

## The Application of Qualities of Friendship in Constitutional Reforms of Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*There are many multi-ethnic countries that are experiencing the problem of co-habitation. And this has affected the level of peace and development in those countries. There are cries of marginalisation and injustice especially by the minority groups. Often these have led to full scale civil wars. A close look at the problem of co-habitation in multi-ethnic countries reveals the cause of this. It is essentially as a result of the different perceptions of justice by the constituent ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its perception of justice engraved in its world view. It does not think that other perceptions of justice of other ethnic groups are legitimate.*

*In order to achieve a better integration of the multi-ethnic countries, the qualities of friendship ought to be used in the reformulation of their constitutions. This paper will use Nigeria which is an ethnic country to showcase on how this can be done in order to have an all-inclusive constitution that serves the interests of the constituent ethnic groups of a country.*

**Keywords:** Friendship, benevolence, dialogue, equality, constitution

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a nation is being buffeted brutally by ethnic, political, social and religious conflicts. And those who happen to find themselves at the public service through any of these conflicts tend to consolidate their positions by means of the same. To achieve this they devote much time, energy and scarce resources needed to direct the ship of the state just to hatch out plans to emasculate the opposition. They siphon public treasury available to them not only to be used to enfeeble the opposition but also to maintain the interests of the whole army of their cronies and cohorts while leaving the rest of the masses moored on the shackles of poverty. They execute all these with overweening arrogance and unbridled confidence as if they have sacred and inviolable right to behave in this manner.

Many Nigerian leaders of thought have voiced out their discontentment on the Nigerian predicament (C. Achebe, 1983; B. Okolo, 1994). They excoriate the political class as being grossly responsible for this predicament. They believe that things would be better if the leaders are honest, dedicated and have the will and ability to spend themselves to make Nigeria great.

Some of the Nigerian leaders of thought underscore the importance of justice. Chukwuemeka Odumekwu Ojukwu, for instance, maintains that justice should pervade Nigeria in order for her to move forward. And for this reason he calls on any Nigerian leader to always stand for and be a symbol of justice for it is the hallmark of good governance (C.O. Ojukwu, 1989).

And yet other Nigerian thinkers blame the constitution of Nigeria for her string of woes. For this crop of people, Nigerian constitution is unsuitable to address her topsy-turvy social life. Balewa strikes on this cord as he says: "There is need to constantly bear in mind that no

nation can always have good or competent leadership. Our concern should not be with the question: who should rule Nigeria? But with the more vital one: How can Nigerians so organise their political institutions that bad or incompetent leaders can be prevented from doing damage to the society” (B.A.T. Balewa, 1994).

In her search for a way that would ensure greater unity for Nigerians and promote peace, development and good standard of living, Nigeria had adopted, at the dawn of Independence, the French parliamentary system of government. It was her faith in the principles of justice that led to this option. However, the system was like a square peg in a round hole. It did not work. It was a complete failure. And so it was rejected. In 1979, it was replaced with the American presidential system of government. The latter was reviewed between 1994/95. One of the highlights emanating from the constitution review committee was the creation of six geopolitical zones (T. U. Nwala, 1997). In 1999 there was another new constitution. Alterations have made in this 1999 constitution; two alterations in 2010 and one in 2011. But all these efforts have not solved the perennial problem of conflicts – ethnic, political, social, religious. There are still great cries of marginalisation, ethnic clashes and political insurrections.

The aforementioned constitutions and their alterations have not yielded the expected results because those who framed them did not take into serious account the peculiarities of Nigeria. If they had adapted them to address the local needs and problems, perhaps, they could have brought about better political, social, economic and religious advancements. The fact that the Parliamentary system works in France and the Presidential system works in America does not mean they must be suitable for Nigeria. For Aristotle, constitutions should be adopted according to circumstances of the people (Aristotle, 1990). The history of Nigeria is different from that of France and America and should therefore have a constitution that takes this into consideration.

To address the issue of constitution, some believe that the concept of the family should be used metaphorically to restructure it<sup>1</sup>. This is a laudable idea. It is far from being a cosmetic proposal. The proposition of the family metaphor is a significant step in the search for a veritable means for ameliorating the lives of the ordinary Nigerian citizens.

Be that as it may, family metaphor may not produce the desired end<sup>2</sup>. Nigeria is a mishmash of more than 250 ethnic groups. The virtues of a family may be overstretched if they are applied metaphorically to reconstruct a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. The family metaphor is much more relevant in a homogeneous than in a heterogeneous society. This is part of the reasons why a person like Balewa is mistaken in his attempt “to investigate the underlying propensities of the Japanese political system of primarily Meiji era (1868-1912) and their applicability to the Nigerian situation” (B. A. T. Balewa, 1994). Japan is a homogeneous group (P. W. Goetz (ed), 1985). It does not have the suffocating effects of ethnic conflicts akin to those of Nigeria. Nigeria must therefore look for a concept that can take account of her multi-ethnic nature. And I believe that the best concept is friendship.

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<sup>1</sup> Iroegbu speaks of *Umunna* (the extended family) as the basis and prototype of Ohacracy, the African form of democracy. On how the *Umunna* can play out metaphorically with regard to Nigeria he says, “Community is an Oha-Umunna, with one Father, God himself, and one mother, a geo-cultural mother, Nigeria. They have one general destiny: the conviction and action as *Umunna* as foundation stone” (Iroegbu, P.O., “African Vicious Triangles: A please for Ohacracy, The Socio-Political Leeway” in *Holy Spirit Lectures*, vol. N<sup>o</sup> 1, 1999, p.33).

<sup>2</sup> Francis Arinze has this to say with regard to African family: “The concept of family in Africa...is not altogether perfect” (Arinze, F., “The Importance of the African Synod for the Church in Africa” in *Holy Spirit Lectures*, vol.1, n<sup>o</sup>, 1999, p.12). This remark is meant to caution those who maintain an exaggerated notion of African family virtues. Singleton reminds us “Il ne faut jamais oublier que l’extension d’une grande famille est un enjeu de conflit et de conquête” (Singleton, M., *Ethique des enjeux: Population, Environnement, Developpement*, UCL: Universitaire Ciaco, p.104).

## FRIENDSHIP AS OPERATIONAL CONCEPT

The multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria is a phenomenon that should not be ignored in any honest attempt to proffer solution to her imbroglio. Aristotle in his *Politics* notes that the coming together of ethnic groups to form one entity either by design or otherwise portends difficulties (Aristotle, 1990). This is because the converging groups may have different conceptions of what justice is. Justice in democratic system is obviously not the same as in oligarchy. In Nigeria, for instance, the Igbo are said to be democratic. And so, they have democratic conception of justice. The Hausas are oligarchic and consequently have oligarchic conception of justice. The Yorubas are aristocratic and have aristocratic conception of justice. And so when the different political systems with differing conceptions of justice come to live together, there must be a way of achieving profound unity and cohesion or else conflicts and social unrests will scuttle the chances of progress.

The concept of friendship can be used metaphorically to minimize ethnic conflicts by rising above the various conceptions of justice of the composing ethnic groups and put Nigeria on her way to greatness. And it can do it better than family metaphor. There is irrefragable evidence to buttress this fact counting even from the way the two words, family and friendship, are used in human interactions. From the way family members use the word “friendship”, it seems they would prefer to relate to themselves according to the principles of friendship rather than those of the family. Among the Igbo, for instance, a father sometimes addresses his son as *Enyinnaya* (his father’s friend). And in some extended families, it is not uncommon to find a woman being addressed as *Enyidiya* or *Oyidiya* (a friend of her husband) by her husband and even by her fellow women.

But why does a father prefer to call his son *Enyinnaya* (his father’s friend) instead of *Nwa m nwoke* (my son)? Or why does a man prefer to address his wife as *Enyidiya* (a friend of her husband) in place of *Nwunye m* (my wife)? These questions can be answered by finding out the place of *Enyi* in those names. *Enyi* serves as a prefix in *Enyinnaya* and *Enyidiya*. And the dictionary meaning of a prefix is “A letter or group of letters added to a front of a word to change its meaning” (J. Turnbull (ed), 2010). This means that the addition of *Enyi* before *nna* or *di* is a veritable attempt to change the meaning of the relationship between a father and his son or between a husband and his wife. This fact confirms what Hobbes affirms when he says, “all names are imposed to signify our conceptions, and all our affections are but conceptions, when we conceive the same things differently, we can hardly avoid different naming of them” (T. Hobbes, 1968).

To reduce frictions and conflicts and ensure a modicum of peace among the Nigerian citizenry, Nigeria should be restructured and tethered along the principles of friendship. There is no alternative to this. The basic principles of justice are not sufficient to improve the social political life of the people. But friendship can improve it for it stands head and shoulders above justice. Friendship as a concept includes justice. But justice does not necessarily include friendship. Those who are friends are just to each other but those who are just to themselves are not necessarily friends. Thus friendship rises above justice and includes such qualities as benevolence (goodwill and beneficence), dialogue and co-operation. And so those who are friends are not only just, giving to the other what is his or her due, but also they go all out to do things disinterestedly, that is *ex gratia*. This is what it means to say that friends are benevolent to one another; they make some sacrifices for the sake of their friends.

Now, friendship is often understood as something personal. Is one, however, justified to transfer or extend this habitual understanding of friendship to another context, like a nation, organisation, family etc? I think it is legitimate. The legitimacy is derived from the way language is used especially in the deployment of metaphors in speech.

## The Validity of Metaphor as an Analytical Tool

Metaphor is the transfer of the meaning of a word from its habitual sense or meaning to another context. Aristotle would describe metaphor as “the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus or applied to the species or from the species to another or else by analogy” (Aristotle, 1995). This is how metaphors function.

The Igbo language is full of metaphors. In an extended family, all the children born in it are addressed as our children (*Umu anyi*) despite the fact that they belong to different nuclear families. Again, the men in an extended family refer to the women as their wives (*Ndi nwunye anyi*) and the wives refer to the men as their husbands (*Ndi di anyi*). All these are metaphorical ways of speaking.

But why must we stretch a word from its habitual context to another context? One of the reasons, perhaps, is because people want the qualities or characteristics of a word to be extended to a larger context or because they see similarities between the smaller and larger contexts. For Paul Ricoeur however, the reason is: “Because we have more ideas than we have words to express them, we have to stretch the signification of those we do have beyond their ordinary use” (P. Ricoeur, 1976).

Many philosophers have used metaphorical arguments to establish important philosophical points. Plato has taken such a methodology. And this is with regard to the relationship between the individual and the state. The soul of an individual, according to him, consists of three parts: the rational, the spirited and the appetitive parts (Plato, 1983). And he maintains that there is justice in the individual when these three parts are working harmoniously. From this perspective of the individual, Plato thinks of the society metaphorically as consisting of three parts: the rulers, the guardians and the businessmen (Plato, 1983). The rulers correspond to the rational part of the soul, the guardians to the spirited, and the businessmen to the appetitive part. Succinctly he says, “We are bound to admit that the elements and traits that belong to a state must also exist in the individuals that compose it. There is nowhere else for them to come from” (Plato, 1983). And so similar to what is said with regard to the individual, Plato maintains a view that there is justice in the state when each of its composing parts is minding its business (Plato, 1983).

Aristotle also employs metaphor in his speculations on the different types of constitutions. For the six constitutions, namely, monarchy, aristocracy, Timocracy, tyranny, oligarchy and democracy, there are their metaphorical resemblances in the family relations (Aristotle, 1994). The monarchy is likened to the paternal relationship between father and son, aristocracy between husband and wife, Timocracy between brothers, tyranny between a man and his slave, oligarchy between a man and his wife where one dominates the other, and democracy reflects a household without a master.

In his treatment of happiness, Aquinas can be said to have thought of the supernatural end of man metaphorically from his natural end. He endorses Aristotle’s view that man has a natural end. This natural end, which is happiness, is attainable through natural laws and the virtues especially through the cardinal virtues of courage, justice, temperance and prudence. Thinking metaphorically from this point of view, Aquinas states that man attains also his supernatural end through the divine law and the theological virtues of faith, hope and love (S. E. Stumpf, 1977).

In the same vein, friendship can be used metaphorically to fashion out an ideal society where peace, order, benevolence may exist in abundance. It is therefore legitimate to transfer the meaning of friendship from its habitual individual context to another, for example, the state.

But how are we sure that friendship can ensure this when the idea and practice of friendship is fraught with exclusivity and other negative connotations?

### **The Problems of Friendship as Analytical Tool**

There have been friends who have practised their friendship in such a daring manner that it is really doubtful whether the principles of friendship can serve as a veritable tool for elaborating or structuring a group to ensure peace. One of the outstanding negative aspects of friendship is its exclusivity. Epic writings contain irrefragable evidence of this exclusivity. In the *Iliad*, Homer portrays the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus as very exclusive. There, Achilles shows profound arrogance to what happens outside his friendship. The attitude of Achilles as shown by Homer is indicative of this. When, for instance, Agamemnon the leader of the contingent in the Trojan War had boorishly seized his war prize, his reaction to this aggression was excessive. He not only refused to go back again to the battlefield after many pleadings made with concrete gifts (Homer, 1999), the speech which he made in response to the pleadings shows his insensitivity to the plight of the people outside his friendship (Homer, 1999). When, however, he rejoined the war, his sole reason was to avenge the blood of his bosom and boon friend Patroclus who was killed in the battlefield. James Hooker rightly captures this point when he notes that the grand design of the *Iliad* was to make Achilles practise friendship that is exclusive to social institution (J. Hooker, 1989). How can one then use the concept of friendship, which contains exclusivity to fashion an inclusive political structure?

Other friends whose practice of their friendship has cast doubt on the suitability of the application of the principles of friendship in the political engineering in the epic writings are Orestes and Pylades. These were friends but also partners in criminal and heinous acts. They had such unflinching loyalty to one another to an extent that when Orestes needed a helping hand to murder his mother, Pylades rendered him such assistance (Euripides, 1912). Orestes' sister, Electra lauds Pylades for participating in the matricide and even gives him a wreath for his services. Orestes himself rewards Pylades later by offering him his sister in marriage (Euripides, 1912). Now how can one use the image or the metaphor of this kind of friendship to construct a social, religious or political setting?

In the Roman Antiquities we read of how the friends of Tarquinus, notably, Titus, Tiberius, Marcus, Manius and Lucius were working clandestinely and frantically to restore him to power after he was deposed and banished by his people (E. Cary (trans.), 1940 ). For this coterie of friends what was of utmost importance to them was their interest. It did not matter if this ran counter to public good. E. Forster supports this kind of insensitivity to public good even in our time. He says, without mincing words, that if he were given the option to betray his state and his friend, he would prefer to betray the state (E.M. Forster, 1972). If friends can speak or act in this manner, it does not seem reasonable to use it metaphorically to organise a society.

Apart from the exclusivity, which is characteristic of friendship, many tend to reject the notion of friendship because for them it involves selfishness. The school of Hegesias, which took off from the teaching of Aristippus, holds that there is nothing like friendship because in the so-called friendship all actions are performed not for their sakes but for selfish motives (Diogenes Laertius, 1958). For Theodorus, a pupil of Anniceris, friendship does not exist because of its inanity to the wise and the unwise (Diogenes Laertius, 1958). He subscribes to this view because of his conviction that the unwise dissolve the bond of their friendship as soon as their needs disappear. And on the part of the wise, they do not need friendship because they are sufficient in themselves.

However, Aristotle in his treatise on friendship endeavours to respond to this kind of difficulty posed by the school of Hegesias and Theodorus. He draws a line between friendships that involve self-interest and the ones that are disinterested. For him, there is self-interest in the utility and pleasure friendships (Aristotle, 1994). But the friendship of the good is disinterested. It is therefore not selfish (Aristotle, 1994).

Nevertheless, some thinkers believe that Aristotle's attempt is futile and unsuccessful. In his analysis of Aristotle's position, Adkins says "all men φιλοῦσιν on account of the things which are or seem to them to be ἀγαθὰ for themselves, but that in the case of ἀγαθοὶ the things which are ἀγαθὰ for them are also ἀπλῶς ἀγαθὰ ...all three types of φιλία are equally selfish" (A.W.H. Adkins, 1963). By this, Adkins returns to the position of the school of Hegesias and Theodorus that all friendships are selfish.

Now let us look at the positive aspects of friendship to see whether there are sufficient materials that support its deployment as analytical tool to political reconstruction.

### **The Positive Image of Friendship**

It is through the positive aspects of friendship that we can begin to see its usefulness in social-political engineering. Right from the classical period the subject of friendship has been a hobbyhorse and its importance has been greatly stressed over the years by great thinkers. Convinced of the need of friendship in our lives, Democritus maintains that anyone who has no friend is not supposed to live (J. Barnes, 1987). Plato sees friendship as the most important of all external goods (Plato, 1996). Aristotle endorses this view (Aristotle, 1994). He underscores this as he says that friendship "is one of the most indispensable requirements of life" (Aristotle, 1994). He bolsters this view by maintaining that even a happy man needs it. For him, friendship is one of the main sources of happiness. The young, the old, the poor, the rich and all classes of people, all need friendship. They need it for their welfare and well-being. Cicero concurs for he claims that "not even water and fire...are universally essential to us as friendship" (Cicero, 1959).

Epicurus highlights also the positive aspect of friendship. Like Aristotle, he maintains that friendship is an essential ingredient to happiness (Diogenes Laertius, 1958). For him, friendship occupies a pre-eminent position in the hierarchy of things that bring about happiness. In addition to this, he believes that "in our limited conditions of life nothing enhances our security so much as friendship" (Diogenes Laertius, 1958). And so, Epicurus subscribes to the view that friendship is productive not only of happiness but also of security. And these are important attributes which a peaceful person or state ought to possess. Thus, despite its exclusive nature vis-à-vis the wider society, friendship is still important.

Considered in itself, friendship is a rich concept. The practice of true friendship reveals the gargantuan nature of this concept. For Francis Bacon, for instance, friendship yields three dividends (F. Bacon, 1978). The first of such dividends is that it helps to calm down a heart that is filled with emotions that are generated by passions. He maintains that if a heart swollen with emotions is not let loose through communication to a friend, the consequence will be very disastrous. According to him, as the stopping of the heart, liver and suffocation may spell doom to the body unless it is given adequate attention and treatment, so is a heart filled emotions ready to detonate unless appropriate measures are taken to avert the ugly and inevitable consequences. And these measures are simply communication to a friend. For Bacon, a friend is someone to whom one "confers one's grief, joys, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatever leith upon the heart, to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confessions" (F. Bacon, 1978). Kant espouses similar view when he says that "each of us needs a friend, one in whom we can confide unreservedly, to whom we can disclose

completely all our dispositions and judgements, from whom we can and need hide nothing, to whom we can communicate our whole self” (I. Kant, 1991). This implies that friendship encourages self-expression. And free expression of oneself is an important element in life. According to Bacon, one can impair or damage one’s power of understanding if one does not express or share out or confide one’s secret emotions to another. Nevertheless, to express oneself freely is not only integral to friendship but it is an element that is essential in human society, for if conscious efforts are made “to crush liberty and to regiment thought and speech, great harm results” (F. Copleston, 1985).

The second fruit of friendship writ large, according to Bacon, is that it enhances self-understanding (F. Bacon, 1978). For him, one understands oneself and thoughts better if they are shared and discussed with friends. This means discussion or dialogue is an important element in friendship (H. Arendt, 1968). People discuss better and arrive at better conclusions faster if they are friends than if they are not.

The third fruit of friendship is concerned with benevolence. In friendship there is “aid and bearing a part in all actions and occasions” (F. Bacon, 1978). We shall come back to this important positive aspect of friendship. It is important because there is no way friendship can be said to exist without benevolence.

The importance of friendship is also bolstered by R.W. Emerson (R.W. Emerson, 1991). He says that: “everyone passes his life in search after friendship” (R.W. Emerson, 1991). Kant shares the same sentiment as he maintains: “Every one seeks to deserve friendship” (I. Kant, 1991). If this is true it means that one can never find a rest of mind unless one finds someone (God or human being) to whom one can associate as a friend, communicate one’s thoughts and secrets, and to whom one can relate benevolently. Stretching the implication of this assertion further it would mean that even for people who are simply just to one another, there is still a longing in their lives. And that longing is friendship, a relationship in which people give to others what is not their due; where they relate with unasked reciprocal love. Aristotle had endorsed this view when he says that: “friendship is the motive of social life” (Aristotle, 1990)<sup>3</sup>. This means the end of social life is to arrive at a stage where people can relate among themselves with disinterested love.

Another point from Emerson’s reflection on friendship, which highlights its importance, borders on his claim that friendship, ought to be limited to a society of two persons. When it is so limited, it facilitates openness and self-revelation during discussion. For him, a society of two persons discusses more candidly and sincerely than when the group is enlarged to three or more persons (R.W. Emerson, 1991). According to him, people do not express themselves freely as they would if the number of people that discuss is not reduced to two. By implication it would seem that for Emerson as the number of people to a discourse increases, the sincerity with which the participants express their views diminishes. However, while this claim casts doubt on the credibility of public discourse in general, it also highlights the nature of friendship and its importance in facilitating authentic existence.

This authentic existence is not something, however, which has no social advantage. It is something that improves the general welfare. This point is clearly manifest in Elisabeth Telfer’s reflection on friendship. She affirms that friendship is a particular relation but

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<sup>3</sup>Aristotle, *Politics*, III, v, 1280b 14. Aristotle’s appreciation of friendship is at its apotheosis when he says: “And if men are friends, there is no need of justice between them; whereas merely to be just is not enough – a feeling of friendship also is necessary” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, I, 1155<sup>b</sup>, 4). Here, however, Aristotle must not be understood literally as meaning that justice is not necessary in social interactions. Justice is an important element in friendship as we said earlier. Friends are not unjust to one another. Friendship takes justice for granted. Friendship, nevertheless, goes beyond this and issues in doing things with disinterested love.

ironically it ultimately serves the general welfare (E. Telfer, 1970). Her major argument is that the experience, which friends gather in their relationship, helps to improve their relationships with others outside their friendships. In her words, "...the understanding developed by it (friendship) and mutual criticism involved in it will improve the way friends deal with people outside the relationship" (E. Telfer, 1970).

Telfer's point helps to soften the hard fact made by Emerson, namely, that the discussion by friends composed of society of two is more genuine and sincere than public discourse. Her main trust is that the way these friends discuss at this basic level will influence the way they participate in public discourse. This point seems to affirm that it is legitimate to use the notion of friendship metaphorically to construct an organisation or society.

Going from what has been said so far on the positive aspects of friendship, it is evident that it is justifiable to use it as an operational tool in the elaboration and structuring of human organisation. Friendship promotes self-expression, dialogue, authentic existence, benevolence and better participation in public discourse. Of all these, the fact that it promotes and enhances public discourse seems to make it more expedient. But how do we understand friendship in such a way that it can concretely be used to resolve conflicts and enthrone and promote peace? This is what we are going to examine next.

### **The Qualities In Friendship Necessary for Political Reconstruction**

The first important quality in friendship that is needed for social-political reconstruction is equality. Equality is a very important element in friendship. Friendship survives when the partners relate on the basis of equality. Pythagoras recognises this element when he says that "friendship is equality" (Diogenes Laertius, 1958). Aristotle shares this view (Aristotle, 1994). Because of its importance, Aristotle suggests a way of putting it in place (Aristotle, 1994).

Another important quality in friendship the deployment of which is very useful in political reconstruction is benevolence. Benevolence involves the performance of an action for the other *ex gratia*. In fact benevolence is the distinguishing mark of friendship. If one removes benevolence from friendship the said relationship becomes a justice relationship. Friends, apart from being just to one another also do things benevolently to each other. There is a plethora of historical evidence to bolster the view that benevolence is an essential element in the concept of friendship (Diogenes Laertius, 1958; Cicero, 1959; R. Descartes, 1953; I. Kant, 1991).

There are two species of benevolence, namely, goodwill and practical benevolence or beneficence. Aristotle illustrates both species of benevolence with the relationship that exists between a mother and her child. The mother showers her child with affection and does something practical to portray it without necessarily expecting something in return. As he puts it:

"But in its essence friendship seems to consist more in giving than in receiving affection: witness the pleasure that mothers take in loving their children. Some mothers put their infants out to nurse, and though knowing and loving them, do not ask to be loved by them in return, if it be impossible to have this as well, but are content if they see them prospering; they retain their own love for them even though the children, not knowing them, cannot render them any part of what is due to a mother." (Aristotle, 1994)

Benevolence yields phenomenal dividends. It draws the benefactor and the beneficiary, the lover and the beloved more closely than justice would do to those who are just to themselves. As Hume would say, "A generous and noble character affords satisfaction even in the survey;

and when presented to us, tho' only in a poem or fable, never fails to charm and delight us" (D. Hume, 1985). And so, great bond is established between friends if it thrives in benevolence.

The beneficiary of benevolence must be aware of it or else such benevolence does not constitute friendship. Awareness, therefore, is another important element in friendship (Aristotle, 1990). It is the awareness of the benevolence that inspires the beneficiary to develop positive attitude towards the benefactor and to transform the new relationship into friendship. Generally, people do not form true friendship with those they are not aware of their love. And so awareness helps friendship to develop. It is thus an important quality in friendship.

Apart from benevolence, which is symbiotically connected to awareness, another important quality of friendship that enhances political reconstruction is discourse. Friends who do not discuss and share ideas are not true friends. Through discussions friends get to know themselves better and appreciate their respective problems. Indeed there is unwitting and inadvertent self-disclosure when friends discuss. And the knowledge obtained from such discussions spur the friends to act benevolently when the need arises. Discussion dismantles unnecessary suspicion and misunderstanding. And it makes friends to be united more than ever.

In friendship, also, there is a certain level of independence. Friends have certain things and not all things in common. That people are friends does not mean that they possess everything in common. They can share certain ideas and properties but not all of them. Pythagoras had maintained the view that what the friends have is common property (Diogenes Laertius, 1958). Plato had erroneously adopted this principle and had applied it metaphorically in his political theory. It was this principle that formed the background of his theory on the common ownership of properties and wives.

However, the principle is now a shibboleth; it received virulent criticism from Aristotle. Epicurus rejected it. For him such a maxim from Pythagoras implies "mistrust and without confidence there is no friendship" (Diogenes Laertius, 1958). In practical life, a friend has his personal ideas and properties, which he does not necessarily share in common with his friends. He can use these personal ideas and properties to help himself, his friends and others outside his friendship when he wishes to do so. This is what it means to say that in friendship there is independence.

Now we proceed to deal with how these friendly qualities- equality, benevolence, awareness, discourse or dialogue and independence can be applied to the Nigerian constitution.

### **Incorporating Friendship Qualities into the Nigerian Constitution**

The incorporation of friendship qualities in a Nigerian constitution would mean to a large extent a reduction to ethnic, social, political, religious conflicts. Now since these conflicts still exist and hamstring her development, the probable reason is that Nigerian constitution lacks friendship qualities or has not enough of them. This is perhaps the bane of the nation. To rise above these conflicts, friendship qualities should be incorporated in our constitution. To do this, it is not absolutely necessary to convene a sovereign national conference. The volatile state of the nation is such that any sovereign national conference will lead inexorably to a morass of confusion and scupper the nascent and fledgling democracy to a halt. What is necessary is simply to fine-tune some key areas where the principles of friendship have been wanting. A constitutional review committee can easily and more effectively do it than a sovereign national conference.

The first area that the committee members should address themselves is the question of electoral process. This should be tailored along the lines of friendship. Till date the constitution has allowed the winner-takes it all philosophy. This practice is in order under the principles of justice. It is a principle that is fashionable in sports. And there it promotes sportsmanship. But in politics, especially in multi-ethnic politics, it does not achieve much. In Nigeria, for instance, it has not yielded the much-desired dividends. This is because the philosophy of the winner-takes it all does not take into accounts the peculiarities of the Nigerian nation, which is a hotchpotch of many nationalities.

The committee members, working under the assumption of the equality of the citizens, should restructure the constitution in such a way that no party emerges as a single winner with absolute votes at the end of an election. In this context, the party that emerges with the highest votes is not declared the winner until it secures the required percentage. This means that there should be room for the winning party to go into coalition with other parties of its choice in order to produce the constitutional requirement.

This practice of forming coalition gives rise to discussion or dialogue between the parties. And the one thing that is useful in dialogue is that those who go into it are not there simply to insist on what they feel is their due; they are there also to forgo their rights when necessary in order to achieve harmony. Actually following the strict principles of justice, the party that scores the highest votes should be allowed to govern. But the principle of friendship, while not denying the party its right as justice demands, makes it expedient for it to share this right benevolently with other parties of its choice in order to form a broad based coalition. In the 1994-1995 National Constitutional Conference, the members called for the abolition of the winner-takes it all and said, "Any political party which wins not less than 10 percent of the total seats shall be entitled to representation in the cabinet" (T. U. Nwala, 1997). While this suggestion is a good idea, it may not likely solve the problem that occasioned it as a constitutional issue. This is because at the end of an election it may happen that none or one of the parties only may have scored 10 percent of the total votes cast.

When there is a coalition in government, many interest groups, ethnic, political, religious, social, are to a large extent represented. Coalition promotes discussion and understanding. It serves as checks and balances on the executive and legislative arms of the government. The party in the majority is always afraid of taking a unilateral decision in favour of its party, its ethnic group etc. for fear of tearing the coalition asunder.

The call for a political system that encourages coalition is not something simply theoretical but practical. Coalition practice has yielded dividends in countries that have been engulfed in ethnic conflicts. Belgium is a case in point. The strong ethnic affiliation there is better imagined than described. But this has been defused to acceptable level through constitutional contrivances. In her local, state, regional and federal levels, no party wins out rightly at the end of an election. The party that has the highest votes goes for coalition. When it shilly-shallies, the smaller parties that have lesser votes can team up to produce the required constitutional percentage. This type of arrangement has brought the ethnic groups to work together.

To further promote the principles of friendship in the Nigerian constitution, there should be further effort to set up political structures that promote dialogue. In 2002, the constitution review committee of the national house came out with proposition, (1) One term of office of five years for the president and the governors, (2) rotational presidency among the six geopolitical zones, (3) Two vice presidents. This is a welcome development. But to ensure friendship in the nation's body polity, there should be more than two vice presidents in order to promote more dialogue at the executive level in such a way that the common good and the

geopolitical zones' interests of the nation are better ensured. For this reason, therefore, there ought to be six vice presidents, each coming from one of the six geopolitical zones. The consensus outcome of their executive dialogue meetings should serve as the constitutional basis and not just serve as a piece of advice to the president in the discharge of his executive functions.

In friendship as noted already, awareness of the goodwill of the other is very important. Before one commits oneself to friendship, one is supposed to be aware of the fact that the other is well disposed or has goodwill or benevolence towards him. In restructuring the Nigerian constitution therefore with the idea of friendship in view, the constitution review committee members should make it obligatory for those who are seeking public offices at the various levels of government to show in what ways they have demonstrated love for the country. This will serve at least as evidence of what is to be expected of them. Public office should not be conferred on anyone who does not love the public. As Aristotle would say: "A citizen who contributes nothing of value to the common stock is not held in honour, for the common property is given to those who benefit the community" (Aristotle, 1994). Benefiting the community can be seen much more globally, for example, those who have given material support for building it up as well as those who have sacrificed themselves in whatever capacity to foster its development and unity could be said to have benefited it. But more importantly, it refers to those who were entrusted with public responsibilities in the past at any level and they discharged them creditably. The community should be aware of such people. It is for the community to judge whether the services they rendered and the experience they garnered from the execution of the said responsibilities are sufficient for greater responsibilities.

This last point needs to be further stressed. A person seeking a presidential post, for instance, cannot wake up one morning and begin to ask for votes. The people who should be given this post are those who have track records of good leadership. They should be those who, for example, at the local and state politics, have carved a niche for themselves through manifestation of good leadership. Where a person has never led anybody even in the secondary level, how do we know that he can sacrifice himself for the office that he is seeking; how do we know that he loves the people; how do we know that he has sufficient leadership experience?

Now in order to know the level of love that the aspirants to the elective offices have for Nigeria, they should present themselves to national televised debate. They should be required to do this after they must have gone at the grassroots levels to sell their ideas to the electorates. This should be made mandatory. In the past some aspirants have carefully avoided this. But this should no longer be the case. Any candidate who fails to do this seems to have skeleton in his cupboard and therefore should stand disqualified. It is through these debates, interviews and selling of their ideas at the grassroots and national levels that the people can know the amount of love or friendship the candidates have for them.

The idea of national televised debate for aspirants to elective posts is fast becoming popular. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, 2002 Germany had for the first time in her history a widely televised debate between the two principal candidates vying for the post of Chancellorship. The debate, which was watched by about 15 million viewers, was followed by serious discussions on many German television channels. The impact of the debates is that many of the viewers reconsidered the opinions they had formed on the candidates. The Germans have repeated this public debate ever since. The Germans had borrowed this form of televised debate from the Americans.

One country can always borrow useful political ideas from other nations. Aristotle supports the legitimacy of such borrowing when he says, “The Egyptians are reputed to be the oldest of nations, but they have always had laws and a political system. Hence we should use the results of previous discovery when adequate, while endeavouring to investigate matters hitherto passed over” (*Pol. VII, ix, 1329b, 5*). Nigeria should therefore follow this friendly electoral process already existing in America and Germany.

In friendship as we already noted, there is a certain level of independence that exists between friends. The same should exist between entities of the Nigerian nation. They ought to co-operate in those things that are necessary for co-operate existence but should be allowed the right to self-determination. There are 36 states at present in Nigeria. Each of these while contributing to her co-operate existence should be given a free hand to generate and control its resources. This helps to defuse the ethnic conflicts and reduce the agonising cries of marginalisation. This is not indeed a new idea. What is held out here is that such a recommendation has a philosophical foundation based on the deployment of the principle of friendship in social engineering.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is still great hope for Nigeria in spite of the ubiquitous conflicts that that serve as cogs on the wheels of her march to greatness. This hope will be translated into reality if friendship qualities are incorporated into her constitution. The friendship qualities will help to bring in many ethnic and other interest groups into the government of the day. This in turn will hamstring the domination of one group over the others and so reduce to barest minimum the harrowing experiences of the minorities.

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