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Exiled at home: Rethinking eco-injustice and environmental restoration in Ogoni-Niger Delta through *Ziibalogzii* Philosophy

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Abstract

We currently live in an emerging context marked by ecosystem decline, biodiversity loss, accelerated climate change, and resource depletion. For over four decades, the Ogoni-Niger Delta region, where oil is drilled has remained the metaphor of natural disasters, environmental pollution, ecological degradation and socio-political and economic injustice. Oil exploration has turned Ogoni into a wasteland: lands, streams, and creeks are totally polluted; the atmosphere has been vapors, methane carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and soot emitted by gas. Acid rain, oil spillages and blow-outs have devastated Ogoni environment. Consequently, the Ogoni people now feel ecologically exiled in the places they continue to live as home. Using the descriptive method with special reference to the Glenn Albrecht Solastalgia's theory, the paper present an alternative approach to environmental restoration in the Ogoni-Niger Delta region.The paper established that one central aspect of the Ogoni worldview is the believed that reality is interconnected. This brings to bear the underlying Ziibalogzii philosophy-seeing reality in terms of a universe of forces that interlinked together, and that are in constant interplay with one another. This unitary view of reality claims that the earth is an environment comprising of elements which are material, mystical, visible and invisible, physical and mental, corporeal and spiritual and each of these elements are so linked and interconnected with the other in such a way that they appear almost inseparable. The paper, therefore, emphasized the need for the adoption of the eco-sophical dimension of Ziibalogzii in rebuilding lives and restoring the Ogoni-Niger Delta environment.

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Key Words: Eco-Injustice, Eco-Justice, Environmental Restoration, Niger Delta,Ogoni, *Ziibalogzii*

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Introduction

In Ogoni religious philosophy,it is believed that reality is interconnected. This interconnectedness implies a cosmos that is characterized by a unitary view. This brings to bear the underlying *Ziibalogzii* philosophy-seeing reality in terms of a universe of forces that interlinked together, and are in constant interplay with one another. This unitary view of reality claims that the earth is an environment that is composed of elements that are both material and mystical, visible and invisible, physical and mental, corporeal and spiritual, and that each of these elements is so linked and interconnected with the other in such a way that they appear to be almost inseparable from one another.

The Ogoni-Niger Delta has an ecosystem that is endowed with a multitude of natural resources, including minerals, land, biological diversity, animals, forests, fisheries, and water, and shaped by various factors that may be classified as human or anthropogenic, and natural. However, The Ogoni modern society's use of natural resources, such as land, water, and air, is in direct opposition to the practice of environmental conservation that has been practiced traditionally. For example, the drive for development has led to a rise in the exploitation of natural resources and the destruction of forests, which has had a multitude of adverse consequences on the environment, including increase in turbidity, erosion, floods, desertification, and pollution. The result of this is that individuals now experience a sense of ecological exile in the locations where they continue to reside as a consequence of ecological change and environmental deterioration.

The environment that humans inhabit is today seen as something that should be degraded, exploited, and ruled by humans. These human actions are responsible for the loss of biodiversity and the disruption of bionetwork processes, which has resulted in the reduction and extinction of the number of plant and animal species that may be found in the ecosystem. It is a well-established truth that the same capitalist economic system is responsible for the continuation of a broad variety of environmental and ecological deterioration, which in turn leads to the creation of poverty and inequality. As a result of the exploitation of global resources, there is widespread deforestation, soil erosion, and depletion of soil resources; land degradation, a decline in forest cover; rising levels of energy use and carbon dioxide emissions; a shortage of food;[3] and an increase in air and water pollution, including both drinking water and groundwater.[4] All of these factors contribute to the shifting circumstances on a worldwide scale, of which eco-injustice is a significant component.

Since the discovery of oil in the Ogoni-Niger Delta region of Nigeria, private oil companies, as well as the Nigerian government, have exploited this resource in

[3]United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). *Global environmental outlook, Earthscan.*(London, UK: United Nations Environment Program, 2000), pp 31-35. FAO. *State of the world's forests 2007*. (Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2007), p. 55

[4]World Bank. *World development report*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp 100-105

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ways that have significantly degraded the environment, undermined public health and resulted in a range of social, cultural, economic, and political issues for the Ogoni people. In other words, the history of oil exploration and production in Ogoniland is a long, complex and often painful one that to date has become seemingly intractable in terms of its resolution and future direction. It is also a history that has put people and politics and the oil industry at loggerheads rendering a landscape characterized by a lack of trust, paralysis and blame, set against a worsening situation for the communities concerned.

Since the discovery of oil in the Ogoni-Niger Delta region of Nigeria, private oil companies and the government of Nigeria have exploited this resource in ways that have significantly degraded the environment, undermined public health, and have caused a variety of social, cultural, economic, and political issues for the Ogoni people. In other words, the history of oil exploration and production in Ogoniland is a complicated, and sometimes traumatic one that to date has become seemingly intractable in terms of its resolution and future direction. It is also a history that has put people and politics and the oil industry at loggerheads rendering a landscape characterized by a lack of trust, paralysis and blame, set against a worsening situation for the communities concerned.

In the end, after decades of negotiations, initiatives, and demonstrations, there has not been a solution that has been able to satisfy the expectations and fulfill the duties of all parties involved. The government of Nigeria, in conjunction with a large number of the key parties, sent an invitation to the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) to propose the possibility of conducting an assessment of oil pollution in Ogoniland. This was done in an effort to break the impasse and move forward with something constructive. Through its ability to assemble expert teams, coordinate rigorous evaluations, and provide policymakers with scientific and empirical data, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has earned a reputation on a global scale. Almost nine years after the release of the UNEP report, there is still no clean-up, no fulfillment of 'emergency' measures, no transparency, and no responsibility for the failed attempts, neither by the oil firms nor by the Nigerian government. Neither of these things have been accomplished. The efforts that have been made have been too little, too weak and have not resulted in effective clean up. When an area has been toppled by ecological degradation and environmental pollution, lives and homes are totally disrupted. Not only do people need to rebuild their lives but they also have to reconcile with what they have lost. The Ogoni ecosystem is growing increasingly endangered, and urgent action is needed. This paper, therefore, presents *Ziibalogzii* philosophy as an alternative approach in rebuilding lives and restoring the Ogoni-Niger Delta environment.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Glenn Albrecht Solastalgia theory. Solastalgia is a neologism that denotes a sort of emotional or existential sorrow that is induced by environmental change. Etymologically, the word Solastalgia is derived by the combination of the Latin terms *sōlācium,* which means comfort, and the Greek root *-algia,* which means pain, suffering, or sadness. The most accurate way to characterize it is as the lived experience of a change in the environment that is regarded adversely. In his article *Solastalgia: A New Concept in Human Health*

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and Identity,[5] the philosopher Glenn Albrecht is credited with being the first person to use the term. He refers to it as the homesickness you have when you are still at home, and the environment is changing in ways that you find upsetting. Solastalgia is a construct developed in order to provide an explanation for the sorrow that individuals feel in the aftermath of environmental ecological change and environmental degradation. This misery is caused by the fact that the environment can no longer provide the same level of consolation that it previously did.

Albrecht emphasizes that solastalgia is not only about remembering the past or wanting to return to the place that is known as home, but it is also a life experience of losing the present, which manifests in pain (dislocation) or the feeling of being attacked by a force that eliminates the possibility of peacefulness[6]. As one observes the harm that has been produced and becomes aware of the significant changes that have taken place in the environment, one experiences the agony. The Ogoni people, for instance, would experience comparable sentiments when they see what was once a thick forest being stripped of its vegetation for oil exploitations; similarly, the river, land and air that has become polluted owing to the activities of oil multi-nationals will also experience similar feelings. Consequently, the Ogoni people's realization that the places they lived in and loved are physically damaged and altered permanently, they may experience feelings of unhappiness, mournfulness, and despair. This is because the negative transformation of environment may pose a challenge to their sense of identity, belonging, and control. This negative experience has also made made farmers feel like they had lost the land and their livelihoods forever, which resulted in negative emotional effects. The farm was their life, livelihood, and home.

This theory is used to explain how the Ogoni-Niger Delta region, where oil is drilled has remained the metaphor of natural disasters, environmental pollution, ecological degradation and socio-political and economic injustice. The theory provides the framework for understanding the complexities that are inherent in the relationship between Ogoni people, the places that they call home, and the emotions that they experience after those places have been irreparably damaged or changed as a result of climate change and environmental degradation. The extraction of oil has resulted in the transformation of Ogoni into a desolate region. The land, streams, and creeks have been completely and persistently contaminated, and the atmosphere has been filled with vapours, methane, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and soot that have been released by gas. Acid rain, oil spills, and blowouts have all contributed to the destruction of the ecology in Ogoni. Mild to severe and persistent experiences of anxiety, despair, loss, anguish, and helplessness is experienced by the people. These individuals may have the perception that their sense of place, belonging, and comfort has been diminished or is being

[5]Glenn Albrecht, *Solastalgia: A new concept in human health and identity* (PAN Partners, 2005), p. 80

[6]Albrecht, G. A. Negating solastalgia: An emotional revolution from the anthropocene to the symbiocene. *American Imago*, (2020).*77*(1), 9-30.Albrecht, G., Sartore, G. M., Connor, L., Higginbotham, N., Freeman, S., Kelly, B.& Pollard, G. Solastalgia: The distress caused by environmental change. *Australasian Psychiatry*, (2007).*15*(sup1), S95-S98.

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attacked. Consequently, the Ogoni people feel paradoxically ecologically exiled in the places they continue to live because of ecological change and environmental degradation.

Conceptualizing Environment, Eco-Injustice and Eco-Justice

The word environment emanates from the French word "Environ" which denotes circle, surrounding or circle around. Human surrounding includes biotic factors like human beings, plants, animal, microbes, etc, and abiotic factors such as light, air, water, soil etc. In other words, considering the etymology of the term, two important things are involved, namely: the circumstances and the conditions that surround an organism or group of it; secondly, there are the social and cultural conditions that affect an individual or community. Environment is therefore the surrounding of an organism in the place where it lives or exists.[7]The complex combination of physical, geographic, biological, social, cultural, and political variables that surround a person or creature and ultimately define its shape and the nature of its survival is referred to as the environment. Ecology is the study of the relationships that exist between humans, animals, plants, and the surroundings in which they live, as well as the equilibrium that exists between these relations.

While Eco-injustice refers to the abusive exploitation of natural resources to an excessive degree, which in turn causes damage to ecological systems and ultimately results in ecological imbalance. In other words, it is the unequal distribution of costs and benefits that are acquired from the use of natural resources by the current generation, without taking into account the requirements of the generation that will come after us.[8] The term "Eco-justice" may be used to refer to the simple act of connecting environmental concerns with a variety of social justice problems. In light of this, eco-justice may be defined as the equitable treatment and meaningful participation of all individuals, irrespective of their race, color, national origin, or income, in the process of formulating, enforcing, and enacting environmental laws, regulations, and policies.[9] According to Bullard, fair treatment means that no group of people, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, should be forced to bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences that are the result of industrial, municipal, and commercial operations, as well as the implementation of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies. In light of this, it may be deduced that every single human person is entitled to equal protection and equal enforcement of their environmental land use. Lakna[10] asserts that it is a fair distribution of the costs and benefits that are derived from the use of natural resources. The goal is

[7]Gbenda, J.S.*Religion and ecology: A comparative study.*(Markurdi. Obeta Printing & Publishing co.2010), pp. 10-15.
[8]Lakna *Difference between ecology and ecosystem.* Retrieved from Difference Between Ecology and Ecosystem Definition, Structure, Role, Similarities(pediaa.com) on 20th October, (2017).
[9]Bullard, Robert D."Environmental Justice for All." *Nature Transformed: The Environment in American History*<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nattrans/ntuseland/essays/envjust.htm>(March, 2005).
[10]Lakna, p.45.

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to guarantee that all living human beings are provided with the minimal welfare criteria without putting the welfare of future generations in jeopardy. In all aspects of life, including the political, economic, and social arenas, development is expanding and the level of advancement is increasing. According to Lubaale (2020), it is about making modifications and improvements that are beneficial to all aspects of life. To a considerable extent, development is dependent on ecological equilibrium, and underdevelopment is a consequence of ecological imbalances. These imbalances result in enormous development gaps that may be avoided.

The Ogoni Worldview on Natural Resources and Environmental Condition

Traditional Ogoni views of ontology can be understood in terms of their view of cosmology. It is believed that reality is a composite, unified, and harmonious combination of natural forces. There are human communities (families, villages, countries, and humanity), spirits, gods, deities, stones, sand, mountains, rivers, plants, and animals that make up reality. Reality is a holistic community of natural life forces that mutually reinforce each other. There is a life force or energy that permeates everything in reality, and the harmonious interactions that occur between these things are what strengthen reality. It is possible to classify objects in reality into the following hierarchically ontological categories, according to their capacity to enhance relationships and harmony in reality: God, ancestors or spirits, people, animals, plants, and things that are not biological. There is a great amount of faith in a Supreme Being among the Ogoni indigenous people. This Being, who is believed to be famine, is referred to as *Kawaa-Bari*, which may be translated as "the Mother of creation," "the Woman who moulds," "the Moulder of the Universe," or "She Who Creates." It was believed that she was the mother of all nature and the womb of all life. She was considered to be the first mother. Within her womb, it is stated that she was the one who created the planet, and she is also considered to guide all human endeavors. Among living beings, gods, deities, and spiritual entities, *Kawaa-Bari,* also known as God, is considered to be the source, creator, and origin of life.

The Ogoni people have a holistic understanding of nature that manifests itself in the symbolism and the way they utilise natural resources. Not only do the Ogoni people take into consideration the priorities of sentient creatures, but they also take into account the interests of nature in its whole. It is not only the usefulness of species that determines the selection of species, but also the symbolic meanings and interpretations that are embedded in their cosmic vision that determine the preference of species. To Anstey and De Sousa,[11] the norms and regulations that pertain to the use of natural resources and the distribution of land are mediated by a mix of spiritual concerns and the unwritten customary law. This is true for both the allocation of land and the usage of natural resources. Ogoni people have a strong belief that it is possible to maintain the continuity of social, religious, and economic elements of

[11]Anstey S, De-Sousa C. Old Ways & New Challenges Traditional Resource Management Systems in the Chimanimani Mountains, Mozambique' in Hume D and Murphree M (eds.) *African Wildlife & Livelihood: The Promise and Performance of Community Conservation,*(Oxford: James Currey.2001), pp 150-165.

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existence by living in harmony with the environment itself, as a number of our informants for the research have confirmed. In order to demonstrate their reverence for the natural world, the Ogoni have designated some areas of the terrain, including trees, animals, and other natural features, as sacred. The Ogoni have a positive attitude towards non-human agents. It is via taboos that they express their disapproval of brutal treatment of non-human animals, non-human creatures, and the environment itself. The purpose of taboos is to instill in society a more favorable attitude toward and concern for the environment.[12] Through the observation of taboos, the Ogoni were, and continue to be able to limit the indiscriminate harvesting of forest products, safeguard water supplies, and preserve species that have spiritual, nutritional, and medical significance, as well as uncommon species.

A stance like this indicates, in a symbolic sense, that the Ogoni have a significant concern for the preservation of natural resources. An attitude that is more or less sacral in nature is characterised by this critical concern, which is an integral aspect of the venerable attitude. As we have seen, some animals are given honorific titles that are comparable to those that are given to elderly members of the society in order to show respect for them. It is via taboos that they express their disapproval of brutal treatment of non-human animals, non-human creatures, and the environment itself. Such a view symbolically means that the Ogoni possess a critical concern for conservation of natural resources. This critical concern is part and parcel of a venerable attitude that is more or less sacral in nature.

The Ogoni people have a culture of giving themselves totems. These totems are often formed from the names of animals or from natural phenomena such as a landscape or a pool. Alternatively, they may be created from words. When seen from a sociological point of view, the totemism system is useful. To begin, it allows for the regulation of human behavior and social structures, in addition to contributing to the preservation of the natural environment. Secondly, totemism helps to cultivate human ideas of goodness. Due to the fact that members of the society are socialized to behave in moderation in all parts of life, it has an effect on how people behave and how they connect with nature. In the case of incest, for example, the use of totems is beneficial in terms of controlling the issue. This is due to the fact that it is thought that such aberrant behavior has certain connections with the occurrence of terrible catastrophes like drought. Thirdly, totemism contributes to the preservation of a sense of identity, which may be defined as a sense of belongingness and is connected to a belief of collective duty in society. When interpreted metaphorically, this indicates that the use of natural resources is not just a question of technology but also of a social existence that is well-ordered.[13] It should also be stated that natural resources have both tangible and intangible utility, which vary from the fulfillment of people's bodily requirements to the importance they have in the

[12]Duri F, Mapara J. Environmental awareness and management strategies in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe J. Geogr. Res., (2007).1(2): 98 – 111.
[13]SchoffeleersJ. M. Introduction in Schoffeleers J M (ed.) *Guardians of the Land: Essays on Central African Territorial Cults,*(Gweru: Mambo Press, 1978). P. 97

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religious life of the people. According to the findings of Nhira et al.,[14] trees and forests play very important roles in the creation of household goods in rural areas. It is important to highlight the fact that the natural environment supplies a variety of resources, including animals, water resources, and wood and non-timber forest products, among other things. The non-timber forest products include things like grazing and browsing, traditional remedies, wild fruits, fuel wood, litter leaves, materials for crafts and building, and materials for construction.

Among the Ogoni, the pattern of natural resource utility is based on the stress that they put on the multipurpose nature of species and the sacredness of some species. This is an important fact that need to be taken into consideration. In other words, this pattern is a by-product of the veneration of socially selected sacred species and places as well as the role of species to human health as sources of food and medicines and their importance in household production and reproduction. For instance, according to the assertions made by our source, the *Kionor* tree is not used for the purpose of building since it is placed on top of graves in order to safeguard the bodies of deceased individuals from the influence of witches, or used for boundary adjustment. The Ogoni people have a religious worldview that is profoundly entrenched in the selective use of species, and this worldview asserts that there is an intimate link between the conservation of the environment and the control of social life.

The Ogoni people have developed a sophisticated system that integrates social life with environmental management. When it comes to the usage of natural resources, there are customary structures that encourage sustainable practices. According to the summary provided by one of the informants, the community makes certain that everyone has a place to dwell and produce. Even when people go hunting, they usually share the parts of the animal that they kill, regardless of how little the animal is or how many hunters there during the hunt. An oral interview conducted by Nwideede[15] revealed that social life places an emphasis on community responsibility, which extends to the preservation of the environment. People have a selfless commitment to preserve and protect the environment because they recognize that the community is the custodian of natural resources, while the individual is a member of the community. This fact gives people the motivation to conserve and protect the environment.

However, the history of natural resource extraction in the Ogoni-Niger Delta region is replete with tales of violence and impunity. It is also a history that has put people and politics and the oil industry at loggerheads rendering a landscape characterized by a lack of trust, paralysis and blame, set against a worsening situation for the communities concerned. The reality is that decades of negotiations, initiatives and protests have ultimately failed to deliver a solution that meets the expectations and responsibilities of all sides. In other words, The contributions from the Ogoni-Niger Delta region's wealth to

[14]Nhira C, Baker S, Gondo P, Mangono J. J,Marunda C. Contesting Inequality in Access to Forests', Policy that Works for Forests and People Series, No. 5, (Harare: Zimbabwe Centre for Applied Social Sciences and Forestry Commission, 1998).
[15]Nwideede, N. L. Personal communication at Bori, Business man, 75 years(2023).

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Nigerian economy bring with it environmental degradation, deprivation, protracted marginalization, induced frustration and aggression expressed as the Ogoni-Niger Delta Question in forms of non-violent protest. The Ogoni-Niger Delta Question is multi-dimensional as there are conflicts within the Niger Delta communities resulting from visible underdevelopment, gas flaring, oil spillage, unemployment and militancy.

The Ogoni-Niger Delta question is a multidimensional question, particularly due to the fact that it takes into account a great deal of different facets. In other places, it has been said that the Ogoni-Niger Delta question is a result of the unequal distribution of power and opportunity, which has resulted in the area being at a disadvantage (Deezia, 2017). The Ogoni-Niger Delta dilemma is directly attributable to the purposeful injustice and neglect of the area that has been committed by the governments of Nigeria. This is a territory that is wealthy yet impoverished; it is a place in which poverty is a consequence of its prosperity. The Ogoni-Niger Delta Question is, above all else, a reflection of the inconsistencies that exist within the political structure of Nigeria.

The Ogoni-Niger Delta region of Nigeria is sitting on a treasure trove of oil and natural gas. However, oil exploration and exploitation from the area have continued without much or any thought, agreement, or approval from the people who are attributed with the natural ownership of the land. This is because to the odious land use Decree of 1977, which transferred all lands to the government.[16]By this singular act, land which for ages had been accepted by all nations as valid inheritance of the people, is here in Nigeria, made an inheritance of the federal government, in flagrant negation of natural law. For the same reason, all resources extracted from the same land and accruing economic earnings are solely and wholly made a federal government inheritance, which in turn decides on ways and means of appropriating such funds to various parts and components of the federation.

The environment of Ogoni-Niger Delta has been degraded for over 50 years of oil production in the region with clear cases of injustice in the region. We are now aware of the problems of acid rain, issues of gas flaring and spillage, the toxic flared effect on people's health, environment and livelihood of the Niger Delta people. Acid rain and gas flares impacts negatively on iron zinc and other objects in Niger Delta which rust quickly. The decades of the 1980 and 1990s witnessed massive disruption of the social and economic life of Niger Delta region. These disruptions were mainly triggered by poor company, community relations in all parts of the Ogoni-Niger Delta region. In 1993, Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) noted that, "we witnessed the slow poisoning of the waters of this country and the destruction of vegetation and agricultural land by oil spills which occur during petroleum operations."[17]A report compiled by Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) revealed that the Ogoni region in particular have suffered over 2,976 separate oil spills between 1976 and 1991.

[16]Kii, P.B. *Preservation of the environment for social order in the Niger Delta: A perspective from canon 747&2*(Enugu: fourth Dimension publishing Co., Ltd.2017), pp 120-135
[17]Environmental Rights Action (ERA). The Emperor Has No Clothes. (ERA, Benin City, 2000).

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In at least 10 Ogoni communities, drinking water is contaminated with high levels of hydrocarbons, seriously threatening public health. The report also showed that in one community called Nisisioken Ogale, in western Ogoniland, families are drinking water from wells that are contaminated with benzene – a known carcinogen – at levels 900 times above World Health Organisation guidelines. The site is close to a Nigerian National Petroleum Company pipeline. UNEP scientists found an eight-centimetre layer of refined oil floating on the groundwater, which serves the wells. This was reportedly linked to an oil spill, which occurred some years ago.[18] Three years after the release of the report, nothing has been done to begin a cleaning up process – something the UNEP says could take up to 30 years to accomplish.

Note Rather than solve the issue at hand, the government, in collaboration with Shell, made the decision to implement coercive measures. The ripple effect of such bad strategic thinking on the side of the government and the oil firms sparked a series of demonstrations, both peaceful and violent, in the years that followed. In 1990, the Ogoni people issued the Ogoni Bill of Rights in which they demanded environmental protection, economic benefits, political representation and treatment with respect and dignity within the Nigerian state. The Bill of Rights became an organising document for the Ogoni people and also eventually prompted other ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta to establish similar charters as a nonviolent method of probing the government into discourse and action. The Bill noted that although crude oil had been extracted from Ogoniland since 1958,they had received nothing in return.[19] Articles 15-18 of the Bill state:

15. That the search for oil has caused severe land and food shortages in Ogoni – one of the most densely populated areas of Africa (average: 1,500 per square mile; national average: 300 per square mile).
16. That neglectful environmental pollution laws and sub-standard inspection techniques of the Federal authorities have led to the complete degradation of the Ogoni environment, turning our homeland into an ecological disaster.
17. That the Ogoni people lack education, health and other social facilities.
18. That it is intolerable that one of the richest areas of Nigeria should wallow in abject poverty and destitution.

Ken Saro-Wiwa saw the need for the Ogoni-Niger Delta to have a greater degree of control over their environment and resources, he put the campaign to the attention of the international community. In response, however, the state

[18]UnitedNations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Environmental Assessment of Ogoni land (2011).

[19]The Ogoni adopted an alternative weapon of peaceful mass protest and enlightened propaganda. The Ogoni Bill of Rights issued in 1990 sought pacific means to resolve the conflict of poverty in the midst of oil wealth. The Ogoni demanded equity in resource distribution. They asked for adequate representation in federal establishments. They demanded an end to the rapacious exploitation of oil and gas in their lands. More significantly, the Ogoni presented a case of reparation for the restoration of damage ecosystems. The Ogoni Bill of Rights. Article 16, 17, 18. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, (1990).

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carried out acts of terror, which included the murder and maiming of vulnerable Ogoni-Niger Delta people as well as the destruction of their homes. In the event, the leaders of the movement for the survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP), including the write and environmentalist ken Saro-Wiwa, as well as a number of his fellow countrymen, were killed in a manner that was completely contrary to the directives issued by international authorities. Encouraged by the growing awareness about the reciprocal relationship between social and ecological welfare, these individuals invoked the environmental ideal as a symbol of self-determination for the Ogoni. For this, they incurred the wrath of power elites who had routinized brute force and violence as mechanisms for censorship and repression. The conflict culminated in the execution of the activists. Some called it sheer martyrdom. That the illegitimate military regime opted to sacrifice the activists to signify a lesson against radical resistance epitomized its checkered history of tyranny and ineptitude. On the other hand, scape-goating the Ogoni statesmen transformed them into a collective icon of the struggle for environmental responsibility and justice.

The Ogoni tragedy highlights the devastating human consequences and massive environmental problems that are associated with patterns of production and consumption that are not suitable for long-term sustainability. In general, it underlines the degree to which contending for natural resource control is an active component, if not a recipe, for the socioeconomic circumstances of poverty, ethnic fragmentation, and heated political disputations. To be more specific, it demonstrates how the predatory behaviors of political and corporate economic elites, in conjunction with the severely reduced alternatives available to disadvantaged ethnic minorities and rural communities, are likely to set off a triangle trend of marginalization, deprivation, and degradation. In a more important sense, the experience of the Ogoni sheds light on the environmental elements of subtle discriminatory practices and policies that have a differential effect on the welfare of Ogoni people and put it in jeopardy.

It has come to light that the unjust actions that humans have taken against the environment are now also the unjust actions that humans have taken toward mankind. If the relevance of social justice in terms of resource distribution is taken into consideration, particularly in relation to the environment, then the role that poverty plays in causing damage to the environment will be reduced, if not eliminated entirely. We are 'moral agents'[20] despite the fact that we are accepting very little to no accountability for our acts, despite the fact that the environment is suffering from the rising harm that is being caused by human activities. The challenge of 'intergenerational justice' has been brought to light as a result of the impacts of environmental degradation on the climate of the Ogoni-Niger Delta. The anthropocentric human worldview has played a significant role in getting them to the point where their climate is no longer safe for them, and if they do not accept responsibility for their actions, which is the first step toward fixing it, then a complete catastrophe is unavoidable.

[20]Deezia, B. S. *Ziibalogzii:* Towards an Interconnected Humaneness in Ogoni-African Philosophy. In Benson Ohihon Igboin (ed). *Religion and Everyday Life in Nigeria: A Festschrift for Professor Olu E. Alana,*(Germany: Galda-Verlag, 2023), pp. 45-62

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The UNEP Report in Ogoniland and Environmental Restoration

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) report is the most exhaustive research that has been conducted to date on the effects of oil contamination in the Ogoni-Niger Delta region. It shows that Shell and successive Nigerian administrations have failed to honor their national and international legal commitments. The extensive evaluation that it provides concentrates on the effects that oil pollution on Ogoniland; nonetheless, the findings and suggestions that it provides are applicable to the whole oil-producing region. Despite the fact that oil spills were often not cleaned up for decades after they had happened, the investigation reveals that both oil firms and the government failed to clean them up. An alarming degree of pollution has been generated by the pollution, which has resulted in the contamination of agricultural land, fisheries, and drinking water, and exposing hundreds of thousands of people to major health problems.

In 2006 the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) commissioned the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) to carry out an independent environmental assessment of Ogoniland. In August of 2011, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) presented the UNEP report 'Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland.' The Ogoni community, the Nigerian government, and oil firms that had an operational stake in Ogoniland were all included in the recommendations that were included in the study. The establishment of a committee by the government that is tasked with the responsibility of monitoring the execution of the UNEP report is one of the most important recommendations provided. Therefore, in July of 2012, the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) was founded under the Ministry of Petroleum as the vehicle for implementing the recommendations included in the UNEP report. However, the early efforts made by HYPREP were not very effective, and as a result, the organization remained dormant.

At the Patrick Waterside in Bodo, the FGN flagged off the Ogoniland Clean-up Campaign in the month of June within the year 2016. The Governing Council (GC), the Board of Trustees (BOT), and the Project Coordination Office (PCO) are the three components that make up the governance structure of the reformed HYPREP that was created under the Federal Ministry of Environment (FMEnv). This organization was stated in the Gazette. According to the recommendations made in the study by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the first scope of projects and activities that are going to be undertaken by HYPREP are going to encompass the following main areas:

Environmental Remediation: The clean-up of the hydrocarbon-impacted sites, the restoration of artisanal refining sites, and any other polluted sites that were identified in the report, including the clean-up of contaminated land, the treatment of contaminated sediments, the decontamination of groundwater, the treatment of surface water, the restoration of swamplands, the restoration and rehabilitation of mangroves, as well as surveillance and monitoring during and after clean-up operations in Ogoniland.

Potable Water Supply: There were eight (8) Emergency Measures that required rapid action, and among them were the provision of safe and

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alternative drinking water for communities whose water supplies were affected by hydrocarbon contamination, as well as the restoration of selected existing water supply networks.

Alternative Livelihoods: Sustainable alternative livelihood programs for the Ogonis, notably those involved in artisanal refining and oil bunkering, as well as other measures to alleviate the socio-economic repercussions of oil pollution, are being implemented.

Public Health Assessments: It is necessary to conduct investigations and studies to determine the type, breadth, and scale of the consequences that hydrocarbon contamination has on the health of the Ogoni people, as well as to develop strategies to monitor, reduce, and remediate the damage.

Institutional/Capacity Development: Integrated Contaminated Soil Management Centre (ICSMC) to support the clean-up of polluted sites, as well as the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Environmental Restoration (CoEER) in Ogoniland to promote learning in other areas impacted by oil contamination in the Niger Delta and elsewhere in the world. Both of these centers will be located in Ogoniland.

The Concept of *Ziibalogzii* Philosophy in Ogoni-African Environmental Ethics

Within the framework of the Ogoni environmental ethical ideas and viewpoints, the notion of *Ziibalogzii* has a key position. Etymologically, *Ziibalogzii* is derived from the Ogoni words *Zii,* which means one, *Ba,* which means hand, and *Log*, which means washes (this implies that one hand washes the other). *Ziibalogzii,* is literally translated to "the condition of being human," is a theory that was developed from the ancient Ogoni collaborative and reciprocal way of thought.[21]This refers to the value of mutual reliance and dependency in terms of reciprocity or reversibility, collaboration, and interconnection. *Ziibalogzii,* which may be interpreted as humanness, is a philosophical instrument that is used in African philosophy to engage with concerns of morality, politics, and society. Deezia (2023) provides a comprehensive explanation of the concept of *Ziibalogzii,* which is interpreted as humanness, taken into consideration in the context of being and becoming human.

The concept of humanness is inextricably linked to the intricate network of interconnections that exists between individuals and with the ever-evolving and intricate (biophysical) universe. *Ziibalogzii* is a practice that entails the 'coming into present' of the self within a dynamic social and biophysical environment. It may be deduced from this that the affirmation of each individual is connected to the affirmation of another individual via *Ziibalogzii*. One can be more or less of a person, self or human being, where the more one is, the better". Since this is the case, the ultimate objective in life ought to been how to *become* a Person.

As a normative principle, the mutuality in the connectivity of the self with the social and natural forms the framework for the ethics of care for others and nature. Ziibalogzii is not an ecocentric ethic; rather, it is an ecosophy because of this phenomenon. As noted elsewhere, *Ziibalogzii* as an ecosophy would

[21]Ibid, p. 46

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connect society, self, and nature together.[22] By connecting the three ecologies together, the principle of *Ziibalogzii* will help to maintain harmony in the world. Humane relations are characterized by human equality, reciprocity and solidarity, reflecting the idea that one human being is deemed to be the same thing, namely, a human being in relation to another human being and by the principle of sharing the joys and sorrows of life, the goods of the earth and personal property. Sharing and caring for one another are basic tenets of the *Ziibalogzii*ethics.

The ethics of care and nature-relatedness are theorized by Ogungbemi in accordance with an understanding of the practices of traditional African values on the protection of the environment and conservation of natural resources. In his view, "the ethics of nature-relatedness can be stated as an ethics that leads human beings to seek to co-exist peacefully with nature and treat it with some reasonable concern for its worth, survival, and sustainability."[23] His reasoning also lends credence to the assertion made by *Ziibalogzii,* which states that humans and nature are inextricably linked, and that the ethics of care is responsible for preserving the harmony that exists between the two. At the core of *Ziibalogzii* as a normative theory is the idea of community that moderates the relationship between nature and humans. The concept of *Ziibalogzii* expresses the idea that the relationship between nature and human should be pivoted on solidarity, identity and respect. This is why Lanka[24] argues that: "no person is complete in him/herself; s/he is fully human in as far as s/he remains a part of the web of life, including creation and the earth". Human relations within the web of interconnectedness are imperative and should be built on cooperation in the cosmos.

The communitarian aspect of *Ziibalogzii* ideas in the traditional context of Ogoni is supported by the findings of Some African Reflections on Biomedical and Environmental ethics. The notion of communality serves as the foundation for the philosophical understanding of the interdependence and harmonious coexistence that exists between people, plants, animals, and the environment. According to Tangwa, the contrasts that the African traditional worldview acknowledges between these realities do not presuppose that human people have any mandate or unique privilege to conquer, rule, and exploit the rest of creation at any point in time. It is evident from what has been presented so far that the notion of *Ziibalogzii,* which is rooted in Ogoni-African environmental ethics, serves as an indispensable tool for analyzing a wide range of environmental and societal challenges.

***Ziibalogzii* as an Alternative Approach to Environmental Restoration**

It is believed that all natural forces are interdependent, and it is only in and with all of nature can humans exist in harmony. Speaking about the

[22]Ibid, p. 47
[23]Ogungbemi S. "An African Perspective on the Environmental Crisis." In Pojman, Louis J., (ed). *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application.*(Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), pp. 85-100

[24]Lanka, p. 47

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interdependence of individuals within the larger society to which they belong and the environment on which they all depend. Nwideede[25] in an oral interview, presents an ethical viewpoint that asserts that the well-being of humans is intrinsically related to our dependency on and interdependence with everything that exists, particularly with the immediate environment on which all humanity depends. As a result, the traditional Ogoni philosophical view from the pre-colonial era entails recognition and acceptance of interconnectivity and harmonious coexistence amongst the environment, plants, animals, and human.

The methods, manners, and cosmic relationships between a person and his fellow humans were supported by this relational-metaphysical perspective. This explains why the traditional Ogoni were more circumspect when it comes to plants, animals, inanimate objects, and numerous invisible forces at play in the universe. The traditional Ogoni philosophical distinction between "plants, animals, and inanimate objects, between the sacred and the profane, substance and spirit, the community and the individual, is a slim and flexible one. It is possible to situate the idea that a person's soul may transform into an animal, a plant, or a force such as the wind in a manner that is coherent and rational within the context of this metaphysical framework. Regarding the harmonious relationship between people and the environment in traditional Ogoni culture, the Ogoni people have a respectful coexistence, conciliation, and containment attitude towards nature and the rest of creation. There are frequently sacrifices offered to deities, the divine spirits, both benevolent and malevolent, to the deceased ancestors, and to the various invisible and incomprehensible forces of nature.

Climate change and environmental degradation are global environmental debacle that threatens humanity, and the notion of Ziibalogzii would be valuable in the discourse for climate change mitigation and adaptation. This is because anthropocentric activities of human beings are one of the major causes of climate change. The unreasonable dominance and exploitation of nature may be traced back to the biblical mandate in Judeo-Christian theology. According to this injunction, human beings, created in the image of God, are ordered to "subdue" the earth and to "have dominion" over all other living species. This may also be seen in the writings of Aristotle, who said that "nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man" and that the worth of things in nature that are not related to humans is just instrumental. The world is now experiencing a tremendous environmental crisis as a direct result of the perception of nature from an instrumental point of view. This is evident in Klein's assertion:

> "What the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity's use of resources; what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion. Only one of these sets of rules can be changed, and it's not the laws of nature". The idea that capitalism and sustainable development will save us from extinction is a theory that must be set aside as it is precisely this notion that has set us on this apocalyptic path. A key reason why the modern

[25]Nwideede, 2023

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> individual is not taking climate change seriously enough to motivate the needed collective post-haste behavior is that such actions directly challenge the Western individualistic-capitalistic paradigm where humankind is seen as autonomous and separated from nature.[26]

The ideology of *Ziibalogzii* in Ogoni-African environmental ethics considers nature as an end in itself which should be respected for its own sake. In Ogoni ontological conception of environment, nature is revered as sacred and exists in harmoniously with humans. In the account of *Ziibalogzii*, nature has intrinsic value which is rooted in the interconnectedness with human beings and as such deserves moral consideration and obligation of care. In the notion of family relation with nature, humanity is part of a community of nature and just as members of a community co-operate for the good of all, so should we co-operate with nature.

The communitarian ideology of *Ziibalogzii* that is oriented on the well-being of the community would not allow irrational exploitation of nature and the natural resources. The Ogoni moral communities constitute entities such as ancestors, the living, future generations that form part of the web of life and virtue is achieved through maintaining harmonious relationships that prioritize neither the individual nor the community while respecting both. The communitarian principle will help to solve the problem of consumerism and an attitude of unsustainable exploitation towards nature. This is because the teleological conception of the environment is an Ogoni metaphysics that considers that human beings should use natural resources to their benefits and ought to keep harmony with nature in the cosmic web of relationship. Because nature is deserving of moral consideration, this ought to be the optimum course of action. As such, what grants moral considerability is the web of interconnectedness and all entities are necessarily part of the web. This is the basis for mutual obligation. According to Behrens:

> African environmental ethics would regard all living beings, some inanimate entities such as rivers, rocks, mountains, forests, ocean currents, winds, and even the atmosphere, as morally considerable because all entities have life-force, though in gradations, and they play systemically important roles in the flourishing of other aspects of nature.[27]

In the Ogoni traditional worldview, preserving harmony in the interconnectedness would be beneficial to human beings since it would help to prevent natural disasters, illnesses. On the contrary, disrupting harmony would result in negative consequences that are detrimental to human existence. Today, we are disrupting the harmony in nature through the burning of fossil fuels. The burning of fossil fuels is one of the primary causes of current climate

[26]Klein, N. *This changes everything: Capitalism vs. the climate*. (NewYork:Simon and Schuster, 2014), pp. 15-25.
[27]Behrens, Kevin Gary An African Relational Environmentalism and Moral Considerability. In: *Environmental Ethics* (2014):1, 63–82.

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change, altering the Earth's ecosystems and causing human and environmental health problems. The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that emissions from fossil fuels are the dominant cause of global warming. This paper argues that we need to apply the principle of *Ziibalogzii*, in order to balance harmony with nature. We cannot avoid the use of chemicals.

The ideology of *Ziibalogzii* is against the values of individualistic inclinations and capitalistic exploitation of nature. The core cause of global warming, which is driven by human activity, is a social and economic structure that has a parasitic connection to the Earth, which is the planet on which we live. Capitalism as a system is highly exploitative of both people and the planet. It is driven by a desperate need for profit and accumulation. But, the question is: is capitalism the major cause of climate change? We cannot cast all the blame on capitalism. The emergence of capitalism is to achieve and adapt to a new level of productivity by new production models.

Despite this, the individualistic behavior that is prevalent within the capitalist system poses a great deal of issues due to the destructive tendencies that it represents. It was pointed out by Polychroniou[28] that the accumulation of capital is the most important factor. Capitalism does not have any concern for the earth or the people who live on it. Capitalism will not hesitate to ruin the earth in a creative manner and will regularly expropriate the natural environment, which is seen as a free gift. This is done in order to increase profits. The paper argue that capitalism is profit-driven and the desire to acquire more capital makes it dangerous to the well-being of the environment. As a result, society need to exert more control over capitalism, whether via the establishment of social standards or by the implementation of government regulations. By using the Ziibalogzii philosophies that emphasize the interconnectivity of nature, it is possible to accomplish this goal. Hence, capitalism needs to be better constrained by society, whether it is social norms or even government legislation. This can be achieved if the interconnectedness of nature in *Ziibalogzii* ideologies is applied.

The *Ziibalogzii* philosophy recognizes the significance of relationship healing as an integral component of a healthy way of life. Recent occurrences that have been experienced by the Ogoni indigenous people, which include natural disasters, environmental pollution, ecological degradation to socio-political and economic injustice, are a testament to the urgent need for relational repair within human and non-human communities today. At the core of this healing process for the Ogoni indigenous people are the procedures and practices of recognition that make it possible for them to establish their own self-determination. Ziibalogzii serves to emphasize the fact that it is essential for healing to trace the roots of these dysfunctional relationships and map the ongoing suffering that they cause. An important aspect to consider is the manner in which unequal power relations are distributed, clustered, and advanced. In addition, un-telling the narratives that allow and sustain these

[28]Polychroniou, C, J., *Interview – Climate Change Is the Product of How Capitalism "Values" Nature*, (2018).

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degenerative relationships is crucial, and the retelling of tales that bring us face-to-face with each other's reality.

Reversing the continued destruction of the Ogoni-Niger Delta natural environment[29] is central to this healing as well. This relational repair is not something to be applied exclusively to relationships among people, but rather to other dimensions of human experience – their relationship with the earth and all living beings. The continued unwillingness to restore relationships with nature exemplifies a failing of the present generation to uphold their side of a healthy relationship. As a people, the Ogoni need acts of restoration, not only for polluted waters and degraded lands, but also for their relationship to the world.

Concluding Remarks

One of the regions with the greatest concentrations of biodiversity is the Ogoni-Niger Delta region. Both the petroleum sector and the industries in the Niger Delta area are strongly connected to the region's most significant environmental concerns. These problems chiefly are oil spills, loss of mangrove forests, and depletion of fish population. There is also the invasion of water hyacinth, the flaring of natural gas, and biological clean up. The primary problem is that ecological injustice is made up of human acts and activities that are not limited by geographical boundaries and have the potential to have a significant detrimental effect on all living and non-living things that exist within the universe.

The environmental degradation only surmises what the future holds for us if the measures suggested in this paper others on environmental preservation are not considered seriously. Being aware of and embracing the facts of the matter is the first step towards making any difference, there is a need therefore, to first of all to be conscious and be reawaken from our collective ecological slumber and rise to the occasion of preserving our environment. For this reason, our previous ways of carefreeness towards the environment and our activities that degrades it should be dealt with. There is no gainsaying that our earth is ill. The responsibility for resolving the ecological injustice is in the hands of humans, unless corrective actions are taken, we may be losing our common home. There is, therefore, a need for relational and moral obligation towards the earth. The ecology will outlive man, so there is a need for a healthy relationship and attitude towards the environment. There is a need to rekindle interest in environmental preservation and conservation.

The destruction of the environment is simply a prediction of what the future holds for us if the recommendations made in this article on the preservation of the environment are not taken seriously. Being aware of and embracing the facts of the matter is the first step towards making any difference, there is a need therefore, to first of all to be conscious and be reawaken from our collective ecological slumber and rise to the occasion of preserving our

[29]Deezia, B. S. "Environmental Justice and the Quest for Equitable Resource Control and Political Restructuring in Nigeria: The Ogoni-Niger Delta Experience,"*Tansian University Journal of Arts, Management and Social Sciences (TUJAMSS).* (2017).Vol. 4, pp 77-94.

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environment. For this reason, our previous ways of carefreeness towards the environment and our activities that degrades it should be dealt with. There is no gainsaying that our earth is ill. Human beings are the ones who are responsible for fixing the ecological injustice; if corrective steps are not made, it is possible that we could lose our shared habitat. Because of this, there is a need for a moral and relational commitment toward the environment. As a result of the fact that the ecosystem will outlast man, it is essential to maintain a positive connection with and philosophy of the environment. Rekindling people's interest in the preservation and protection of the environment is something that has to be done.

The way forward is not the way of retreat. The notion of *Ziibalogzii,* as well as the philosophies it depicts, has the potential to help human beings in re-evaluating their perspective on nature and non-humans, as well as in adopting a more cautious approach to their anthropocentric actions. The dialogue on climate change adaptation demands that they have an empathic obligation towards nature. Humans should no longer be seen as separated from each other, non-humans, and nature. In contrast, human existence is relationally rooted in ecological life. The ideologies of *Ziibalogzii* place a strong focus on living in harmony with the natural world. When it comes to environmental restoration, it is important to take into consideration the many cultural ethical standards that exist in addition to the various scientific methods. A strong emphasis was placed throughout the study on the need of including the eco-philosophical aspect of *Ziibalogzii*. The *Ziibalogzii* approach allows for an emphasis on the richly intertwined aspects of nature and culture.

Through exploring the human lived experiences of solastalgia whilst also reclaiming the human body as an extension of Nature, we might, through this duality, simultaneously heal human and ecosystem, while inspiring collective action against the structural forces underpinning climatic and environmental change. The ideals of *Ziibalogzii* should be integrated with other ethical principles aimed at providing a solid base in rebuilding lives and restoring the Ogoni-Niger Delta environment.

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