos shared by people, capturing moments of their lives. As noted by Hjorth and Hendry, the use of camera phones results in the emergence of alternative visual modes[14]. Pictures and videos captured on a modern smartphone are edited in apps that can then be shared almost instantly across multiple platforms. Photo and video sharing apps make it easy for prosumers to produce and consume the risk exhibited.

Digital platforms have introduced new ways for young people to consume. The possibility of prosumption intensifies the performative aspect of consumption.

A performance involves not only doing, but also pointing, underscoring, and displaying the act of doing. Goffman defined a performance as «all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants»[15].

[12] A. Burns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York 2008.

[13] Y. Gabriel, T. Lang, *New Faces and New Masks of Today's Consumer*, in «Journal of Consumer Culture» 8 (2008) n. 3, pp. 321-340, p. 330.

[14] L. Hjorth, N. Hendry, *A Snapshot of Social Media: Camera Phone Practice*, in «Social Media + Society» 1 (2015) n. 1, pp. 1-2, p. 1.

[15] E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Penguin Books, London 1990, p. 15.

Performance conjures expectations of theatre. Performativity is linked to preparation, presentation, script, symbolism, props, drama, and most importantly, an audience, whether real or envisioned. In this sense, Goffman's dramaturgical approach is frequently considered a useful foil for understanding risky behaviours exhibited online by young people.

Adolescents thus engage in performances where risk-taking is not part of everyday life, but rather a state of exception that experimenters enjoy and manage carefully.

The performative aspect of risk-taking and sharing conveys meanings related to a sense of belonging in groups.

In cycles of presenting risks and forming impressions, individuals perform on multiple stages. Patterns of action that unfold during a performance are known as parts or routines. In subsequent work these are referred to as restored behaviours. Restored actions encompass the mechanical and conscious activities that become part of the performative repertoire marking one's identity. Language is essential to performativity, as it both describes and presents a form of doing. Whereas restoration and repetition of behaviours reproduce "the Other as the Same", performativity enables a reproduction of the Other in which "the Same is not assured".

The role of risk, like in a play, allows individuals to experiment with different roles and identities by combining, remixing, and practicing various behaviours. These playful practices combine language and aesthetics to construct narratives that support a storytelling of the self, ever in progress and unfinished. Autobiographical performances use performativity to transition from private to public and back, sustaining self-storytelling. Performances such as these often produce staged personal narratives, shaping how audiences understand them and then reinterpret them.

By incorporating strategies of play, adolescents take risks in blending their public and private identities, deconstructing and reconstructing performances in their journey towards an authentic sense of self. Performances thus enable individuals to move from private to public. Sedgwick[16] clarifies, however, that such traversals are further supported by affective processes, which infuse new meaning into the texture of a performance, frequently through linguistic play or reversal of norms. Emotional release and affect are important aspects of the expressive and connective gestures available

[16] E.K. Sedgwick, *Touching feeling: Affect, pedagogy, performativity*, Duke University Press, Durham (NC) 2003.

through social networks[17]. Potentialities for being, then, are both reproduced and multiplied through play and interpretation.

Social media platforms expand the array of performative props, offering a heightened potential for theatricality and drama, which individuals find appealing. Boyd[18] explains that persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability are important affordances of networked publics. The message conveyed is that self-presentations, captured in video and images, endure and cannot be entirely eliminated, can be effortlessly duplicated, are accessible to both familiar and unfamiliar groups, and can be readily found through searching. Architectures that prioritize default information sharing enhance these capabilities.

Young people usually use tags to mark their videos and posts. Tagging is the act of signing an art performance. Artists develop specific tags to represent their works among known crowds. Tagging categorizes the performance and makes it accessible to wider audiences. It provides more visibility to performative statements of the self, effectively making them the namesake.

Posting risky behaviour can be seen as a way to seek attention and elevate one's social status by presenting oneself in a high-status position. This is known as "aspirational production". The power of the image in this respect is undeniable: individuals curate their pictures and experiences in a way that may provide some sort of affirmation. The subject that arises from this practice involves not only an ontological state but also inevitably involves a politics of visibility, both at the personal level and within the technological infrastructure. It is this visibility that leads to labels of narcissism and vulnerability assigned to young people as the "Look-at-me generation"[19].

A managed self must appear flawless to others. However, this reflection is also influenced by the feedback from peers or the intended audience. Thus, the progressive co-dependence between impressions and the audience has become a defining feature of the social media sphere, highlighting their integral roles within this digital realm. For Leary, «the process of controlling how one is perceived by other people is called self-presentation or impres-

[17] Affective gestures infuse the risk narrative with emotive impressions that enhance performances of the self but may also entrap the self in a continuous loop of mediated affect.

[18] D. Boyd, *Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications*, in Z. Papacharissi (ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites*, Routledge, New York 2010, pp. 39-58.

[19] K. Mallan, *Look at me! Look at me! Self-representation and self-exposure through online networks*, in «Digital Culture & Education» 1 (2009), pp. 51-66, p. 52.

sion management»[20]. He argues that what truly matters is how others react to people's efforts to control their impressions, regardless of whether these responses align with their expectations, irrespective of whether these perceptions are positive or negative.

The power of the gaze can play a role in reinforcing the idea of tailoring digital impressions for an audience-centric strategy. In an online setting, the desire to express different parts of oneself aligns with the belief that the audience holds great influence, sometimes even dictating how the performance unfolds[21]. Conceptually, the audience plays a pivotal role within the changing landscape of internet-related media and advancing technologies. Within the dramaturgical approach, the audience refers to those who observe a specific actor and monitor their performance. These are the people for whom one "puts on a front". This front consists of the specific details that one presents to create the desired impression, as well as the unintentional details that are given off during the performance. In the context of social media, the audience is a conceptual audience. According to Litt[22], the imagined audience is the mental conceptualization of the people with whom we are communicating. An imagined audience may not exactly match the actual viewers, but it also includes users from broader social media community. In effect, Marwick and Boyd[23] have identified an audience, known as a "networked audience", which combines real and imagined viewers to form a wide audience based on social media mass and users' own social networks.

The tragic nature of the risk exhibited online

In online risk narratives, the concept of "seeing" plays a central role, allowing for the exploration of the complex dynamics concerning the am-

[20] M.R. Leary, *Self-Presentation: Impression Management and Interpersonal Behavior* (1996), Routledge, New York 2018.

[21] It has been highlighted by Frison and Eggermont, that the process of "liking" a photo is a significant and daily part of users' engagement with social media platforms, and that it can have an impact on the poster's self-esteem and satisfaction (E. Frison, S. Eggermont, *The impact of daily stress on adolescents' depressed mood: The role of social support seeking through Facebook*, in «Computers in Human Behavior» 44 (2015), pp. 315-325).

[22] E. Litt, *Knock, Knock. Who's There? The Imagined Audience*, in «Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media: Socially Mediated Publicness» 56 (2012) n. 3, pp. 330-345, p. 331.

[23] A.E. Marwick, D. Boyd, *I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience*, in «New Media & Society» 13 (2011) n. 1, pp. 114-133, p. 129.

biguity of the drama. This leads to the shaping of identity through tragedy and emerges as a paradigmatic moment of an impending catastrophe. The tragedy of online risk permeates every aspect of the narrative, including both the extrinsic act of posting and the behaviours that ensue. This is due to the specific way social media allows the negotiation of the bond between risk and uncertainty.

Social media is a crucial way for young people to adapt to such uncertain futures. Through the digital realm, young people can seize control over their life paths, but the escape that it offers is quintessentially ephemeral. Social media platforms offer the "illusion" of dynamism to young people, allowing them to construct their identities in the digital space.

Self-management is promoted through social networking sites, providing young people with a semblance of control. Nevertheless, when risk-taking practices become the norm, the ensuing experience may not necessarily be one of safety and predictability. When young adults partake in risky activities on a regular basis, it can cause instability in their daily lives and uncertainty about their future.

Social media offers a sense of stability while also perpetuating instability. The issue at hand is whether young people can find genuine stability in a space that is heavily influenced by the opinions of others. As Ricoeur states, in the "city of opinion", greatness depends on fame and the esteem of others. Each person has no existence and is only considered great in the eyes of others[24]. The most important concept here would be demonstration, which is a key aspect of the pragmatics of judgment.

In their pursuit of fame, individuals who strive to become micro-celebrities, a term that refers to modern celebrity culture on social media, take risks in order to stand out and be one-of-a-kind. According to Senft, «micro-celebrity is best understood as a new style of online performance that involves people 'amping up' their popularity over the Web using technologies like video, blogs and social networking sites» [25]. A key concern for Marwick and Boyd[26] is the apparent transformation of celebrity culture: the fragmented and widely applicable social media self-presentation practices reach and influence more people so that celebrity is formed by what an individual does and not who he or she is.

[24] P. Ricoeur, *Responsabilité et fragilité*, in «Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique» (2003) n. 76-77, pp. 127-141; pp. 132-133.

[25] T.M. Senft, *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks*, Peter Lang, New York 2008, p. 25.

[26] A.E. Marwick, D. Boyd, *op. cit.*

Users trying to raise awareness and become famous has led to a new type of micro-celebrity seeking recognition on social media platforms. The phenomenon observed here could be attributed to the fact that many people, both individuals and non-professionals, are inclined to experiment with building celebrity and its performative element.

In this way, young people utilize social media as a means to create a digital representation of themselves that is perceived as likable. Maximizing "likes" may indicate the desire to increase reputation and rewards on social media platforms.

Social peer influence for acceptance becomes more significant due to the platforms' architecture, which prominently displays the total number of likes or hearts under each shared post. In a way, "likes" can serve as an indicator of peer status and popularity, as well as a method for young people to gauge their personal image. This process impacts the online strategies of young people.

Young people's plans and decisions about posting are linked to the number of "likes" they attract. In general, such constant competition for "likes" is connected to the concept of comparing oneself to others and evaluating appearance.

The pursuit of "likes" by young people is a way of seeking attention that creates an idealized but ephemeral self. It has emerged as their response to the normalized uncertainty they face. Engaging with social media seems to create added pressure for young people to constantly and instantly reshape their identity. This new sense of selfhood is characterized by its ephemerality. It reflects a de-standardization of young people's biographies by a fragmentation of the self into discontinuous ephemeral moments. As Nelson argues[27], the trouble from a moral perspective is that the narrative self and its composition are inevitably dependent on context. Social media, which often lacks context beyond the temporary interactions, highlights the complexities of shaping a digital identity based solely on a "here is where I stand" approach.

Furthermore, individuals need to improve themselves to stay competitive in a "market" where the key is to attract attention. Young people need support to remain focused in a competitive environment. In this way, individuals need to enhance their sense of self by engaging in and posting acts that are increasingly risky in order to reinforce their own feeling of invulnerability.

[27] L.S. Nelson, *Social Media and Morality: Losing Our Self Control*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2018, p. 175.

An invulnerability that Le Breton[28] would define as tragic as young people's shared posts are increasingly characterized by innovation. In this way the element of tragedy lasts only a few seconds before being overshadowed by another post, video or image. These publications are released in abundance, like a litany, but they no longer have an impact on the audience. They do not reciprocate any emotional impact on our personal thoughts and feelings.

And the tragedy reaches its peak in the repeated act of posting that never ends. Social media is rooted in the premise and the expectation that young people will post relentlessly.

In this way social media promotes and encourages the commercialization of personal life by supporting well-packaged and promoted commodified self. The focus of the social media experience is to give young people a leading role in their self-promotion while promoting a reassuring sense of belonging.

The marketing potential of social media lies in its ability to facilitate self-branding, which is predominantly cantered on visual and performative aspects. The notion of branding encompasses not only the consumption of products and services, but also the consumption of meanings that can complement or improve the consumer's self-perception. In this way, self-branding strategies no longer include expensive purchases but involve choreographing a version of oneself. The abundance of photos and videos showcasing risky behaviour allows individuals to visually promote themselves as faultless. The social media arena is a confusing environment for showcasing and consuming one's identity.

Through this visualization, the intersection of social media and consumption results in a changing experience. It offers a hyper-real environment, an idealized version of reality and self that young people perform and present to their peers to be "consumed". Social media is no longer restrained by temporal and spatial limitations. Virtual platforms provide young people with the resources they need to negotiate their identities in a new way. The unfortunate reality of this process is that it prioritizes consumption by young people, even at the cost of their own identities and vulnerabilities.

In this regard, it seems correct to say that young people have become the victims of their own success.

[28] D. Le Breton, *Jeux de mort à l'adolescence*, in «Empan» 97 (2015), pp. 29-38.

From tragedy to fragility to responsibility

Yet it's not all bad. Still, it's unrealistic to live without technology or to believe we will ever eschew our mobile devices and return entirely to face-to- face communication. Therefore, it's necessary to consider how we might evoke a sense of moral responsibility towards each other when we engage online, and perhaps address our moral shortcomings offline as well.

Verbeek suggests that technologies should not be destructive to humanity, but rather they should be explicitly designed to help shape the morality of subjects. This approach to social media is influenced by Heidegger, who discusses the "saving power" within the danger of technology[29].

The tragic nature of the risk narratives shared online has had a twofold direction. One is focused on the immanence that traps in the despair of a repeated action without a final resolution, and the other moves towards the meaning announced in the ambiguity of the "vision", both granted and denied at the same time. Therefore, we must read the drama as teleologically oriented forward, towards the search for practical truth.

The online world's tragedy, pushed to its breaking point, can evoke a longing for resolution in the form of a melancholic realization that develops into a sense of wisdom, a wisdom tinged with tragedy. In light of this the question becomes: What lesson can we learn from the tragic online narrative? This last reminder provides a thread that deserves to be followed in this regard. It is, a call to "think more and differently" as a response is sought to "this terrible risk shown" without simply giving in to defeat. Rather, let us strive for a transformation and a different conjunction, not only in our thinking, but also in our emotions and conduct, especially in terms of morality and politics, towards others. As stated by Ricoeur, this path take us "from the guilty man to the capable man". In this last theme, the portrayal of human fragility takes precedence over dwelling on the tragedy of the action.

As Ricoeur argues in *Responsabilité et fragilité*[30], there is an important relationship between the phenomena of fragility and that of tragedy: this consists in the fact that both the fragile and the tragic are born from the conflict between quality human beings, i.e. both those who post and those who see, whom their very greatness confronts. Moreover, fragility, like tragedy, demonstrates a sort of obstinacy in finitude, a tendency to be closed off to others, from the very forces that the action encounters. The big difference,

[29] M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, M.A.D.F. Krell (ed.), HarperCollins, London 1993, p. 297.
[30] P. Ricoeur, *op. cit.*

however, between the fragile and the tragic lies in their different relationship to responsibility. The tragic scenario evokes a situation where man becomes painfully aware of a destiny or a fatality which weighs on his life, his nature or his very condition. The presence of the "fatal" or "destiny" dimension of the posting and that of the action signifies an irreparable conflict that ultimately results in the destruction of the protagonist who is forced to risk his life more and more to stay cool. The fragile does not include this faculty by virtue of the fact that the latter contribute to their downfall by the very efforts they deploy to avoid the disastrous outcome. On the contrary, fragility calls for action which is inherently linked to the concept of responsibility.

As Hans Jonas argues in *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*[31], responsibility has as its specific counterpart fragility.

Ricoeur recalls that Jonas refers to it as a principle because it is immediately expressed as an imperative with nothing preceding it. This principle is enveloped in a feeling that we discover, a feeling that affects us at the level of a fundamental mood in which we place ourselves first of all. We are compelled, enjoined by the fragile, to take action, not just to offer aid, but more importantly to promote growth and enable fulfilment and flourishing. The intensity of emotion lies in its ability to make us experience that exists, yet should not. The imperative is associated with what we perceive as deplorable, unbearable, unacceptable, and unjustifiable. We are made responsible by the fragile. Now, what does it mean: made responsible? This: when the fragile is not something but someone, this someone appears to us as entrusted to our care, placed in our charge. We are responsible for it.

The fragile person is someone who is counting on us; he awaits our help and our care; trusting that we will be there for him. This bond of trust is fundamental. It is important that we encounter it before suspicion arises, as it is intimately linked to the request, to the injunction, to the imperative. It follows that in the feeling of responsibility we feel that we are made responsible for and by.

The question then is: what will we do with this fragile being shown on the screen, what will we do for him?

It is the future of this being, the future of the new generation displayed on

[31] H. Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, Insel-Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1979 (transl. by H. Jonas and D. Herr, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1985).

the screen, that we must help to survive and grow. That is our focus. And this future is already our present. The imperative to act now in order to safeguard humanity for the future indicates the far-reaching effects of our technological interventions.

It is in the midst of otherness that we actually become responsible. At its core, this is about acknowledging each other as equals and seeing beyond differences. It's about viewing the other person as a fellow human being, rather than a stranger. We are responsible for a new entity, one that is still in the process of being created rather than recognized. This entity represents a fragile humanity that has lost the absolute values that modernity was based on, and is now defining itself by merging with the virtual world. The strictly political and social question is certainly unprecedented. However, it is to the extent that it is unprecedented that it calls for an anthropological reflection on the ethical behaviours likely to guide responsible behaviour in what Ricoeur would have described as the new fragile region.

It is enough for the recognized fragile to summon us here and now, with no guarantee of success, or even immediate effectiveness. We are at a pivotal moment in history where it is a question of recognizing that the figures of tragedy or, as we said more precisely, the sources of the fragile are also the sources of history, in the sense of "making history", to quote Ricoeur. We are at a turning point if we want to continue "being human in an Hyperconnected era"[32].

Abstract

Traditionally, adolescence has always been associated with a culture of risk. Nowadays, the Internet has radically changed the contexts, opportunities, and ways of expressing risk. In literature we find many studies discussing the assumption of risky behaviors on social media from a cognitive-behavioral point of view, but we lack a suitable conceptual framework to analyze it. In addition, a philosophical reading is also important in order to design an ethical training pragmatics. This analysis is complex, as risk is ambivalent and always refers back to uncertainty. Furthermore, as Verbeek argues, digital platforms are not simple tools, but have become means through which the subjective perceptive experience is created and mediated, with important ethical implications.

[32] L. Floridi (ed.), *The Onlife Manifesto. Being Human in a Hyperconnected Era*, Springer 2014.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to investigate the expressions and meanings of risk exhibited online and how social media responds to the relationship between risk and uncertainty. The final objective is to understand how social media changes the perspective we take on moral responsibility and its impact in relation to new generations. Not only do we need to question whether social networking technologies are inherently moral or immoral because of the political significance we attach to them, but we also need to reconsider how we understand and define our own moral sensibilities. Technologies mediate not only our perceptions, but also our praxis, introducing a novel set of considerations to the question of morality that animates the study of technology and its effect on our lives. We are at a turning point if we want to continue "being human in an Hyperconnected era".

Keywords: risk; uncertainty; adolescents; fragility; moral responsibility.

Ilaria Malagrinò
Università di Messina
ilaria.malagrino@unime.it