

A HEIDEGGERIAN ETHICS OF POSTERITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGER DELTA OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

In contemporary times, there are increased concerns for 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 need for intervention. This paper aims at discussing the intervention. It utilizes analytical methodology to advocate moral education and 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. On 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 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 span generations. Put differently, current researches on 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 continuity of life are assessed for their effect on life – positive or negative – so as to regulate their operations with the aim of achieving sustainable development. The regulation entails manipulating or completely 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 perpetuation of good quality life and are, therefore, urged to be eschewed (Unah, 2002b). 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 completely annihilate life or populate 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 perpetrate 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 orethikos*. 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 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 conducts (Omogrebe, 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 common life with 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 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 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 present generation of mankind fulfillment, happiness and peace. The achievement also aids organisation and reorganisation of the world, making it a much more conducive place for people to live in.

But, how does this impact on the Nigerian national environmental development, particularly with respect to 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 completely 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, with a view to preserving the region – its people, environment and other bio-diversities. To achieve this, it adopts 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 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 current geo-political 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 politics of oil exploration which forms a prominent factor that defines the area as Niger Delta, Abia, Ebonyi and 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 (Beregha, 2012; Kadafa, 2012). Its ecological environment can be broken down into four zones, including coastal barrier islands, mangrove swamp forests, fresh water 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 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). 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 the 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.

Overtime, 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). 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 the 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; Uygwe and Agho, 2007). The spillage and gas flaring makes Nigeria the country with the highest number of the 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 ground water and soil (Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, 2010; Kadafa, 2012). It destroys crops and aquatic and human lives (Uygwe 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; Uygwe and Agho, 2007). Sediments from the spillage settle at river banks, get washed to main-lands and destroy crops with its toxic chemicals (Ukoli, 2005; Uygwe 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 to humans and other adverse effects to bio-diversities (Uygwe and Agho, 2007; Kadafa, 2012). Given these, there are undue diseases, famine, hunger and unemployment in the region (Tolulope, 2004; Uygwe and Agho, 2007). People are also unduly displaced from their homes in order to create space for further exploration and mining. Indeed, life in the region is short, brutish and nasty. There is complete absence of human and environmental

development of the territory (Tolulope, 2004). And the future appears bleak all the same. Considering present circumstances of life in the region, the critical questions 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 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 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 are 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 the justice as a theoretical or purely philosophical (i.e. ethical) subject (Boulanger, 2013: 1; Benton, 1999; Jacob, 1999). Rather than 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-grand-children – 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 environment. They like to merely speak of acting for posterity in order to satisfy political interests and agenda.

This moral insufficiency of SD which politicizes obligation to posterity arises from individuals’ difficulty in bridging the temporal gap between living people and 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 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 due to the fact that the posterity concerned comprises individuals and their environment that are presently non-existent (Care, 1982; Narveson, 2011). They belong to 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, the 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 a 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 which can be morally evaluated, the obligation is considered to be justified by the prospects of better future that it holds. At 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 standpoints – 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 (on the basis of 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 which 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 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 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 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 non-existence of posterity and its concomitant disconnection from living people and current world. Then, from that standpoint, posterity's existence and connection is to be articulated. On the basis of the articulation, the obligation is to be worked out as a function of the existence and connection.

Since existing obligationist theories lack the capacity to 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 science of beyondness, metaphysics deals with ultimate nature of things, involving relations, interconnections and interpenetrations that transcend palpable reality (Unah, 2010). As fundamental ontology, it deploys 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 form 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 connects posterity with them, establishes their (posterity) existence, and motivates inevitable subjective obligation for them (posterity). The traits include power of finite transcendence, power of temporality, and 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 posterity of any projectable time and determine their (posterity) life right in the present.

Thinking, according to Heidegger, is an activity which 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 in order to interpret the meaning of life (Heidegger, 1962: 370-488).

Human existential structure involves modes of time – past (*Geworfenheit*), present (*Verfallen*) and future (*Verstehen*) (Ibid, 39-41). At any point individuals seek concrete meaning of life, it is often in inevitable relation to these modes of time (i.e. their past and future, while in 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 the purpose of meaning-making). It is because human beings are bundles of

consciousness who interpret their daily lives in time that existence (which they themselves 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. Existence and non-existence of human being only appeal as opposites and parallels when subjected to scientific-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 meaningful. 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 *existentiality* 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 a 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 a 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 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 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 virtue of 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 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, an 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 need for some form of moral consciousness-raising or education. When people are educated about the 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 economic-political elements of morality as conventional definition does, the definition characterizes it with fundamental ontologico-moral elements. By daily concern for creation of quality life, this definition urges present needs of living individuals to be satisfied. And by 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 superior quality of life are voluntarily 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 of all forms of behaviour that are inimical to 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 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 government, the region and her people all the fulfillments, happiness, peace of authentic living and governance, respectively. Hence, 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.

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