



Section A: Homage to Scholarship



B. M. Ibitokun and the Dynamics of Episodes as a Gadfly

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Introduction

Socrates in Plato's *Apology* vindicated his life by maintaining that he is a gadfly sent to Athens-the big ass- by the gods, to wake her up from her moral and intellectual stupor¹. He claims this mission for himself in spite of his conviction on the charges of corrupting the minds of Athenian youths and importing foreign gods not recognized by the state, for which he is sentenced to death, having been tried by a properly constituted Athenian court of law.

Consequent upon Socrates' execution arising from that conviction, Plato, his foremost pupil, abandoned his quest for a career in public life, for which he was eminently qualified by both pedigree and intellectual training.² His grouse being that, a society or state that could execute Socrates, who was for him, the best man ever lived; standson a fundamentally flawed moral and intellectual pedestal. So, on the one hand, Socrates was a public enemy no.1, and on the other, the best man ever lived! He thus fits the paradigm of a person, who was many things to many people, especially when we recollect that Aristophanes, the comic poet and dramatist, lampooned Socrates as a trickster in the *Clouds*³, and thus, associated him with the opprobrium the name 'sophist', had acquired by the latter half of the fifth century B.C. in Athens.

In view of the foregoing, the central questions for this paper are: who is Benedict M. Ibitokun (BMI)? Is he a friend or foe, or simply a gadfly? These are difficult questions to answer given the intricate web of professional and social relations BMI constructed for himself as a teacher, academic researcher, and community leader.

A voyage through this intricate web of relationships in search of possible answers to these questions requires, I believe, doing the following: building heuristic models of analogues of BMI, interpreting these models as episodes in social interaction, evaluating these interpretations against the background of certain theories of friendship, and finally determining whether or not BMI is a friend or foe, or just a gadfly who is not necessarily the most adored or admired person.

Heuristic models of BMI

The purpose of these heuristic models is to recapture as much as possible, certain prominent character traits or dispositions of BMI in different life scenarios in order to see through them, how they mediated his relationships with students, colleagues, University administration and the constitutive rules of the University. In deploying these models, historical accuracy is not claimed, nor are they claimed to be accurate psychological make-up of the person under discussion. In fact BMI is likely to reject many of the portraitures as inaccurate representations of him now, or what he had been, said, or done in the past. His possible denials of these models, or by any other person, are beside the point for the purposes of this paper, given that perceptions or

¹ See *Apology*

² Plato's uncles had been in the public arena as politicians

³ It was originally produced at the City Dionysia in 423 BC



interpretations of the actions of a person are, usually, beyond him. Having entered into these caveats, we now turn to the models.

BMI as a teacher and researcher

As a teacher BMI believes and shows that, a teacher must know his subject very well, so as to guide the class aright in raising fundamental issues pertaining to a subject or reading text under discussion. He could bring a text, say *Anna Karenina*, and announce to the class, '*E mi tikaileyi o! sugbon, gbogbowa ma lo s'ileka*'. He could code switch and speak at the top of his voice – 'I haven't read this, but every one of us should go home and read it, we discuss it next class eh!' '*sogbo mi?*' (Am I understood?). By the scheduled date of discussion of the text in class, he would have been ready with his own analysis to lead the discussion, and fill in the gaps, should the students fail to show promise. Later, he would upbraid them: '*o le nigbogbo yin, e berulatika we*' – 'all of you are lazy, afraid to read books.' For BMI, on no account should a teacher bamboozle his students into silence such that they cannot ask probing questions. If there is something hazy which a teacher cannot figure out immediately, he or she should be honest enough to say, 'I will look it up, and come back to you next class eh!'

There are some attitudinal dispositions of students that could bring out the best or the worst in any University teacher, given that students are generally presumed to be responsible adults. A few of these habits or dispositions are truancy, academic laziness, and penchant for missing essay submission deadlines. How would BMI react to any or a combination of these? To the truant, he would raise his voice and say, 'I didn't bring you to this University! You came here on your own accord. But let me, let tell you, *Jen so fun e*, you cannot get a degree of this University on your own terms. There are rules you must obey, and if you do not comply with them, '*ko eru re lo si le!*' you pack your things and go home eh! From now on if you miss my classes again, I will expunge your name from my list of registered students, *ma pa re, olorun!* You can report to the Vice Chancellor, if you like, *ko lo so fun won eh! tobafe*'

In case a student failed to submit his or her assignment on time as scheduled, he would remind him or her: 'two weeks are enough for any serious student to write and submit this assignment as scheduled, *O le ni o!*' Do you hear me well eh! You believe in what you people call 'African time', I don't! Go away with your script, and don't come here to bother me, in fact you can grade it if you like!

However, should BMI learn that a student was bereaved, or sick, and that explains the lateness of the submission of his essay or assignment paper, he would put a soft inflexion in his voice, rendering tenderly, 'oh!, is that so?' '*E mi omo, pele!*' (I didn't know, sorry about that), but you should have called me on my phone line, or at least alerted me through your class leader, or other friends of yours. Sorry eh!, I hope all is well now? '*Je kin woiwe e, se iwo lo se, tabi won ti se si le fun e?*' (Let me see your script, are you the one who did it or your friends?), he would tease. Thereafter, he would then accept the script, putting it carefully aside for quick remembrance.

If, in a class, there is a student who shows promise and diligence in his or her academic work, such a student, invariably, became BMI's favorite, whom he would always exhibit as an example diligence to others anywhere, within or outside the classroom. In the classroom, he would show open approval of the person: '*wo! Iwo mobawi, omoluabi ni o!*' (Look! you a very good person, well-bred and diligent). Keep it up, you are doing well! '*Ma se bi ore re yi, tonje ole!*' (Don't behave like these your friends who are lazy students). Be serious always with your work, eh! On the corridors of the department or faculty, if such an *anomoluabi*-of- a- student is passing by,



BMI would call him, hold him by the hand, and tells anyone who wants to hear: “this is a very good student, very diligent! Well behaved and serious with his work. Keep it up! Eh! He would pat him on the back, and let him go.

As a researcher, BMI endeavored to develop and sustain a focus, for he believed, that as the planets trace their orbits in space with the sun-in- view, an academic researcher should have a target, a bull’s eye of a sort, in his or her research. Such an academic could be eclectic, not as divergent beams of light devoid of focus, but more like convergent beams of light directed to a point from where it glows and radiates light to its environs. That is, for BMI, academic production should show a trajectory of development from infancy to adulthood of research in a particular area of an academic’s specialization. Hence, as a literary critic, he drew inspiration from both continental and occidental philosophic traditions to inform literary criticisms and elaboration of texts, and like Hermes of old, he directed our attention to new vistas of meaning and significance of literary texts with regard to the major questions of human existence.

BMI in the Department

For a professor like BMI who spent more than 35 years in the Department of English, he has seen it all! He saw the creation of the Department of Literature, worked in it while it lasted, and again saw its merger with the Department of English from where he retired. His life, career, and interactions in these Departments were guided by the zest for probity, observance of laid down rules and procedures in all things, as well as, insistence on competence and personal responsibility in the discharge of one’s duties. These informed his own discharge of duties as a lecturer and Head of Department, and moderated his interactions with colleagues within and outside the Department and Faculty.

To a young, newly employed trainee academic staff, BMI would ask, pointedly, ‘*ewolonse?* What are you doing?’ ‘You have to be mindful how you organize your work in this place, otherwise you just play away your time and youth.’ In the case of another colleague whose doctoral program is dragging along and crawling, BMI would want to know what the problem is: ‘what is the problem? Is it you, your supervisor or the title of your thesis, ‘*e wo ni mbe eh?*’ (Which one is the problem?). When the student volunteers the information that registration of Form A is the issue, and cause of delay, BMI would retort: ‘you see, what they do in this place is nonsense, the PG school forms are too many and the procedures for processing them are very cumbersome, and you see, these forms do not add quality to any student’s work, *won kangbaasikolasan ni, pele!* (They just waste time). *Ti oba lo were latoni lo, ko ran mi leti, kin lo rioga re, sogbo mi?* (if there is no appreciable progress from today onwards, just let me know, so I can see your supervisor). *Pele!* It will be over very soon, eeh!

At a Departmental meeting, the Head of Department introduces a proposal for a curriculum review in the literature segment of the Department. The thrust of this review is Afrocentric, implying a de-emphasis on European classics content, but an exaltation of African source material in the reviewed curriculum. Arguments are traded by supporters on either side of the matter. At the inception of the debate, BMI is quiet, but listens with rapt attention to the opinions canvassed by other colleagues. However, as the arguments wear on, he thrusts his hand mid-way in the air, as a way of requesting the chairman’s permission to contribute to the discussion. BMI commences his contribution by asking a question: ‘what is the target of this review of syllabus?’ are we now in the era of renewed nationalism, a sort of neo-nationalism, or



are we imbued with the zeal for producing graduates in literature who will be intellectual midgets? I am not against the infusion of reading materials of African origin or coloration. That is alright, especially in this age of post-modernism and eclecticism. But let's answer one question before the program is bastardized: from what kind of inspiration did Africa's Greats in literature write? I mean authors like Achebe, Soyinka, NgugiWaThiongo, CamaraLaye, and even the latest of them all, ChimamandaAdichie. What inspired them?

Had these African authors not read European classics, how could they have carried on with certain adaptations of some classics to African contexts? Anyone who cares, should read Okigbo, I mean Chris the poet. Read his poems and you see them shot through with the styles of Sophocles and Euripides. How could he have adapted these Greek classical authors without reading them? What I am saying in essence... (Chairman gives him sign to round off)... *Jen san temi tan*... am saying that African authors of note today could not have emerged had they not read European classics, given the history of our colonial education. So if you are de-emphasizing European classics in the Literature program of this Department, you would in reality be short changing the present generation of students. I don't think it is our mandate to do that! Many of us now sitting down here presiding over this insidious suggestion, having turned emergency of Afrocentrics, were taught by Richard Taylor, Hamlet, Biodun, I mean Jeifos, Ropo Sekoni, and yours sincerely, using the same European Classics, you now want to abolish, alongside African Authors! We have to strike a balance, that's what I am saying, if we still want to be relevant as robust Department of Literature. *Otan!*

As Head of Department, BMI had zero tolerance for academics, whom he perceived, were usually more on incessant leave of absence or fellowships abroad, than being on ground to teach students and discharge administrative duties assigned them, in order to enhance the growth of the Department. He would use any available opportunity to caution or upbraid such members of the Department. *Wo! Iwo mobawi* (look! am talking to you). When you were appointed, was it for the purposes of being on interminable Leave, or for teaching students and doing your work in the Department? I have not seen you on this corridor in the last six months, all I see every now and then are frivolous requests for all species of leave. It is high time you are told that other members of the Department are your donkey, doing your work, while you are busy gallivanting all over the world. *Wojen san fun e*, next time I see any application for spurious leave of absence, *mi ni fowokan*, I will not touch it, unless for throwing it into the trash can! For now, *yanjusi mi ni office, orokanwa*, see me in the office, there is a matter for discussion.

However, the most sensitive of cases he handled then as Head of Department, were those of academic review of members of the Department for the purposes of promotion to higher ranks. A certain member of staff approaches him with a curriculum vitae (C V), requesting for a preliminary perusal prior to presenting it to the Departmental Review Panel. BMI surveys the C V intently, especially the section for academic publications. After a while, he lifts up his gaze, and talks to the member of staff: 'I see you have done some work, at least in terms of number of publications, to merit a consideration for promotion to the next rank. But you also realize that you are moving into senior academic position. In that regard, I am worried about the direction of your research. It does not have a focus! You have abandoned your area of specialization, which I think is English stylistics, and overloaded your cv with sociolinguistics and Yoruba studies. But this is Department of English, you know! Go back and do more work in your area of specialization before asking for promotion.



This member of staff protests these observations of BMI and insists that nothing is wrong with his cv and academic publications, especially in this era of collaborative and interdisciplinary research. BMI reacts to this protest thus: 'I don't have time to waste on this matter, *ti bi yii, tabinkotimo san, o te yin lorun, ko lo simbo mi* (if this department, or what I have said, is not convenient for you, you can try some other place). In fact, you should transfer to Yoruba studies in the Department of African Languages! That is what I see in this cv of yours. You have no place in the Department of English with this type of cv, otan!

Later a similar scenario plays out in the case of another member of staff, whose cv has a preponderance of issues on teaching English Language, and BMI pointedly tells him to transfer to Faculty of Education.

BMI and his younger friends

There was a discussion session organized by the erstwhile Academic Circle. The topic was examinations results processing in the University, on which Victor was invited to speak, and BMI was in the audience. The speaker went into a detailed explanation about how students' examination results were processed from the Department to the various committees in the university till it terminates at the University Senate. First, one had to collect raw score results from the various departments from which the students in a Department sourced their courses. Some Departments would oblige at the first visit, while others would keep one coming back again and again, till it nearly turned into a fight, because of the insensitivity on the part of the officers of the Department handling examination matters.

Thereafter, the Master Mark Sheets I and II (MMS I&II) are prepared. MMS I shows the current state of students' results with the raw scores for all courses taken, the current Grade Point Average (GPA), the courses each student failed in the current examination, and so on. On the other hand, MMS II shows the current, Previous GPAs, as well as, the cumulative Grade point Average per student, and all 'carry-over' courses where relevant. Subsequently, the prepared MMS I&II are presented, first, to the Departmental Board of Examiners, then to the faculty examinations committee, and next to the Committee of Deans, and finally to the Business Committee of Senate.

Victor went on and on talking about how to prepare the results of students who fall sick during examinations, or when a student comes back from sick or leave of absence, or in the case of a student who did not register for a semester-each of these cases required presenting all the student's results at a glance from inception to the current situation, with detailed background information to aid the relevant committee to take an informed decision.

After the discussion, BMI walked up to Victor, put his hand on his shoulder and intoned: 'Is this what they are doing to you? *se won fe pa o ni?* (Do they want to kill you?). If you continue like this, you won't face your studies and research and achieve much in this insensitive system! The work of processing examination results like this is Herculean. It is just too much for one person. It needs a lot of attention, diligence, and time to keep up with the demands of students and the system.' From the time of that encounter, each time BMI passed by Victor's office, he would pop into ask, 'how are you, victor? I hope you are doing your work? *Ma da awonyiilohun, to ba fun won l'aye, won ma lo e pa*(Don't mind these ones, if you give them chance, they use you to the death). Take care!' That is how BMI took interest in Victor's career and academic progress, and would want to have a progress report, even if he saw him in the market place.



These I take to be paradigmatic of BMI's dynamic interactions in different scenarios, others are possible, for he was also an active participant in the life and activities of the Catholic Church community on the campus.

Theories of Friendship

In order to make sense and analyze these dynamic scenarios, it is important to look at them through the theoretical prisms of both classical and modern philosophers. For the purposes of this discussion the Friendship theories of Aristotle, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Siegfried Kracauer, among others, especially the ethics of Care, are apposite.

Aristotle

For Aristotle, there are three types of friendship, one based on **utility**, the second on **pleasure**, and the third on virtue. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he maintains that the best of the three is the friendship based on virtue. This is because the aim of such a friendship is goodness and the pursuit of moral excellence, rather than particularized interests or pleasures. He thus lays the conditions for virtuous actions as follows: "First [the person acting] must know that he is doing virtuous actions; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves, and, third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state"⁴ These conditions are necessary to ensure that actions in friendship are not capricious, given that "each type of friendship is, in a sense, altruistic, since we are concerned with the welfare of our friends for their sake, not merely for our own"⁵

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson's theory of friendship, as articulated and elaborated by Jason A. Scorza, can be summarized as saying that, friendship is a dialectical concept, and in practice, it is a mediated relationship. In order to understand how this is so, we first have to take cognizance of Emerson's individualistic creed: "persons practicing self-reliance heed their own moral judgment as much as possible, and depend as little as possible on the opinion of others, or social conventions"⁶ The picture of a person exhibiting this *individualistic creed* of Emerson, is similar to the poise of a cynic wise man like Crates or Antisthenes, who was said to be self-sufficient because he was a repository of wisdom, and depended less on emotions and public conventions, but more on *reason* when taking his decisions, upon which his actions were anchored. It is from the perspective of this hard-core personal autonomy that Emerson yet, endeavors to construct a theory of friendship.

For him, friends love each other, or one another, treat themselves as friends, and abandon self-determined projects for their sake. Friendship requires that friends are open to each other, and empathize with each other as the occasion arises. In addition friends invest time and effort in each other's projects. As such, friends try to disagree today in a manner that allows them to disagree again tomorrow, which implies that friendship relations are consensual, and in consequence, we incur special obligations to friends.

As friendship is a mediated relationship, it both threatens and preserves the strong personal autonomy issuing from Emerson's *individualistic creed*. As Scorza articulates it, "Friendship is a relationship that promotes self-reliance by threatening

⁴1105a30-1105b, see *Nicomachean Ethics* trans. Terence Irwin. Indianapolis: Hackett.

⁵Scorza, J A, "Liberal Citizenship and Civic Friendship", *Political Theory* 32 (1) 2004,85-108

⁶Scorza, 85-108



always to undermine it. It is a crucible through which self-reliance must pass in order to realize itself fully. Ideally friendship serves as an aid to self-reliance. Through acquaintance with friends one's acquaintance with oneself can be reviewed"⁷ In other words, one's friend is a mirror through which he can see himself in all his beauty or ugliness, and depending on how either is reflected back, it can improve or diminish his self- concept, or even the relationship ultimately. Again in Scorza's words, "in a gesture, pause, word, or glance, individuals can, in a flash, see themselves through the eye of a friend."⁸

One character trait that sustains friendship is *integrity*, as in other relationships too, such as marriage, the professions, and in business. Much as integrity is central to a thriving friendship, Emerson is cognizant of the fact that friendship can destroy integrity. One who tries to stand by a friend who has just fallen from grace, risks his own integrity, because as the cliché goes, 'show me your friends and I tell you whom you are.' Sometimes, a friend may want to belong by adopting certain unconventional lifestyles of his other friends, either because we don't want to hurt their feelings, or in order not to lose them. Whichever way one's integrity, assuming he had any, is at stake. This is why Emerson says that, "the ideal friend is a sort of beautiful enemy, untamable, devoutly revered." Thus as we say in our local parlance, "God, please save me from my friends, as for my enemies, I can take care of them." Similarly, as one popular Igbo musician put it, "*Ilokasinjon'uwabuilooyi, makanaoyigi ma irugi, n'azugi.*"- when friendship turns sour and enmity ensues, it is very virulent, because one's friend knows him inside out!

This underscores the dialectical nature of friendship; it harbors in itself the seed of its own destruction, and moves on to a higher qualitative level through crises, supporting the popular belief that friends who have never quarreled are not yet *real* friends.

Emerson's theory of friendship has what can be called two motive forces, following Empedocles of Acragas. Emerson calls them *communicative norms* of friendship: norms of Truth and Tenderness. They imbue friendship relations with life, and energize them towards qualitative purposive ends. The norm of Truth is "a practice of frankness conjoined with openness to the frank speech of one's friends." In this regard, bonds of friendship are knotted with understanding and frankness, as well as the unreserved disposition of the parties to heed the frank talks of each other. The dictum is: "Let there be truth between us two forevermore." Essentially, therefore, "there should be no predetermined limits to what may be said and heard- a friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him, I think aloud."

On the other hand, the norm of Tenderness demands a "posture of giving and a posture of receiving, one speaking and listening. It is a kind of "permeability or responsiveness", through which we assume the posture of our interlocutor to appreciate his words and thoughts. It does not allow any party to take undue advantage of the other. The norm of tenderness seems to be subsumed in the rhetorical principle of two-fold *logos*, which essentially urges interlocutors to be aware, always, that there are two arguments of equal cogency on either side of a question. Observing this rule means that there oughtn't to be any disposition of prejudging an issue, prior to entertaining views or arguments from either side on the matter. The norm of Tenderness infuses empathy in a friendship relation.

⁷Scorza, 85-108

⁸Scorza, 85-108



Care Ethics

While the debate of the relation of care ethics and virtue ethics rages on, we can adopt some guiding principles from *care ethic* for the purpose of this paper. Scholars in this area of ethics seem to agree that care ethics involves “concern with people embedded in contextual relations”, attention to some areas of life not usually covered by mainstream ethics such as friendship, family, and challenged persons, the emotive content of care, and partiality⁹.

Let’s consider the emotive content of care, and with regard to challenged persons. These are persons who have one disability or the other; it could be physical, visual, auditory, or mental. But let’s consider the obvious one, the case of a physically challenged person, who has the good fortune of moving around in a wheel chair. This person now happens to gain admission into one of the Nigerian universities, but because many of Nigeria public institutions were built without regard to the need of the physically challenged, there are flights of stairs all around without side way rumps through which this person can wheel himself conveniently into classrooms or auditoria, to receive lectures or attend other functions that give meaning to being a university undergraduate. He contents himself with receiving lectures from the sideways or through the windows; given that physical obstructions cannot allow him move any nearer. When one imbued with care encounters such a person, something leaps in him, a concern for this challenged person’s predicament, that he is shortchanged by a society, an institution that ought to care for him better than he is receiving right now.

The *carer*, normally called care giver, spontaneously wants to do something to relieve the inconveniences of this physically challenged person. In the immediate, he goes to him to enquire whether he could be wheeled to a better position, that done, and later after the class, the *carer*, sends a petition to the university authorities about the plight of such challenged persons, and wants to know what the university is going to do about it. On the morrow of it all, he publishes an article in the National Dailies on this matter, and so on. So, in caring, or care giving, there is an element of emotional spontaneity that seizes the *carer*, and pushes him to help. At this point in time he is not coldly rational about what he is doing, much as he is also not irrational about it. He did not, for example think, “am also receiving a lecture, if I go to help him now, I will not only lose what the lecturer is saying, am likely to disturb others too, so let me attend to that matter later.” He just moves to help as if he has just come under the influence of a kind of *mania*! That is what I call *emotive spontaneity* in care giving.

The other component of care giving is *partiality*. The question is if all human beings have worth, and should be treated as ends in themselves, as Kantians and utilitarians urge, why should a *carer* favor one person in giving care, instead of another? How does he justify his partiality? There is a vigorous debate on this matter among care ethicists, which cannot be reviewed here, but in the interim, *carers* point out that giving care is done in contexts, and to persons one has some kind of relationship already, not to total strangers, otherwise that would tantamount to altruism. It has also been stoutly argued that one can agree that everyone is worthy of being treated as an end in himself, and still be partial to some persons, because the rules justifying this partiality derive from specific contexts.

⁹Halwani R, “Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics”, *Hyperia* 18 (3), 2003, 161-192



B. M. Ibitokun: Friend , Foe or a Gadfly?

In order to answer this question, an informed decision is required, and to have the basis for this, the heuristic models of BMI in different dynamic scenarios have to be considered in the light of the different friendship theories seen above.

The classroom scenario is characterized by BMI in the capacity of a teacher, mentor, and as both, he acted in *loco parentisto* the students. As a teacher he gave the home work reading assignment, prepares the lecture in this regard to be delivered in case the students failed to do so, and as a mentor he chastised the students for being lazy at their academic work, and shows them that as a teacher he had to do his work well, and in doing so, sets examples for them to emulate. Somehow we see that the duties of a teacher, mentor, and parent run into one another such that there is no clear cut delineation between them, yet they harbor a significant ingredient of friendship. A teacher, mentor, and parent who is not a friend to his student/ward in not like to succeed in any of those capacities.

Aristotle requires that a friend acting virtuously should know that he is doing so; decide on doing so for the sake of the virtuous actions, and acts on them as a stable virtuous character, and in pursuit of moral excellence. The pursuit of moral excellence here implies that the actions of a virtuous person should improve significantly either the person acting, or another who, in this case, are the students. Of course BMI in giving out the home work reading assignment, chastising the student(s) for laziness, truancy, and lateness *knew* he so acted, *decided* to do so, and did so for the sole reason of improving the students towards both moral and technical excellence. It is to show, really, that his interest in acting the way he did to students was to improve them, that he adopted, once in a while, an exemplary student, openly commended him in class, and wherever he met him. For it is the one who knows the purpose of teaching, who like Socrates' groom, would improve the object of his art- *techne*. In this case, the object of BMI's pedagogical art was the student. The next question is whether he acted the way he did from the crust of a stable character which is one of the indices of Aristotle's virtuous man?

In order to answer this question, it is not just enough to affirm, "yes, he did". It requires showing independently, that over time; he recognized his avowed principles and argued for them, as occasions arose. There was a debate on the floor of the Academic Staff Union of Universities' (ASUU) meeting to determine whether or not the Union should declare another strike to show its grievances towards the Federal government's non implementation of the agreement it reached with the Union after a protracted strike. Some speakers were trading the arguments in favor of the strike invoking "the interest of the students", which, they maintained, would be better served were the government to accede to the agreements in question. So, the proposed strike was necessary. BMI who, was against the strike, because it was to be one too many in recent time, intoned: Let's not deceive ourselves here at this meeting, there are no special set of lecturers, or members of this Union, who are more interested in the welfare of the students, more that some others. We are all here because of the "interest of the students." So if any person wants the strike let him bring up a better argument for it, but this "interest of the students" talk, won't work, because we all share a common interest in that regard!

At some other time, after a students' demonstration on the University campus, during which some property was touched by them, they were subsequently sent home. But on resumption, the students were required to present an authentication-of-good-character letter from eminent persons in the society, parents, as well as senior academics, before they could re-register as students of the university, for they were



deemed to have violated their matriculation oaths by the violent demonstration. BMI was usually at his office to give letters to those students whom he could vouch for in terms of good character. As a result of BMI's center- of- the- right ideological stance on burning socio-political and economic issues, he had the disposition to subject all proffered solutions to rational analyses and arguments. Ideological sectarianism for him compounds problems rather than solve them! So, over time, and given any issue, one could have predicted on which side BMI would be, in case he was to be approached for his own opinion on the matter.

I believe this type of stable disposition to worthy issues measures up to Aristotle's index of stable character. And even in popular perception, BMI is not one to be seen as fickle in his ways and views. In spite of this *apodeitical* disposition to matters of life and existence, BMI's display of *emotive spontaneity* towards the student who was bereaved or sick, and in consequence, could not submit his or assignment on time, shows he was also a *caring* teacher, acting as a parent (*loco parentis*) towards his students, and even to others in the community as we shall see later.

The same can be said to be his attitude to the newly employed teaching assistant whom he spontaneously called and advised on how to conduct himself and manage his time as a teaching assistant in order to maximize the opportunities offered him for academic training and career advancement in the University. The display of *emotive spontaneity* is even more pronounced in the cases the doctoral candidate whose program was not recording expected rapid progress. He called him unsolicited, advised him on the way forward, and even offered to take up his matter with his supervisor, if need be, in case the problem persisted.

In characterizing the Departmental meeting scenario at which a curriculum review was proposed for the Literature arm of the Department, it is noteworthy that it was a formal setting, with a presiding chair in the Head of Department, who was an appointee of the Vice Chancellor, the repository of epical power and academic leadership in the University. Then there were the academic members of the Department considered as colleagues, though some of them were BMI's erstwhile students. It could also be seen as a friendship setting because everyone is in the Department to earn a living, develop a career and further it by serving the University. But none can do those alone, but needs the cooperation of one another and the dialectical impetus between one another, on the one hand, and the formal structure of other Department, on the other.

So this Department, like any other, is a scene for friendship and submission to authority at the same time. In speaking at this scene, BMI was speaking both to the authority of the University and colleague/friends. He could be understood as telling the authority that its proposed curriculum review would neither serve the interest of the students, nor the career interests of academics in the Department, because in either case, provincialism would predominate, whereas the people concerned are aspiring towards academic cosmopolitanism. And to the colleague/friends, he could be understood as telling them, "let's be mindful not to hand over our mainline interest to the authority, to do what it would". Those explain the trenchant pitch of his voice as he made his points, and the reference to history of the emergence of eminent authors of African descent, to show that the curriculum from which they benefitted, similar to the one about to be reviewed, but adapted from the ones in the European metropolis, has not failed. The usage of such word as '*emergency Afrocentrics*', '*insidious suggestion*', '*academic midgets*' in his contribution were because he was talking to friends, before whom he had to '*say it as it is*', in accordance with Emerson's *norm of Truth*. It was also a way of drawing the attention of his colleagues to dictum that there



are *two opposed arguments of equal cogency of either side of a question*, and that is why they had to thread carefully, and strike a balance between the two. Apparently, these words were not used to bruise anyone's ego, but a way of jolting all and sundry concerned to reality of the situation as friends would do to one another, or each other.

In considering the academic review scenarios sketched above, we meet more complex situations than the one already discussed, in terms of the web of relationships. BMI found himself in a very awkward interface of official and human relations. This time around he was the Head of Department, thereby carrying the face of officialdom, and representing the University authority in the Department, and as the Head, he was *toshepherd* the Department such that it moved forward in actualizing its mandate of qualitative teaching, research and service to the community. In short, he should show academic leadership and administrative competence!

At the same time he had to relate with his colleagues cordially as much as possible, while trying to actualize the mandate of the Department. Expectedly, these departmental colleagues would want to seize every available opportunity to gain academic exposure and career advancement. Sometimes the way they wanted either or both may not tally with the relevant university regulations on such matters. Howsoever, as the Head of Department BMI had to straddle between these antithetical interests, in ways that would maintain the friendliness existing in the Department. It is also noteworthy in this context, that academic review is a potentially emotive exercise, for whichever way it goes; it is a vote of confidence in the academic undergoing the review. Hence, any negative assessment is bound to cause emotional ripples and charges of bad faith on the part of the assessor (s).

When therefore, BMI looked at the *curriculum vitae* of the colleagues seeking promotion to senior academic positions, and declared them outside the area of competence of the colleagues, that they should go back and refocus their research endeavors, he was complying with Emerson's norm of Truth in friendship: "Let there be truth between us two forevermore", which implies the other Emersonian dictum: "there should be no predetermined limits to what may be said and heard- a friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him, I think aloud." But the apparent question in the minds of these colleagues would have been, "what is the truth? Is the truth as declared by the Head of Department, or as can be inferred from the rules and tradition of the University guiding the academic review?" There can be no *yes* or *no* answer to this question; the only thing one can say is that there can be reasonable arguments on either side of this matter. And that is where the problem lies, for whichever way one looks at it each party may have a case to push! This is the possible reason why the candidates for the academic review rejected BMI's perception of their CV, and insisted that they had a good case for their next promotion. They argued that we are now in the age of interdisciplinary research and nobody's research effort should be discounted because he has tried to carry out research across the disciplines.

This reaction was also in the spirit of openness in friendship as advocated by Emerson, because BMI as a friend now, not as the Head of Department should be open to dialogue and exchange of ideas on all matters affecting his colleague friend.

And this is where the Emersonian norm of Tenderness should have been brought to bear on the situation, especially on the part of BMI. Rather than do this, he pointedly told one to relocate to the Faculty of Education and the other to the then Department of African Languages and Literatures, where Yoruba Language and Literature were the dominant academic pursuits. Thus in elevating the norm of Truth in the context, the norm of Tenderness was risked, thereby engendering rupture in the friendship relation between senior and junior colleagues, leading the charges of bad



faith, persecution, on the one hand, and laziness, obduracy on the other. It is in this kind of situation that Emerson talks of “the ideal friend is a sort of beautiful enemy, untamable, devoutly revered.”

As we say in our local aphorism, “*When a parent beats a child with the right hand, he brings him nearer with the left hand.*” Though paternalism is not here implied but eventually, the academic reviews were done; the colleagues promoted, and have since gone to higher levels in their career. But it stands to reason to believe that BMI’s *exaltation of the norm of Truth* when he did, helped in a dialectical way to advance, not only the colleagues directly concerned, but also others who were watching from the sidelines, in their careers in the University.

It remains to say something about those who were perceived to be on incessant leave to the detriment of duties in the Department and the University. This is a view hole through which we can see BMI’s attitude to rules of the University and obedience to them. An officer or academic is entitled different kinds of leave meant to achieve different purposes, but all for the overall enhancement of his or her welfare. These different kinds of leave complement one another in diverse ways. For instance an officer, who had taken a study leave with or without pay, can request for a leave of absence, at the end of his/study leave. Thus the leave opportunities can be juggled to achieve certain intended effects in the professional or personal interest of the officer(s) concerned. And in the middle ‘80s and early ‘90s when career prospects for University workers shrunk commensurately with the Nigerian economy, usage of leave chances became veritable ways for the quest for greener pastures, either in Nigeria or in foreign countries, and it is on record that some never returned from the leave granted by the University. After waiting patiently for a long time, to allow some of the absconding officers to make good their obligation to come back, but to no avail, the University had to sack the offenders.

It was against this background that we have to measure BMI’s attitude to leave usage among his colleagues. He was worried that the leave opportunities given by the University to staff members were being abused, which should not be so. There was nothing bad in one who had enjoyed a leave, to come back and resume his/her duties, in order that his/her other colleagues would have a similar chance to enhance themselves. For any person to think that he/she had a special prerogative to enjoy leave interminably amounted to treating the other members of the Department who were always on ground bearing the burdens of the one on leave, unfairly! So, the issue for BMI was that of right as it was of justice. Thus, if in the course of exercising one’s right, one breaches the same rules that conferred the rights in the first place, and treats others as means for actualizing one’s ends, thereby treating them unjustly, then, such rights should be abridged. This explains why he pointedly told the colleague who was always on leave that when next such an application for leave reached his table again, it will be thrown into the trash can. He was saying, in other words, that the rules of the University, from which people derive rights and privileges, in order to ensure equity and justice for all concerned, must be protected.

It is noteworthy, that in insisting that University rules must be observed in all cases and at all times, BMI was not protecting rules *qua* rules, but as tools for facilitating and instituting justice for all! It then appears that underneath his hardline insistence on the superordinate position of rules in the affairs of University and staff, lies an affectionate use of justice to advance the career welfare of all colleagues, young or old. Justice, as we have seen in the theories above, is one of the core values of friendship, and one of the supreme ideals human societies.



In insisting that rules must apply in transacting the business of the University, and in this case the business of enjoying leave opportunities, BMI was trying to avoid one predicament: being made to determine the appointment of a colleague because he or she breached his/her obligations under the rules guiding leave grants. This would have been a very unpalatable piece of cake for him, because it would have meant that he failed in duty as Head of Department, by looking the other way while the wound was festering, and now being made to clear the mess. This mess could have placed him in moral dilemma of determining the appointment of a colleague whom he ought to have guided well, but failed to do so, just because he, as Head of Department was tame, in order not to hurt the feelings of the same colleague then. For BMI, this would have been a double failure, both of character and administrative competence. Both would be beneath BMI! For the purposes of preventing such ugly scenarios, he had to shout and talk when he should, which is one hallmark of friendship that matter.

Evidently, therefore, there are at least two levels on to assess BMI in his dynamic scenarios- the empirical and core value levels. The empirical level is as described in the heuristic models, and at this level the character of BMI appears to contradict itself. To some, he is a very good, affectionate but candid person, and to others he could pass for a wicked fiend in the mold of *Julius César's* Caius Cassius, who does not want the progress of other persons, and would want everybody to get whatever he had achieved through the hard way, like him. So, at this level, BMI like Plato's Socrates appears to be different things to different persons, and so like an African Masquerade, he is cryptic and can be viewed from multifarious angles, each yielding a different meaning. This may as well be so, and everyone is entitled to his/her opinion, at this level, which according to Plato is the realm of infirm belief, for Heraclitus, it is the way of seeming in which people revel in contradictions, and for Xenophanes, the realm in which no person can claim he knows, for knowledge ultimately belongs to God.

The aim of this paper is not to reify the knowledge of who BMI is to celestial realms, but to argue that what appears to be the contradictory perception of BMI's character coalesces into one wholesome view at the *core value* level. *The core value* level for this purpose is undergirded by the various theories of friendship, which provide criteria for *a-friend-in-need* platform for managing the various dynamic scenarios in which the heuristic models of BMI were active participants.

What emerges in all these theoretical excursions is that BMI engaged in virtuous actions in the full knowledge their natures and purposes, and did so from the crust of a stable character of an *agathos*-wholesome good person, an *omoluabi*-implying what the Yoruba mean when they say, *iwalewa*. This inference tallies with the common and popular perception of him, that he is not fickle in his opinions and views on issues; which in turn implies that given any issue and its context, one can almost accurately surmise what his position would be!

In the diverse scenarios in which we saw BMI interacting with people, scenarios in which *friendship* ultimately provide a high relief against which to understand these interactions, his guiding compass were Emerson's *norms of Truth and Tenderness*, one compelled him to say the truth at all times, no matter whose ox is gored, and the other, nudged him to say the truth and pursue virtuous actions with tenderness, which in the Nigerian parlance, we term *human face*. Whether he did so at all times and in all the scenarios, does not detract from the truth and virtue he was either pursuing or trying to inculcate. But in variably he did so in most cases. For example, BMI would meet a colleague, with whom he had an altercation the previous day, and who would not greet him, and BMI would query: *se tori oroananyelofeki mi mo?* In other words,



“is it because of the talk we had yesterday that you don’t want to greet me again?” A query which reflected his innermost disposition- *friends can quarrel over issues and still remain friends*. This is at the core of the *norm of Tenderness*.

From *Tenderness*, we move to *empathy*. In these scenarios, was BMI empathetic in his interactions? That is, as a *carer* or care giver, did he show positive emotions, did he immerse himself in what one would call *situated empathy*? Empathy defined by the context, such that we can say that BMI felt the pain or joy of his colleague-friends. This question has been answered by the analyses of the various scenarios above. In virtually all the cases, but especially in the cases of the doctoral students whose program was unduly delayed, the case of Victor and the story of examination results processing, and even in the academic review cases, BMI showed endemic empathy.

But one thing was apparently not realized, especially by some other parties in the scenarios: Given his experience of the workings of the University and the universal expectation of what a worthy academic should be, he played the role of an *omniscient observer* in the scenarios. The kind of knowledge possessed by an old man about whom the Igbo say, “what an old man sees sitting down, a child cannot see even if he/she stands up.” In all the scenarios in which BMI must have been branded “a bad man”, especially on the empirical level, he was acting from his *omniscient perception* of the University rules, regulations, and traditions, as well as, his inestimable knowledge of how young academics should acquire research trajectories and enduring skills. In this regard one surmises that there was an *epistemological gap* between BMI and the parties that branded him an irritable old man, because of his *exaltation of the norm of truth* in their cases. Now that the scales have fallen off their eyes, they are also seeing now, what BMI *saw*, then, *sitting down*, and both the individuals and the whole system are better for it.

As Plato has argued in his colorful dialogue, the *Protagoras*, all the virtues are united. For instance, as he contended, one cannot be *just, pious, temperate, truthful*, without being *courageous*, and all these virtues are ultimately united in the knowledge of the *Good*, in so far as it is attainable. Evidently, BMI’s exaltation of the *norms of Truth and Tenderness* in his interactions with people, in the course of his career, shows that he is courageous. Even in his expression of tenderness, and exhibition of empathy, he was courageous, especially after a serious altercation, with someone, over issues of principle(s), followed by accusations of insensitivity by the person who apparently thought he/she was being persecuted by BMI, he went ahead to empathize with him/her. Partly because having an *omniscient bird’s-eye-view* of the situation, he knew then that his young friend had a *partial understanding* of the matter. Assuming the young friend had a *comprehensive view* of the situation; charges of persecution or insensitivity would not have arisen, rather, he would have been grateful, for as the stoics maintained, “that which we do not know its purpose in the universal scheme of things, we call evil.” But Zeus, who is omniscient, and knows the position of each thing, even the drop of a pin in the universe, knows that what is evil to man, conduces to good ends in the entire map of universal destiny. BMI is not Zeus with reference to the universe, but could be *zeus* with regard to the scheme of things in the University, which his young colleague-friends did not understand then.

Some of these attributes, especially those deployed in the quest for truth and justice in a friendship relationship, can be destructive of the entire enterprise. But they define the dialectics of friendship in which BMI was a participant. It was such that the deployment of the critical and searching attributes of his character in the friendship relationships, they were contingently destroyed, to be rebuilt of a higher qualitative, redemptive, and therefore, ennobling level for all the participants. One and all persons



who dueled with BMI, is now a better person on all fronts, than he or she was before he/she came under the searching eyes of BMI.



Benedict M. Ibitokun: The Cerebral Guardian of Ethereal Words of Life

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A Festschrift is a collection of essays in honour of a scholar. In the academic tradition, it is a proper way to recognize the immense contributions of high-class intellectuals, in the sharpening of the lives of those young learners that are committed to their care. It is also an attestation to their contribution to knowledge and the overall development of society in general. The etymology of Festschrift is Germanic, in a country that worships altruistic scholarship and functional productivity.

A festschrift therefore, in honor of Professor Benedict M. Ibitokun, to mark his exit, his retirement from active lecturing service, after decades of meritorious service, is a sensible project, and I feel honoured to be a part of it. This is because BM (as he is popularly called) is a tireless teacher, an astute leader of men and a highly cerebral motivator whose large footholds bestride many areas of human knowledge. Like the Colossus of Rhodes, Ibitokun towers higher than most of his peers, many of who merely pass under his wide open legs. He is a polyglot with English and French languages contesting for supremacy in his linguistic repertoire. Other languages in which he is comfortable are Portuguese, Spanish and Italian. He is a Professor of English, African and Comparative Literature who also regularly examines doctoral theses in French language and Literature. BM's knowledge of his native Yoruba Language, Literature and culture is legendary. He is not only a speaker of many languages but also a practitioner of the cultures which the languages encapsulate. He is deeply rooted in the African cosmological view of life, its cultural norms and values and the essence of the human self. With a burning passion for teaching, he disseminates high-class information and resource materials to his students and those that listen to his numerous lectures. A firm believer in the sanctity of African culture, he often condemns the intrusion of extraneous cultures into Africa and the consequent corruption they bring to the continent.

As a natural teacher (teaching is in his genetic make-up) BM enjoys teaching. His performance heightens when the students go along with him and they both operate on the same frequency. His dexterous handling of topics that are regarded as difficult, especially in Poetry and Criticism enhances mnemonic lucidity. He simplifies without omitting key points. That is Ibitokun in the classroom. In his pedagogical profession of research findings and in his creative Art endeavours however, BM is not as simple. He propounds hypotheses and theories that require articulate mental acumen to comprehend. His theoretical positions are not easy to grasp at a glance but require deep considerations and meditation to decipher. His poetry sometimes borders on the bombast, like those of Gerald Manley Hopkins or the African William Shakespeare (WS) Wole Soyinka. The latter appears to be Ibitokun's creative model. No doubt, Ibitokun is a word-smith. The morphology of his language attests to this. This is more pronounced in his poetry. In the alluring ambience and warmth of the forge, a smith may drift to transcendental enclaves, temporarily oblivious of his ordinary, earthen base.

It is our belief that Art, if it is to communicate with the masses, needs to go to simple pedestrian levels. Any Art that has a message for the masses cannot but do this. This problem was faced by late Christopher Okigbo, one of the best Nigerian



poets. When Okigbo wrote his poems prophesying war, very few people understood him because of the pedantic, high-flown language. By the time he realized this and changed to simple language the prophesied war had already commenced and it was too late. He was a very sad victim of the Nigerian civil war¹.

Bernth Lindfors, piqued by the non-communicative cryptic lyrics of Wole Soyinka calls on the latter to “come home”, that is, to come down to the level of the masses. He compares some of Soyinka’s cryptic lyrics to the colourful but meaningless howlings of lunatics in the streets of Lagos and Ibadan². He regard Soyinka’s lack of clarity as a “tendency towards semantic anarchy”³. Chinweizu et al too regards writers who communicate in cryptic codes as suffering from Hopkin’s disease⁴.

We detect the tendency towards esoterism in BM, and we psychoanalyse this to be a natural trait of a man who operates above his peers as a result of his training and natural endowment. There is a need for him to condescend to a level where he would be able to communicate with the average intelligentsia. This view is not that of just an individual, but is based on an opinion poll conducted among academics and post-graduate students. A lecturer lamented that BM is gradually going along the same path as Soyinka in his writings.

BM is not only a writer, he is in Niyi Osundare’s neologism, also a “Righter”⁵. He fights for the enforcement of human rights. He denounces very vociferously all forms and traits of injustice, cheating, oppression and indecency. In his younger days he used to be very assertive and very demonstrative in his condemnation of any form of misdemeanor. Towards his retirement however, he seemed to have relaxed into a kind of functional stoicism – no longer so openly confrontational, but bitterly calling the attention of the younger generation to the prevalent culture of corruption, indiscipline and injustice, since he believes it is they who could (and would) make a change. We are able to observe this trend in B.M. because this researcher has known him for well over three decades! B.M. was this writer’s teacher at undergraduate level in 1978. In 1992 B.M. masterminded how this writer was appointed as an Associate Lecturer to teach Oral Literature in the Department of English of Obafemi Awolowo University. In the year 2000 he supervised this writer’s Ph.D thesis. In the course of interactions over the years, we have known BM in Ile-Ife, in Ibadan, in Lagos, in Ketu and in Benin Republic. There were therefore ample opportunities to observe this great teacher and role model from various angles.

We shall presently examine critically some of Professor Ibitokun’s major contributions to human knowledge and social development, in both critical and creative art works and also in service to society.

Always bubbling with great intellectual energy, Ibitokun not only presented an invaluable and prodigious thought – provoking, reality-invoking inaugural lecture, he went on to give other post-inaugural lectures which he presented in different academic circles, especially at the Federal Universities in Ile-Ife and Ibadan. Some of his academic colleagues were flabbergasted: how would a professor present three standard inaugural lectures, when some professors retire without presenting any, and many others present inaugurals that are mere formalities, in terms of substance? A group of very senior academics discussed the issue in a relaxed atmosphere over some bottles of beer. One of them opined that probably BM is not satisfied with his real inaugural lecture and so decided to make it up with the post-inaugural lecture series. Another one quickly chipped in that BM’s inaugural lecture in September 2000 was equally very solid, and was the talk of the campus when he presented it. The third one then asked rhetorically:



Then what does he want again with these lectures. Does he want to be Deputy God (Academics)?

That is the charismatic enigma called BM, at his intellectual quintessence, as viewed by his academic colleagues.

Firmly rooted in the cultural conventions of the Yoruba race and that of traditional Africa on a macrocosmic level, Ibitokun often laments the prevalent cultural decadence that permeates most African societies. He speaks of contemporary realities when:

... everything, instead of spiraling into the pinnacle of the ideal and the transcendent, seems to be going awry, nose – diving, so to say, into the nadir of stench, decadence and wastefulness, a situation we all intriguingly welcome with an amazing, masochistic fit.⁶

In examining the dialectics and apparent paradox of tradition and modern values, Ibitokun is pragmatic. He does not see culture in mere orchestration of traditional lore by African writers, but as an on-going process of dialectical self-amelioration and self-development – what the Latin poet Cicero calls “cultura animi” – the husbandry or tilling of the intellect or mind.⁷ Tracing the etymology of culture to Greek, Latin and French origins, he sees culture as meaning the systematic training and development of the mind whose attendant dividends are sharpening and fine – turning of moral and aesthetic standards.⁸

According to him, culture conditions the intellect. It “has to do with the ways by which the geo-centric man on this earth attains holistic, paroxysmal standard for better living.”⁹ He sees culture as a process that thrives on subjective or individual paradigms. It is a form of personal activity that leads to intellectual, moral and aesthetic perfection.¹⁰ He is of the opinion that all the prevalent societal vices occur because of the failure of culture and the imbibement of foreign cultures which are meretricious and unsuitable for the African continent. In teaching, promoting and practising culture, BM is unequivocal. A devout Catholic, he also reveres traditional African religions for the roles they play in society. He recognizes the prominence and powers of witches and wizards, holding them in very high awe and esteem. He never refers to them without chanting their praise names. He even published an article in the 55th volume of *Nigeria Magazine* on “The Praise – names of ‘our mothers’ in Efe Performance.” He sees them as a power block that serves as checks and balances to oppressive tendencies in the society. In his zeal to promote culture, BM single-handedly built the multi-million Naira Gelede house in his home town, Sabe, where he is also a chieftaincy title holder. Gelede is a cult of the mothers, originally designed as a check and balance on patriarchy and the iniquity of gender inequity that is common in most human societies of the world. It is the Ketu – Yoruba people’s design to enhance the power of women in the society. In Gelede art, women are supreme. Cynosure of all eyes, the Gelede masquerade performance is a combination of aesthetic entertainment, social satire and functional spirituality. Ibitokun is a cognoscenti, one of the few guardians of the word, a sacred keeper of the knowledge of ethereal reality.

Occasionally in class lectures, public lectures and seminars, Ibitokun releases some of the sacred facts to his students, colleagues and audiences. One of such occasions was the first Faculty Distinguished Lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan on



7th May 2008, titled “The Universe we Live in as a Symphony of many Contrastive verses.”

In this presentation, BM traversed various areas of the humanities. In his own words:

...to x-ray a kind of metaphysical knot which exists and ought to exist between the nature of the world and our basic human behaviours and propensities.¹¹

The lecture which is contained in a monograph examines human language and behaviour in linguistic and literary terms across the ages and continental boundaries, in the works of writers. Utilizing the cosmology of various human societies as portrayed in different literary works, BM examines such issues as the dualist or triadic composure of being in man. Commenting on the prevalent gender ideology, he avers that there is equality and complementarity of the sexes, according to God’s design. He condemns the debased concept that sees the female gender as inferior, and meant to be marginalised. He identifies the Ketu-Oodua culture as one in which women have devised ways of dealing with such phallogocentric ideologies. One of such ways is the Gelede/ Efe performance in which, through dances, ritual drama and entertainment, a practical politics of female self- defence and self- assertion has been developed. He sees racism as a syndrome of a genetic virus, and citing the works of Arthur De Gobineau and other rabidly- racist ideologues, he exposes the stupidity in regarding a race as inferior to others. He concluded the lecture by admonishing world nations and communities to borrow a leaf from nature, and be guided by its peace and harmony. He regards Nigeria’s multinationalism, multiculturalism and multilingualism as aspects of nature which instead of tearing the country apart, should be a strong factor of national integration and diversity – borne unity.

In another scholarly work *African Drama and the Yoruba World view*, Ibitokun examines, in detail the Yoruba cosmology. Utilizing the works of major African playwrights like Wole Soyinka, Tewfik Al- Hakim, Ama Ata Aidoo, Femi Osofisan, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and others, he examines the issues of life, death, reincarnation, will power, feminism, heroism, fate and the supernatural. Having made the Yoruba world view on these issues clear, he compares these views with others across continental boundaries.

Ibitokun’s invaluable researches on Gelede masquerade arts and the ethereal masochistic arts of the “mothers of the Earth” (witches) is contained in his *Dance as Ritual Drama and Entertainment in the Gelede of the Ketu, Yoruba sub- group in West Africa*.

Operating on the theory of relativism in effectively understanding a work of art, Ibitokun dismisses the ideas of M.J.C. Echeruo and Ola Rotimi since their ideas are based on Attic, Aristotelian models which are already outdated in modern conception of drama. Proposing a new poetics of African drama, Ibitokun regards Aristotle’s *Poetics* on the African stage as a misnomer and believes that any theoretical paradigm that is based on it cannot be fully relevant or effective in evaluating African drama. The truism in this observation is obvious. Aristotle wrote *The Poetics* several centuries ago, based on a study of existing models of plays in the Greek society. He was obviously oblivious of Africa or of later developments in dramaturgy. Ibitokun asserts that, although the Gelede masquerade dance is not patterned after conventional models of drama, it is nonetheless a viable drama of an African people. He picks flaws in the pioneering efforts of Henry John Drewal and Margaret Thompson Drewal