

Reading Response V (word count: 302)

Argument Reconstruction

- I. African thought conceives a web of life that transcends generations, and the environment is seen as a resource shared across all generations.
- II. African thought states the living need to demonstrate gratitude to their ancestors by following their example and ensuring that their descendants also inherit an environment capable of providing for their basic needs.
- III. As previous generations have preserved the environment, the current generation should show their gratitude by continuing to preserve the environment for the future generation.
- IV. Therefore, African thought does not limit moral considerability to the current generation.

Objection

I believe there are several flaws in this argument, with one major flaw being with premise III. The premise states that we should continue to preserve the environment for future generations because previous generations have preserved the environment for us. This creates a sense of intergenerational moral considerability, due to the actions of the current generation (protecting the environment in the past) creating a moral responsibility for future generations (protecting the environment in the future).

However, there is a large flaw in this premise. An assumption is made about the fact that previous generations will always have protected the environment. This is certainly false, as can be observed today. The generations before us (such as in the industrial revolution), have exploited the environment for material gain. This can be seen in instances such as the deforestation in the Amazon rainforest; destruction of habitats and diverse ecosystems to build human settlements; destruction of the ozone layer (and therefore global warming).

If we cannot state for certain that the previous generation has not protected the environment then premise III no longer holds. This leads to the future generations no longer being held accountable due to the previous generations fault, and therefore the argument altogether fails.