



GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis
 Volume 3, Issue 3, December, 2020
 ISSN (Online): 2714-2485

Ethics of Posterity for Environmental Development of the Niger Delta.

Otto Dennis

Department of Philosophy,
 Akwa Ibom State University,
 Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Email: ottodennis2001@yahoo.com

(Received: July-2020; Accepted: December-2020; Available Online: December-2020)



This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License
 CC-BY-NC-4.0 ©2020 by author (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

ABSTRACT

In contemporary times, there are increased concerns about the condition of future life. This may be due to the deplorable socio-economic, political, and climatic changes evident everywhere in the world. In Nigeria, it is feared that by 2090, for instance, negative environmental consequences from oil exploration in the Niger Delta region may cause substantial damage to the region's environment. Destruction of Species will likely denigrate the environment, including where humans depend for existence. To prevent this, there is a need for intervention. This paper aims at discussing the intervention. It utilizes analytical methodology to advocate moral education and a practical approach to life, which specifically obligates to posterity quality welfare, as the necessary intervention.

Keywords: Ethics of Posterity; Environmental Development; Niger Delta.

INTRODUCTION

One of life's most fundamental necessities is its preservation. Without life, nothing is achievable and nothing makes meaning. All human aspirations are, in their final analyses, efforts directed at safeguarding life from peril and extinction. Due to the imperativeness of preserving life, human responsiveness to it has not only been practical everyday activities but also a subject of earnest intellectual considerations. Accordingly, right from ancient times of scholarship until today the subject has attracted a wide range of scholarly deliberations. In Western medieval and modern eras of philosophy, for instance, St. Thomas Aquinas (1917) and John Locke (1690) were known to have posited unequivocally that preservation of life from all forms of threat is the first law of nature. In this view, human beings, like other creatures in the world, participate in the consciousness of protecting their lives against all harm, especially those that can completely annihilate their existence.

In contemporary scholarship, concern for the preservation of life has assumed a new intellectual dimension known as sustainability or, more popularly, "sustainable development". Accordingly, studies are preoccupied with examining the possibilities of creating and maintaining general superior quality of living that spans generations. Put differently, current researches on the preservation of life are concerned not just with how present lives are generally organised and advanced but how its superior quality form can be perpetuated across generations. In line with this, human and non-human factors that affect the continuity of life are assessed for their effect on life – positive or negative – to regulate their operations to achieve sustainable development. The regulation entails manipulating or eliminating the negative conditions – i.e. those conditions that hamper continuity of quality life – and promoting the positive ones – i.e. the conditions that support the continuity.

Based on sustainable developmental studies, it is common to find that socio-economic and environmental conditions of life such as liquidation of industry, ecological degradation, population explosion, conjugal disruptions, national and global terrorism, to mention a few, are identified as factors that are inimical to the perpetuation of good quality life and are, therefore, urged to be eschewed (Unah, 2002b; Bassey, 2020). This is because the conditions put both immediate and especially remote future generations of people and their world at grave risks of harm (Partridge, 1998). If uncontrolled or prevented, they reserve the tendency to annihilate life or populate the future world with physical and moral misfits. Individuals, businesses and governments are, therefore, urged to refrain from all surplus exercises of rights and consumerism that can initiate and perpetuate such conditions (Callahan, 1971). People are entreated to deliberately mind the wellbeing of posterity and their world in all their decisions, actions and policies. They are expected to live in such a way that they do not leave the world in any worse form than they met it. Accordingly, they are to create opportunities that would normally aid the development and sustenance of life than retard or destroy it (CUN, 2010).

Against the backdrop of these behavioural insights and prescriptions, an academic discipline known as *ethics of posterity* (hereafter referred to as EP) emerged. This aims specifically at discussing and teaching sustainable-developmental or life-preservative concerns along moral lines. In the context of this essay, ethics means the Greek *ethos* or *ethikos*. This translates to Latin *moralis* (as first used by the popular Roman: Cicero) and English *moral*. In English, it means "habit" "manners", "ways of acting", "laws", or "customs" (Mautner, 2000). Given this, ethics is the systematic study of the habitual or customary manner of acting; or the investigation of "...the goodness and evil of human actions, and human institutions insofar as it can be ascertained by reason" (Garret, 1968). Put simply, ethics is the study of human fundamental principles of good and bad conduct (Omogbe, 1993; Ekwealo, 2012).

Posterity, on the other hand, although traditionally considered in EP studies as abstract, imprecise yet-to-be-born future people that are literally not expected to share a common life with the present world Golding (1972), denotes *all human descendants and their world, especially from fifth-generation until the last survivor on earth*. This is because the traditional definition is too vague to accord the subject the creative specificity that the latter definition (which is ours) holds. Posterity is *the future* qua future. And it is for this reason that both terms – future and posterity – are used interchangeably in this essay.

EP is traditionally articulated as the ethics of intergenerational justice (hereafter referred to as EIJ). Accordingly, it holds that “all members of each generation of human beings, as a species, inherit a natural and cultural patrimony from past generations, both as beneficiaries and as custodians under the duty to pass on this heritage to future generations ... in no worse condition than it was received from past generations” (CUN, 2010). This establishes "obligation to future people" (hereafter referred to as the obligation) as a standard of morality. It prescribes acting for future generations and their world as a superior way of living and condemns the opposite mode of living, where the well-being of posterity is neglected, as an inferior way of living. With EP, people are educated and entreated to consider the effect of all their decisions, actions, and policies on the well-being of the future world. This is because the well-being of posterity ought to be one of the fundamental goals of human life, as its achievement awards the present generation of mankind fulfillment, happiness, and peace. The achievement also aids organisation and re-organisation of the world, making it a much more conducive place for people to live in.

But, how does this impact the Nigerian national environmental development, particularly concerning the Niger Delta region? This question is necessitated by a well-known incessant ravaging of the region with negative environmental consequences from oil exploration since the product was discovered. There is no gainsaying the fact that continuous oil spillage from the exploration has denigrated the region's environment. It has destroyed bio-diversities, which humans also depend on for existence. This is, thus, a problem. For, if nothing is done to control or prevent its further occurrence, there are tendencies that overtime human life and that of the bio-diversities in the region will be annihilated or, as a result of the ravages, the region will be populated with physical and moral misfits.

This essay aims at intervening in the problem, intending to preserve the region – its people, environment, and other bio-diversities. To achieve this, it adopts the analytical method of research to first explore the geographical composition, relevance, and environmental problem of the region. It also explores the meaning of Sustainable Development (hereafter referred to as SD). Then, it adapts Martin Heidegger's theory of anticipatory resoluteness as an inevitable futural way of human living, to advocate moral education and practical approach to life (which specifically obligates to posterity quality wellbeing) as a way to resolve the problem.

THE GEOGRAPHY, RELEVANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM OF THE NIGER DELTA

According to the current geopolitical division of Nigeria, the Niger Delta region is the landmass and water bodies that cover six primary States of the federation, including Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Rivers, and Cross River (Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, 2010). Due to the politics of oil exploration which forms a prominent factor that defines the area as Niger Delta, Abia, Ebonyi, and the Ondo States were later included in the list of the component states of the region (Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, 2010).

The Niger Delta is the largest wetland and maintains the third largest drainage basin in Africa (CS 2013; Ilozobhie & Egu 2013; Beregha, 2012; Kadafa, 2012; Ogbanga *et al.*, 2018). Its ecological environment can be broken down into four zones, including coastal barrier islands, mangrove swamp forests, freshwater swamps, and lowland

rainforests (Awosika, 1995; Chinweze and Abiola, 2009; Beregha, 2012; Kadafa, 2012). It plays host to a large deposit of the mineral resource known as petroleum. These supply the Nigerian State and, particularly, the region with a lush natural habitat that, in turn, ought to provide subsistence and commercial opportunities for its local people.

Fishing, for instance, ought to be one of the major preoccupations of the local people of the region because of its predominance by aquatic bodies (Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, 2010). Before the pollution of the water bodies by oil spillage from petroleum mining, the people used to depend on it (i.e. the water bodies) for fishes, which they fed on and traded. Timber-felling and crop-cultivation provided other sources of income and subsistence too (Kadafa, 2012). However, since its exploration and first discovery in Oloibiri, Bayelsa State, in 1956 by Shell British Petroleum (now Royal Dutch Shell), petroleum mining took over as the major preoccupation of the region, not to the local people, but the federal government of Nigeria (Anifowose, 2008; Onuoha, 2008; Kadafa, 2012; Obi *et al.*, 2013). Due to its huge pecuniary value and sophistication of mining technicalities, the Nigerian national government – by virtue of her political and economic policies and power

– made mining her major preoccupation in the region. She manages the mining, refines, and sells the product. And people from the region are not permitted to participate or take charge, except they are authorized by the government.

Over time, continuous exploration for the product in the region and its discovery in large quantity has led to concentrated mining there. Accordingly, the other occupations, sources of income, and subsistence for the people have been adversely affected (Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, 2010; Akpan and Bassey, 2020). The take-over of the lands and waters for petroleum mining by the government has left virtually no room for the local people to earn their living as they used to (Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, 2010). It is as though the region is now set aside only for mining. In addition to this forceful dispossession of the peoples' lands and water by the government, consistent oil spillage and gas flaring from the petroleum mining pollutes the environment (Onduku, 2001; Uyigwe and Agho, 2007). The spillage and gas flaring makes Nigeria the country with the highest incidence among all oil-producing countries in the world (Umoru, 2012; Kadafa, 2012). And this portends harm to the ecosystem of the region, its people, and other bio-diversities.

Oil spills and gas flaring contaminate groundwater and soil (Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, 2010; Kadafa, 2012; Abosede 2017). It destroys crops and aquatic and human lives (Uyigwe and Agho, 2007). Aquatic lives, which used to depend on dissolved oxygen from natural water are forced to inhale the hydrocarbon that diffuses from the petroleum (Ukoli, 2005; Uyigwe and Agho, 2007). Sediments from the spillage settle at river banks, get washed to main-lands and destroy crops with their toxic chemicals (Ukoli, 2005; Uyigwe and Agho, 2007). Generally, the water is unsafe for drinking, bathing, washing, etc (Tolulope, 2004). Acid rain from gas flaring causes respiratory, renal, and neurological defects in humans and other adverse effects to bio-diversities (Uyigwe and Agho, 2007; Kadafa, 2012). Given these, there are undue diseases, famine, hunger, and unemployment in the region (Tolulope, 2004; Uyigwe and Agho, 2007; Adefolaju 2020). People are also unduly displaced from their homes to create space for further exploration and mining. Indeed, life in the region is short, brutish and nasty. There is the complete absence of human and environmental development of the territory (Tolulope, 2004). And the future appears bleak all the same. Considering the present

circumstances of life in the region, the critical question raised here is: what will be the fate of posterity in the region? In, say, 2090, what will life be like for the people of the region and its environment? Will this form of life and living condition sustain until that time or will there be a change for the better? These questions bring to mind the contemporary concern of the notion of sustainable development. And to the concern, the paper now turns,

ETHICS OF POSTERITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Because EIJ is conventionally concerned with moral distributive justice or equity (with respect to the obligation to the future), SD is the vital tool for rationalising it (the justice). This is because SD is an illuminating and powerful starting point for considering dispositions toward the future, especially in relation to the present (Sen, 2002). SD is the modality with which the relationship between present conduct and its intergenerational perception of justice is made sensible. Conventionally, SD rationalises equity as fairness. Its intergenerational moral function entails striking a reasonable balance between satisfying present needs and setting aside enough resources to provide for the needs of future descendants. Or put more succinctly, it is “a development that meets the needs of present people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland/WCED, 1987: 43).

However, this perception of SD is challenged by its unsatisfactory portrayal of justice as a theoretical or purely philosophical (i.e. ethical) subject (Boulanger, 2013: 1; Benton, 1999; Jacob, 1999). Rather than the ethical rationalization of justice, it rationalizes it as “a global political objective based on some informal intuitions regarding intergenerational equity...” (Ibid, 1) And this gives “...the strong feeling that owing to the limits of nature and the environment we can bear in mind only moderate ambitions in both respects” (Boulanger, 2013: 1). In other words, individuals’ ambition to save for future generations or support their ability to meet their own needs is not expected to extend too far into future time and space. It ought not to extend beyond, say, their first three biological generations – from children to great-grandchildren – where they are still alive to personally participate in the lives.

Justice, therefore, becomes more political and economic than ethical (Boulanger, Op. Cit. 1). It gets concerned with production and consumption patterns whose present ecological efficiency and social equity it attempts to improve (Ibid). This makes it too scientific and more materialistic than moral (which it ought to be the case). It describes a political agenda to which existing governments can commit themselves and aims at forcefully gluing together concerns for the future with the present (Ibid, 2). And this is very attractive to governments because they do not genuinely consider acting for posterity as a moral necessity for sustaining life and the environment. They like to merely speak of acting for posterity to satisfy political interests and agenda.

This moral insufficiency of SD which politicizes obligation to posterity arises from individual's difficulty in bridging the temporal gap between living people and the future world. In fact, given conventional moral prescriptions of EIJ, a “no-obligationist” temper (i.e. anti-obligation views) challenges and rejects all “obligationist” arguments (i.e. pro-obligation views) for the obligation to posterity because of the difficulty. The no-obligationists, which includes scholars like Daniel Callahan (1971), R. L. Heilbroner (1981), T. H. Thompson (1981), Garret Hardin (1981), Norman Care (1982), Jan Narveson (2011) argue that

posterity's existential status does not permit a thorough-going relationship between them and living people. This is because the posterity concerned comprises individuals and their environment that are presently non-existent (Care, 1982; Narveson, 2011). They belong to the atemporal or supratemporal realm of existence. And such condition of existence makes them (i.e. posterity)

too empirically and temporally distant, socially unconnected, and, thus, physically inaccessible to living persons (who ought to be their benefactors) (Meyer, 2010). This is because human beings, as the position considers, are incapable of bridging such temporal distances or penetrating such supratemporal realms of existence to relate with entities (such as posterity) inhabiting the realm.

Further into the problem, conventional obligationist theories of EIJ present obligation to posterity as though it is an unequivocal universal norm

(Weiss, 1984). By this, morality is generally portrayed as a responsibility emanating from universal, objective or absolute principles of social, religious and institutional characterisations of human life. People are expected and urged to

live posterity-friendly lives because the conduct is socially, religiously, or institutionally considered to be good, right, just, and thus, generally stipulated as an acceptable way of living by the characterisations. In other words, the moral rationalisation of the "rightness" or "justice" of the conduct is shown to reside, on one hand, in ethical principles stipulated by institutions of social control such as customs and traditions, law and conventions, religion (as in Aquinas' universal essence of truth and Ndubuisi's instruments of social control) or internal moral soundness of norms (where it is considered that there is something intrinsically valuable in conduct itself, which makes it imperative to be undertaken – as in Kant) (Aquinas, 1995; Ndubuisi, 2010; Kant, 1785). On the second hand, it lies in the prospect for moral consequences of the intrinsically valuable. Accordingly, since actions produce outcomes that can be morally evaluated, the obligation is considered to be justified by the prospects of a better future that it holds. In this instance, it is said to be morally right, good or just, for example, to act for posterity because doing so would leave the world a more conducive place to advance life.

This translates to EIJ being conventionally assumed as a morality motivated by objective deontological or consequentialist moral valuation of human conduct (Bickham, 1981; Wissenburg, 2011; Beckerman, 2006). Accordingly, justice in the conduct consists in acting for posterity from either standpoint – as a moral rule or command; or rule of law (Deadlock, 2012; Ndubuisi and Nathaniel, 2002). Failure to do so constitutes negligence, injustice and defiance. Scholars who hold the deontological view include John Rawls (1971), Ernest Partridge (1976), J. P. Martino (1982), Gro Brundtland or World Commission on Environmental Development (WCED) (1987), Brian Barry (1989), and Avner De-Shalit (1995), *et cetera*. And those who hold the consequentialist perspective include Tim Mulgan (2006), *et cetera*.

Given the no-obligationists' position, therefore, all of these motivation assumptions for the obligation contribute more to dissuading people from caring for the future than encouraging them (as originally intended by obligationists). This is because, with objective deontology and consequentialism, obligationists neglect interpreting the obligation as individuals' subjective tendency, desire and volition to care for or be just, good, and heroic to others (in our case, posterity). They rather superimpose it (the care) on impersonal factors that merely "command" people to undertake the obligation instead of admonishing them to do so (based on inevitable personal involvement and responsibility for

determining conditions of future life) (see Bickham, 1981). It is as a consequence of this problem that Norman Care (Op. Cit., 195-214), for instance, vehemently states that posterity's interests cannot interest living people because living people have no bond with future persons”.

The point made here is that traditional motivation assumptions for EIJ are urged by extraneous absolute authorities that dispassionately dictate compliance rather than solicit voluntary personal responsibility for it. And this signals a repudiation of personal decisions, interests in, passion, and commitment to the obligation for posterity. It discourages individuals and governments from genuinely acting for posterity. It is the reason for the usual withdrawal and unconcern to posterity-related admonitions and projects evident among the current generation. It is the reason why all forms of future-harmful practices inundating the current world are perpetrated. It is the reason why governments' play politics with the interests of posterity. Particularly, the Nigerian government's displacement of Niger Deltans from their lands, homes, and living, for petroleum exploration and mining, without recourse to their survival and that of their posterity, is as a result of this.

To resolve this problem and encourage Nigerians and the Nigerian government to develop and sustain committed thought and action toward the sustainable development of the Niger Delta region, this essay observes that the no-obligationist position must be debunked and SD established on a sound philosophical or moral ground. To debunk the no-obligationists' position, it is important to begin by acknowledging their view on the non-existence of posterity and its concomitant disconnection from living people and the current world. Then, from that standpoint, posterity's existence and the connection is to be articulated. Based on the articulation, the obligation is to be worked out as a function of the existence and connection.

Since existing obligationist theories cannot achieve these objectives, this essay offers to do so. Accordingly, the essay considers that the solution lies in a sojourn into metaphysics of man (strictly called “fundamental ontology”). This is because, to the best of the author's knowledge, the question of human relations with the future involves interrogation of human behavioural relations beyond immediate time. And metaphysics is a science of beyondness. As the science of beyondness, metaphysics deals with the ultimate nature of things, involving relations, interconnections and interpenetrations that transcend palpable reality (Unah, 2010). As fundamental ontology, it deploys the phenomenological method of inquiry to study what belongs to human nature in general or what it means to exist precisely as a human being (Unah, 2002a). An aspect of such meaning involves analysis of human being in time. And Martin Heidegger's philosophy of Being provides a plausible discussion that explains such forms of relations. This essay, therefore, adapts some aspects of Heidegger's insights to achieve its objective.

HEIDEGGER'S THEORETICAL MOTIVATOR FOR ETHICS OF POSTERITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Martin Heidegger's philosophy takes off by taking human consciousness as the basic constitutive element of experience (Heidegger, 1977: 193-194). Accordingly, it holds that consciousness dowers each individual with three inter-related traits that connect posterity with them, establishes their (posterity) existence, and motivates inevitable subjective obligation for them (posterity) (Langbehn 2016).

The traits include the power of finite transcendence, the power of temporality, and the power of care.

By finite transcendence, human beings possess the infinite ability to go beyond any given state of affairs to the reason why that state comes to be (Unah, 2002a: 83-85). This is possible in and through thought; because human beings think (Heidegger, 1977: 193-194). Indeed, human beings are the only entities in the world that think (Ibid.). Human thinking nature is the reason why individuals are the only entities that are properly arrogated the notion of existence. All other entities are just there. They do not exist; because they do not and cannot think (Heidegger, 1956: 215). Consciousness dowers individuals with the ability to project into nothingness to establish foundations and interconnectivity of phenomena and life (Ndubuisi, 2004/2005). It is through thought that individuals make meaning of existence. It is through transcendental thinking that they possess the ability to penetrate all realms of existence including that which may be considered as supervoid, atemporal or supratemporal (of past and future), while in their concrete presence, in order to interpret life meaningfully (Heidegger, 1977: 61-64). This is how they stay connected with the posterity of any projectable time and determine their (posterity) life right in the present. Thinking, according to Heidegger, is an activity that defines and establishes being. And, it (thinking) constantly occurs in time. Heidegger says that time is the transcendental horizon with which man tacitly understands and interprets Being (Heidegger, 1977: 61-63). And, this is possible in terms of its (man's) own temporal being. This means that individuals are temporal beings (Ibid). They temporalise existence to interpret the meaning of life (Heidegger, 1962: 370-488).

The human existential structure involves modes of time – past (*Geworfenheit*), present (*Verfallen*) and future (*Verstehen*) (Ibid, 39-41). At any point individuals seek the concrete meaning of life, it is often in inevitable relation to these modes of time (i.e. their past and future, while in the concrete present) (Ibid, 169-219). Both physico-temporal existence and non-existence; presence and absence (which no-obligationists attempt to demarcate) belong together – in the structure of human existence (which thinks about them, for meaning-making). It is because human beings are bundles of consciousness who interpret their daily lives in time that existence (which they are) and non-existence (which dialectically affirms the existence that they are – in negation) become symbiotically interrelated for meaning-making. For, to understand existence, an individual (as a bundle of consciousness) only needs to contemplate non-existence and vice-versa. The existence and non-existence of human beings only appeal as opposites and parallels when subjected to scientifico-logical or abstract-rational analysis. Concretely, in daily life experiences of what it means to be human species, they jointly present *the* conditions that make living meaningfully. There is no such demarcation.

Consequent upon the foregoing, the denial of posterity's existence by no-obligationists is considered to involve a fundamental (self) contradiction. This is because in the same breathe of denial the no-obligationists – as conscious human individuals who could think (transcendentally imaginatively) of the physico-temporal non-presence of the entities (as a problem) – inadvertently assert posterity's existence by the thought. Similarly, the view that posterity is unconnected with living obligers is self-contradictory because the very contemplation of the non-connection connects the thinker (of the non-

connection) immediately with them (posterity). Given this backdrop, arguments against obligating to posterity due to posterity's non-existence and its concomitant non-connection are to be disregarded because posterity exists – if only in the thought of present individuals (the obligers).

At another level of theoretical extrapolation from Heidegger's fundamental ontology to motivate obligation to the future, it is pertinent to note that Heidegger submits that among the three modes of time *existentialism* is particularly characterised with projections into the future (*Verstehen*) (Ibid, 182-188). Individuals' basic mode of living is futural – constantly projecting toward various possibilities that lay ahead-of-themselves. Even when they contemplate the past, whatever is the subject of contemplation is rendered meaningful in the next moment i.e. in constant relation to the future or what Heidegger refers to as “anticipatory resoluteness” (Ibid, 182-188). By anticipatory resoluteness, living is purposeful futurity. It involves constant acting ahead (always in the next moment) to fulfill one's deep-seated hunger for self actualisation before the strike of death. All decisions, actions and policies made are realisable only in the future because the present is a constant fleeting moment – always tending to the future. Ultimately, therefore, human futural mode of living occasions constant personal connection with posterity, as every action directly determines what becomes the future (posterity).

In the third stream of our justification for moral obligation to posterity from Heideggerian subjective ontology, we find that human transcendental futural being involves average everyday living in care (or *sorge*) (Ibid, 237). Accordingly, individuals constantly engage in the business or activity of existing. By care does *not* mean that individuals approach life more fondly – with sympathy, kind-heartedness, empathy, *et cetera*. For, the opposite of such sentiments, namely, indifference, hostility or being unsympathetic, *et cetera*, would invalidate the trait. By the fundamental care or activity of existing that we identify here, even such sentiments as the latter form equal ways of engaging life. Hence, whatever people do in life (in thought or action); however they approach whatever they do (whether in sympathy or hostility; deontologically or teleologically, *et cetera*), they engage and manifest what it means to exist as individuals. Dealing with the world in the activity of existing entails dwelling (thinking) on every idea that confronts thought and mobilising (building) the thought (transcendental imagination) for decisions, actions and policies that transform the human condition (Heidegger, 1971: 141-160). The transformation often materialises in the future. And that demonstrates that individuals' basic worried caring-being, which is transcendental in imagination and anticipatory in resoluteness, often concretises existence in the future. Consequently, individuals, by their being as humans sustain a fine connection with the future in such a way that obligating to posterity is intricate to their existence. It is a responsibility ingrained in their ontological structure and, thus, inescapable. This is because they freely determine what the future becomes and free actions bear responsibility.

While individuals may not admit that they live daily in accordance with the foregoing fundamental ontological tenets of moral obligation to posterity, it does not change the fact that that is their mode of being. The non-admittance is only a function of their non-awareness. Indeed, such non-acceptance of the position is, metaphysically, activity in the direction of acceptance. For choicelessness is, metaphysically, a choice in itself. What is required, at that juncture, is to enlighten

people about the moral implication of their daily lives, with respect to EP. There is a need for some form of moral consciousness-raising or education. When people are educated about morality in accordance with the analysis of this essay, we (like the familiar positions of Socrates and Plato on the relationship between education and morality) believe that they will realise the stark implication of their daily living, with respect to the burden of their responsibility to the future, and, thus, willingly engage in posterity-friendly conducts.

Given this Heideggerian approach to obligation to posterity, SD is to be philosophically defined as *an average everyday volition to deliberately create and maintain superior quality of life by living individuals*. This takes into cognisance conventional definition of SD which emphasizes the need to satisfy both present and future broad needs of mankind. However, rather than characterise SD by economico-political elements of morality as conventional definition does, the definition characterizes it with fundamental ontologico-moral elements. By daily concern for the creation of quality life, this definition urges the present needs of living individuals to be satisfied. And by the maintenance of the quality life, it urges future needs to be projected and allowance provided for future people's ability to satisfy their needs. Then, the creation and maintenance of a superior quality of life are voluntary activities. This makes the obligation subjective. And the volition is characterised by responsibility because responsibility follows from freedom. Every action freely engaged to satisfy needs has responsibility attached to it. And the realisation of that responsibility is necessarily always futural (Birnbacher, 2006). In D. Birnbacher's words, responsibility is a moral condition, which if

...understood in an ex-ante or prospective way and referring to possibilities of conduct not yet realized, (it) is necessarily future-oriented. Therefore, we are always responsible – in terms of an obligation to concern – for actions or events which, from the subject of responsibility's point of view, take place in the future or at least reach into the future. Thus, responsibility as such means always and necessarily responsibility for the future (2006, 39).

With this ethical conception of SD, its implication for sustainable development of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is to be reassessed next.

CONCLUSION

Given the Heideggerian-influenced conception of SD as *an average everyday volition to deliberately create and maintain superior quality of life by living individuals*, it means that individuals, businesses and governments would be educated to avoid all forms of behaviour that are inimical to the creation and perpetuation of good quality life. They would be urged to deliberately mind the wellbeing of posterity and their world in all their present decisions, actions and policies. They would be entreated to live in such a way that they do not leave the world in any worse form than they met it. This is because acting for posterity and their world would be regarded as an authentic way of living and neglecting them would be regarded as an inauthentic way of living.

Particularly, the Nigerian government is to be educated and entreated to consider the effect of all her decisions, actions and policies on the well-being of the Niger Delta region and its future. This is because, like every other place in the country, the well-being of the region and its posterity ought to be one of the fundamental responsibilities and goals of the government (being a government

of the people). Achieving the goal stands to aid the organisation and reorganisation of the region, making it much more conducive for present and future people to live in and earn their living. This would award the government, the region, and her people all the fulfillment, happiness, peace of authentic living and governance, respectively. Hence, the government is expected to deliberately prospect for oil responsibly. By this, rather than displacing the people from their homes and lands so as to explore and mine the oil and poisoning the environment with oil spillage (which further makes the place inconducive for living and earning a living), she is expected to provide conducive shelter, clean water, and roads in the region. She is expected to manage the exploration and mining of the oil in the region in such a way that spillage is either completely prevented or, if spilled at all, immediately controlled in order not to harm people and the environment.

REFERENCES

- Abosede Omowumi Babatunde. (2017). Environmental Insecurity and Poverty in the Niger Delta: A Case of Ilaje. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 7(2), 36. <https://doi.org/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.7.2.02>
- Adefolaju Eben, A. (2020). Complicities in the Niger Delta Time bomb: Reflections of Selected Niger Delta Drama. In *American Research Journal of Humanities & Social Science (ARJHSS)*, 3(5), pp. 28-37.
- Akpan, C. O., and Bassey, S. A. (2020). The Quandary on Water Pollution in Nigeria's Niger Delta: an Environmental Ethical Analysis. *Bulletin of Pure and Applied Sciences*, Vol.39F(1).
- Anifowose, B., (2008). Assessing the Impact of Oil & Gas Transport on Nigeria's Environment. U21 Postgraduate Research Conference Proceedings 1, Birmingham: University of Birmingham.
- Aquinas, T., (1917). *Summa Theologica*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominica Province. New York, USA: Benziger Brothers Printers to the Holy Apostolic See. II-II, Q65, Art.1.
- Awosika, L.F., (1995). Impacts of global climate change and sea-level rise on coastal resources and energy development in Nigeria. In Umolu, J.C., (ed). *Global Climate Change: Impact on Energy Development*. Lagos: DAMTECH Nigeria Limited.
- Barry, B., (1989). *Theories of Justice: A Treatise on Social Justice*, 1st edition. *Basic Writings*, pp.61-64. New York, USA: and Row, Publishers Inc.
- Bassey, S. A. (2020). Technology, Environmental Sustainability and the Ethics of Anthropoholism. *Przestrzeń Społeczna*, 1, 19.
- Beckerman, W., (2006).The Impossibility of a Theory of Intergenerational Justice, In J. C. Tremmel (ed.), *Handbook of Intergenerational Justice*, pp. 53-71. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Benton, T., (1999). Sustainable Development and Accumulation of Capital: Reconciling the Irreconcilable. In A. Dobson (ed.), *Fairness and Futurity*, pp. 199-299. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Beregha, P., (2012). Environmental issues in Nigeria. In *The Lawyer's Chronicle*. Available at <http://thelawyerschronicle.com/index.php>. Retrieved 20/01/2017.
- Bickham, S., (1981). Future Generations and Contemporary Ethical Theory. In *Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 15, pp.169-177. The Hague, Holland: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Birnbacher, D., (2006). Responsibility for Future Generations - Scope and Limits. In J. C. Tremmel (ed.), *Handbook of Intergenerational Justice*, pp. 23-38. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

- Boulanger, P., (2013). Sustainable Development as Practical Intragenerational and Intergenerational Justice: Interpretations, Requirements, and Indicators. In Jean-Christophe Merle (ed.), *Spheres of Global Justice*, pp. 713-733. Netherlands: Springer.
- Brundtland, G., (1987). World Commission on the Environment and Development (WCED): Our Common Future. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Callahan, D., (1971). What Obligations Do We Have to Future Generations? *American Ecclesiastical Review*, Vol. 164, pp.265-280. Reprinted in E. Partridge (ed.), *Responsibilities to Future Generation*, pp.73-85. Buffalo, USA: Prometheus (1981).
- Care, N., (1982). Future Generations, Public Policy, and the Motivation Problem. Charter of the United Nations (CUN), (2010). Duty to Future Generations, <http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unubooks/uu25ee/uu25eeom.html>, Retrieved on Oct. 7, 2010.
- Chinweze, C. and Abiola-Oloke, G., (2009). Women Issues, Poverty and Social Challenges of Climate Changes in the Nigerian Niger Delta Context. 7th International Conference on the Human Dimension of Global Environmental Changes. Bonne: UN Campus, Germany.
- CS, O. (2014). Geophysical Studies of Parts of Bornu Basin from Seismic, Well Log and Aeromagnetic Data. *World*, 6(2), 105-113.
- Deadlock, I., (2012). *Deontology: Overview*. Retrieved on May 27, 2013, www.true-reality.net.
- Degradation as Constraint to Sustainable Rural Entrepreneurship in the Niger Delta , Nigeria. *Annals of Ecology and Environmental Science*, 2(2), 52-67.
- De-Shalit, A., (1995). Community and the Rights of Future generations: A Reply to Robert Elliot. In *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp.105-115.
- Ekwealo, C. J., (2012). Ethics and Morality: Introduction to Applied and Practical Ethics. In C. J. Ekwealo (ed.), *Applied and Practical Ethics: A Simplified Course Text*, Vol. 1, pp.1-17. Lagos, Nigeria: African Environmental Ethics and Values Research Group.
- Environmental Degradation in the Niger Delta of Southern Nigeria. Community Research and Development Centre Nigeria (CREDC).
- Garret, T. M., (1968). *Problems and Perspectives in Ethics*. New York, USA: Sheed and Ward Inc.
- Golding, M. P., (1972). Obligations to Future Generations, *The Monist*, Vol. 56, pp.85-89.
- Hardin, G., (1981). Who Cares for Posterity? In E. Partridge (ed.), *Responsibilities to Future Generations*, pp.221-234. Buffalo, USA: Prometheus Books.
- Heidegger, M., (1956). The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics. Translated by Walter Kaufmann, in Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, p. 215. New York, USA: Meridian Books Inc..
- Heidegger, M., (1962). *Being and Time*. Translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Heidegger, M., (1971). Building, Dwelling, Thinking. In *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Translated by Alfred Hofstadter), pp.141-160. New York, USA: Harper and Row.
- Heidegger, M., (1977). Being and Time: Introduction. In David Farrell Krell (ed.), Heidegger, M., (1977). Letter on Humanism. In David Farrell Krell (ed.). *Basic Writings*, pp.193-194. New York, USA: Harper Collins,
- Heilbroner, R. L., (1981). What Has Posterity Ever Done for Me? In E. Partridge

- (ed.), *Responsibilities to Future Generation*, pp.191-194. Buffalo, USA: Prometheus.
- Ilozobhie, A. J., & Egu, D. I. (2013). Predicting the Behaviors of Multilayered Reservoirs to Cumulative Production in a Commingled Zone. *International Journal of Natural and Applied Science*, 8, 1.
 In *Ecology Law Quarterly*, 11(4) pp.495-582.
 In *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp.135-141.
- Jacobs, M., (1999). Sustainable Development as a Contested Concept. In Andrew Dobson (ed.), *Fairness and Futurity: Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice*, pp. 21-45. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Kadafa, A. A., (2012). Environmental Impacts of Oil Exploration and Exploitation in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. in *Global Journal of Science Frontier Research Environment & Earth Sciences*, Vol. 12 Iss. 3.
- Kant, I., (1785). Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals. Translated by James Langbehn, C. (2016). From Kant to Heidegger. On the path from self-consciousness to self-understanding. *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 47(4), 329–346.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00071773.2015.1122868>
- Locke, J., (1690). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, <http://ftp.dca.fee.unicamp.br/pub/docs/ia005/humanund.pdf>. Accessed on Jan. 3, 2015,
 London, UK: Harvester-Wheatsheaf.
- Martino, J. P., (1982). Inheriting the Earth, *Reason*, pp. 30-36.
- Mautner, T., (2000). *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. London, UK: Penguin Books.
- Meyer, L., (2010). Intergenerational Justice. In Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/intergenerationaljustice>. Retrieved on Jan. 12, 2013.
- Mulgan, T., (2006). *Future People: A Moderate Consequentialist Account of Our Obligations to Future Generations*, Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Narveson, J., (2011). Duties (to) and Rights of Future Generations: An Impossibility Theorem. *Duties to Future Generations*. Available at: <http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2011/Narveson.pdf>. Retrieved on 27/01/14.
- National Security L/C. *African Security Review*, Vol.17, Iss.3.
- Ndubuisi, F. N., (2004/2005). Interlocking Concepts in Sartre's Ontology of Human Freedom. In Jim I. Unah (ed.), *The Nigerian Journal Of Philosophy*, Vol. 21. pp.112-145. Lagos, Nigeria: Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos.
- Ndubuisi, F. N., (2010). *Man and State*. Lagos, Nigeria: Foresight Press.
- Ogbanga, M. M., Amadi, L. A., & George-anokwuru, C. (2018). Environmental Obi, D. A., Ilozobhe, A. J., & Lebo, S. E. Aeromagnetic Study of Oil Seepage along the Basement Flanks of Part of the Lower Benue Trough, South Eastern Nigeria.
- Omogbe, J. I., (1993). *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*. Lagos, Nigeria: Joja Educational and Research Publishing Ltd.
- Onduku, A., (2001). Environmental Conflicts: The Case of the Niger Delta. A presentation at the One World Fortnight Programme organized by the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, United Kingdom.
- Onuoha, F.C., (2008). Oil Pipeline Sabotage in Nigeria: Dimensions, Actors and Implications for

- Oviasuyi, P. O. and Uwadiae, J., (2010). The Dilemma of Niger-Delta Region as Oil Producing States of Nigeria. *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development*, Iss. 16. Available at www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk (Retrieved 03/04/17).
- Partridge, E., (1976). Rawls and the Duty to Posterity. A Thesis Written in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in University of Utah, USA.
- Partridge, E., (1998). Should We Seek a Better Future? *Ethics and the Environment*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp.81-95.
- Rawls, J., (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press.
- Sen, A. K., (2002). What can Johannesburg Achieve? Available at: http://www.digitalnpq.org/global_services/nobel%20laureates/08-13-02.html. Retrieved on Feb. 6, 2014.
- Thompson, T. H., (1981). Are we Obligated to Future Others? In E. Partridge (ed.), *Responsibilities to Future Generations*, pp.195-202. Buffalo, USA: Prometheus.
- Tolulope, A.O., (2004). Oil Exploration and Environmental Degradation: the Nigerian Experience. International Information Archives. *International Society for Environmental Information Science*. Pp.387-393.
- Ukoli, M.K., (2005). Environmental Factors in the Management of the Oil and Gas Industry in Nigeria. Available at www.cenbank.org (Retrieved 13/04/17).
- Umoru, H., (2012). Nigeria has the Highest Oil Spill in the World. Available at <http://www.nigeria-news-world.com/2012/11/nigeria-has-highest-oil-spill-in-world.html>
- Unah, J. I., (2002a). *On Being: Discourses on the Ontology of Man*. Lagos, Nigeria: Fadec Publishers.
- Unah, J. I., (2002b). (ed.). *Philosophy, Society and Anthropology*. Lagos, Nigeria: Fadec Publishers.
- Unah, J. I., (2010). *Metaphysics*. Lagos, Nigeria: University of Lagos Press.
- Uyigüe, E. and Agho, M., (2007). *Coping with Climate Change and W. Ellington (1993)*. Indianapolis, USA: Hackett Publishing.
- Weiss, E. B., (1984). *The Planetary Trust: Conservation and International Equity*.
- Wissenburg, M. L. J., (2011). Parenting and Intergenerational Justice: Why Collective Obligations towards Future Generations Take Second Place to Individual Responsibility. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 24, No.