



Marcelian Intersubjectivity and the Quest for National Co-existence

Abstract

In era occasioned by the rise of identity conflicts and cumulative social fragmentation, the question of co-existence remains essential to the survival of multi-cultural societies. Nigeria, with its vast ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, symbolizes both the potentials and the dangers of such plurality. While legal and political agendas have attempted to manage these transformations, a deeper, more existential crisis endures; one entrenched in the destruction of authentic human relationships and the objectification of the 'Other'. The paper argued that achieving true inter-ethnic diplomacy, national integration, and peaceful co-existence goes beyond a mere change of structures and profuse rhetoric about national harmony. Rather, it requires a re-engineering of how individuals perceive and engage one another across conflict lines. This transformation in perspective is essential for fostering genuine connections and understanding among diverse groups. In the light of this need, the paper explored Gabriel Marcel's existentialist notion of intersubjectivity, as a pathway for reclaiming the moral and interpersonal foundations for national co-existence. His intersubjectivity offers both metaphysical and ethical frameworks that tend to challenge instrumental and depersonalized modes of relating, by calling instead for openness, fidelity, and a shared being. Within the Nigerian context, this reorientation entails both personal and collective responsibility to rehumanize the 'Other' and to rethink of the polity as a space of mutual recognition. The paper concluded that repositioning the 'Other' in our consciousness through Marcelian intersubjectivity offers a viable philosophical contribution to the ongoing quest for meaningful and sustainable national coexistence.

Keywords: The Other, Intersubjectivity, National Co-existence, Relational Ethics, Reconciliation.

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Introduction

Nigeria is at a critical point in its history, a country torn between the promise of its pluralistic identity and the enduring reality of disunity. With more than 400 languages and 250 ethnic groups, the nation is widely recognised for its diversity, which unfortunately, is also the source of national tensions. Consequently, the country has become a fertile ground for mistrust, exclusion,

and bloody conflicts rather than a source of strength and mutual enrichment. More so, persistent ethno-religious conflicts, regional secessionist movements, and the leadership's ongoing inability to forge a unified national identity based on respect for one another are hallmarks of the nation's post-colonial past (Osaghae 12). Again, at different times, the political elites have taken advantage of ethnic

and religious allegiances for partisan gain, further entrenching divisions and reducing co-existence to a fragile and superficial aspirations

Numerous interventions have been proposed, and some implemented. From fiscal, political, and constitutional restructuring to national conferences, and inter-ethnic/interfaith dialogue initiatives. Yet, these measures, while not without merit, frequently address the structural symptoms of disunity without grappling with the deeper philosophical and ethical questions at its core. What does it mean to live with the “Other” in a shared nation-space? What kind of human relationships are needed to sustain a truly inclusive polity? In Nigeria, the Other, be it a person from a different ethnicity, faith, or cultural background, is often not encountered as a subject, but rather as a label, a stereotype, or even a threat. The lived experience of many citizens is thus, one of alienation and objectification, where identity is reduced to difference – and difference is viewed through the lens of fear or competition (Ehusani 56). Within this context of ethical estrangement that this seeks to confront this deeper crisis, by turning to the existential philosophy of Marcel, whose concept of intersubjectivity offers a powerful framework for rethinking national unity and peaceful coexistence. Marcel critiques the modern tendency to reduce human beings to functions, roles, or data. He rejects such an approach as “technocratic objectification” and instead calls for a recovery of the human person as a “thou,” not an “it” (Marcel, *The Mystery of Being II* 148). His notion of intersubjectivity rests on the

idea of presence, availability (*disponibilité*), and participation in the mystery of the Other’s being.

This paper assumes that understanding and applying Marcelian intersubjectivity is a key to freeing present-day Nigeria from its current deplorable social condition. By emphasizing the sacredness of human encounter and the ethical imperative of openness to the Other, Marcel’s philosophy challenges us to move beyond mere tolerance or co-existence defined by avoidance. Instead, it calls for a radical reimagining of the community as a space of ethical commitment, relational fidelity, and mutual presence. Such a perspective does not negate the need for political reform or institutional justice; rather, it deepens it by grounding co-existence in the metaphysical reality of a shared humanity. Hence, the task before us is not only political but also philosophical: to reclaim the Other in a Nigerian public life, is not a problem to be solved but a person to be encountered. This paper explores how Marcel’s vision of intersubjectivity can contribute meaningfully to this task. The discussion is guided by three central questions: What ethical failures underlie Nigeria’s crisis of co-existence? How does Marcelian intersubjectivity reframe our understanding of a community and the Other? And what practical and philosophical insights can this offer toward a more humane and sustainable vision of national unity?

The Crisis of Co-existence in Nigeria

The failure of co-existence in Nigeria is not a simply an accident of history, nor

is it just a result of flawed institutions. Rather, it is a deeply rooted crisis with moral, historical, and ontological dimensions. While it is often enclosed in terms of political instability, ethnic rivalry, and economic inequality, these manifestations are symptoms of a deeper malaise: the erosion of an ethical and existential bonds that make co-existence not only possible but meaningful. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has struggled to transform its colonial inheritance into a cohesive national identity. The colonial strategy of divide and rule deliberately heightened the ethnic and religious distinctions, embedding mutual suspicion within the fabric of the nascent state (Osaghae 45). Post-independence leaders, rather than transcending these divisions, habitually reproduced them within the agenda of federal competition, zoning, and ethno-regional patronage. As a result, public discourse in Nigeria is frequently filtered through the prism of identity politics, where national belonging is subordinated to ethnic affiliation, and solidarity is fractured along religious and regional lines (Suberu 29).

These divisions are not purely political, they are existential. Nigerians often experience one another not as fellow citizens sharing a common destiny, but as strangers and even enemies who happen to share the same geopolitical space. The Other is rarely encountered as a person to be understood or respected, but more often as a category to be feared, managed, or excluded. In this climate of suspicion, community life is diminished, and the ethical demand to be present to the

Other is replaced by withdrawal, indifference, or hostility (Ehusani 62). The resulting culture is one where superficial tolerance is mistaken for genuine peace, and where co-existence is maintained only by silence or distance, and not by understanding or engagement. Violent conflicts across the country illustrate this ethical void. From the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast to the armed herders' attacks in the Middle Belt; from secessionist tensions in the Southeast to environmental agitations in the creeks of the Niger Delta; and religious genocides in Plateau and Kaduna states, the failure of co-existence manifests in bloodshed and displacement. As Terzungwe Inja has observed, the constant conflicts that continue to erupt in all parts of the country are a symptom of a dysfunctional citizenship system —where people who feel discontented with the lack of inclusion in national affairs tend to express themselves through violence (9–11). More so, these conflicts are fuelled not only by material grievances but by an inability or refusal to see the Other as a co-subject in a shared national project. Emmanuel Edeh rightly captures, "Nigeria's crisis is at its core a moral crisis; our failure is not just of policy but of heart and of vision" (14). In essence, Edeh is arguing that Nigeria's path to true healing and development must begin with a renewal of moral consciousness; a reclamation of values that affirm human dignity, mutual responsibility, and the ethical obligations we owe to one another as fellow citizens. Without this, structural reforms alone are insufficient.

What is missing in Nigeria's discourse on unity is a philosophical anthropology that affirms the irreducible value of the human person. A technical, legal, or economic approach to co-existence cannot succeed unless it is grounded in an ethical vision of relationality and presence. Without this, no amount of dialogue or reform will suffice. It is precisely at this point that Marcel's existential ethics becomes a valuable resource. His philosophy calls for a return to being-with-the-Other in a mode of fidelity, trust, and a shared mystery which is a much-needed corrective to Nigeria's depersonalized and adversarial social fabric. This paper contends that the restoration of co-existence in Nigeria must begin not with policies or power-sharing formulas, but with a moral reawakening; a rediscovery of the Other as someone to whom we are bound not by proximity or necessity, but by the very structure of our being. This shift requires a new language of relationship, one that transcends tribalism, sectarianism, and utilitarianism, and that opens up a space for authentic encounter and ethical solidarity.

The Ethical Presence and the Relational Being of Marcel's Intersubjectivity

Marcel's philosophical vision is a robust affirmation of intersubjectivity, a mode of being that resists the fragmentation of modern existence and insists on the ethical and the metaphysical significance of human relationships. Unlike many existential thinkers who centre the self in isolation, Marcel situates the self within a web of relations that are ontologically

fundamental and ethically demanding. His concept of being-with-others (*être-avec*) is not a secondary social phenomenon but a constitutive feature of what it means to be human. For Marcel, intersubjectivity is grounded in availability (*disponibilité*), a disposition of openness to the Other that transcends mere functional interaction. Availability is not simply a physical presence or a utilitarian attention; it is a gift of the self, a readiness to be touched, changed, and even inconvenienced by the reality of the Other. This kind of presence, Marcel argues, is an ethical posture, an affirmation of the Other as a mystery to be encountered rather than a problem to be solved (Marcel, *The Mystery of Being I* 37). In a world increasingly defined by objectification, efficiency, and anonymity, Marcel's insistence on presence serves as a quiet but powerful protest.

His distinction between the "I-It" and "I-Thou" modes of relation parallels Martin Buber's thought, but Marcel pushes the implications further by rooting this relationality in a metaphysics of hope and fidelity. The "I-It" relation, according to Marcel, reduces persons to functions, roles, or threats, precisely the kind of reduction that is operative in the Nigerian social context where ethnic and religious identities often become fixed categories rather than living persons. In contrast, the "I-Thou" relation affirms the Other as a subject whose presence calls forth a moral response. Marcel's thought also carries a spiritual dimension. In his view, true intersubjectivity gestures towards the transcendent. To be authentically available to another is to

be open not only to that person but to a deeper order of being, a sacred participation in the mystery of existence itself. Hence, for Marcel, relational being is not only ethical; it is metaphysical. It reveals something about the nature of reality: that we are not isolated monads but beings-in-communion (Gallagher 66).

This notion challenges the atomistic individualism and utilitarian calculations that dominates the modern political life. In the context of Nigeria's co-existence crisis, Marcel's intersubjectivity offers a counter-ethic to the prevailing logic of suspicion and self-interest. Where the Nigerian society categorizes the Other based on region, religion, or class, Marcel invites a deeper encounter grounded in presence and mutual recognition. This approach does not erase differences but situates it within a framework of ethical commitment and shared humanity. In a fractured nation like Nigeria, where difference is often weaponized and the Other is viewed as a competitor or threat, Marcel's intersubjective ethics urges a recovery of the human face. It calls for Nigerians to resist the tendency to instrumentalize relationships and instead cultivate a culture of presence, trust, and availability. As such, intersubjectivity is not an abstract philosophical notion. Rather, it is a concrete ethical imperative with transformative implications for how Nigerians might reimagine their social relations and national identity.

Reclaiming the Other in the Nigerian Social Context

The Nigerian social scenery today is one marked by the erosion of trust and the deepening of divisions. As explained earlier, this environment does not reflect a mere failure of governance or economic disparity; it points to a deeper existential and ethical rupture. Within this context, Marcel's notion of intersubjectivity offers a transformative lens through which to critique the prevailing relational structures and propose a path toward authentic co-existence. To "reclaim the Other" in Marcelian terms means to move beyond viewing people as abstract categories or faceless groups such as "Northerner," "Igbo," "Christian," "Muslim," or "herder" and instead encounter them as unique, irreplaceable beings with intrinsic worth. Marcel warns against the "technocratic" view of human beings, where people are evaluated not in terms of their humanity but in terms of their function, utility, or threat (Marcel, *The Mystery of Being I* 88). In Nigeria, this attitude pervades the political and the social discourse, where demographic identities are often treated as political capital or security concerns rather than as human communities with histories, hopes, and dignity.

This objectification of the Other sustains a cycle of alienation and violence. When the Other is perceived not as a subject but as a "case" to be managed whether in counter-insurgency strategy, ethnic quota systems, or economic planning, then moral indifference becomes systematized. Within such a paradigm, atrocities are excused, forced

displacements become invisible, and hate speech gradually becomes part of every day's discourse. Marcel's philosophy challenges this by demanding a fundamental reorientation; to see the Other as someone to whom one is ethically bound, not by contract, but by the shared mystery of being (Marcel, *Homo Viator* 53). This reorientation is not sentimental or utopian. Marcel recognizes the reality of fear and difference but insists that true human co-existence is only possible where there is availability, a deliberate choice to remain open and vulnerable in the face of the Other's presence. In Nigeria, this would mean cultivating spaces for both the literal and the symbolic where genuine dialogue can occur, where narratives of pain and identity can be shared without dismissal or politicization. It would involve dismantling the systemic structures that perpetuate "we-versus-them" mentalities – such as exclusionary zoning policies, ethnically based party systems, systematic ethnic marginalization, and discriminatory resource allocation.

Moreover, reclaiming the Other involves the development of a moral imagination capable of empathy and solidarity. This is especially urgent in a country where mass suffering has become a political abstraction. Ehusani notes that, "The Nigerian condition is one of moral desensitization where tragedy no longer shocks, and the death of the Other is merely a statistic" (49). Marcel's thought calls Nigerians to resist this dehumanization by embracing a posture of presence, a concept that entails not just being near

someone, but being truly with them in attentiveness, care, and ethical commitment. Most importantly, this reclamation must also confront the spiritual void in the contemporary Nigerian society, where religion often serves sectarian rather than unifying purposes. Marcel's intersubjectivity is implicitly spiritual, grounded in the belief that each person carries a transcendent mystery. Reclaiming the Other, therefore, means acknowledging that every human being reflects something sacred, something beyond comprehension, control, or utility. This act of recognition has the potential to renew Nigeria's moral fabric with a spirit of reverence, humility, and ethical responsibility, virtues that have been largely eroded by the widespread cynicism, pervasive fear, and the dominance of political self-interest.

In essence, Marcelian intersubjectivity invites Nigerians to rehumanize their social fabric. It shifts the conversation from rights and entitlements to relationships and responsibilities. It asks not only, "What should the state do?" but also, "How should we be with one another?" In doing so, it provides a powerful philosophical framework for rebuilding the moral architecture of co-existence in Nigeria, not through enforced unity or ideological conformity, but through a deep, patient, and hopeful engagement with the Other as a co-bearer of the human condition.

Rethinking National Unity

In contemporary Nigerian discourse, unity in diversity is often brandished as a matter of national pride. Government

documents, school curricula, and public speeches repeatedly invoke this mantra. Yet a closer scrutiny reveals that this idea is far from the truth in practice. Unity is merely a form of force tolerance; a fragile arrangement of mutual forbearance rather than a genuine acceptance or mutual engagement. Tolerance, in this context, functions as an unwritten agreement to endure the presence of the Other while maintaining existential and psychological distance. While this model may sustain a superficial peace, it ultimately reinforces separation and fails to cultivate the deep, ethical foundations necessary for enduring co-existence. Marcel's notion of presence offers a richer and more demanding alternative. For Marcel, presence is not simply a physical proximity but the act of truly being with another in a way that honours their full humanity. Presence entails vulnerability, attentiveness, and what Marcel calls *disponibilité*, a form of availability that opens the self to the Other without domination or fear (Marcel, *The Mystery of Being I* 109). In this framework, co-existence is not a policy or a programme; it is an existential and ethical act rooted in a shared ontological mystery.

In Nigeria, where ethnic, religious, and regional divisions have calcified over decades of violence, mistrust, and political manipulation, such a shift is both radical and necessary. The model of tolerance, as currently practiced, often institutionalizes distance through structures such as the so-called Federal Character Principle, zoning, and quota systems — mechanisms intended to

manage diversity and prevent marginalization — but which inadvertently reinforce separateness and competition. As Eghosa Osaghae argues, these approaches “tend to reduce national identity to a sum of competing sub-nationalities, each demanding its due rather than committing to a shared moral vision” (112). A Marcelian ethics of presence challenges this instrumental view of the Other. It calls for a mode of national unity that is not based on utility, fear, or strategic balance, but on the recognition of the Other as a subject whose life and dignity matter intrinsically. Such a recognition demands policy reform, as well as a deep philosophical reorientation, and the willingness to see national unity not as the erasure of difference, but as the patient work of building relationships across board.

Within the Nigerian context, this involves confronting the painful histories of marginalization and state violence, such as the Biafran War, the Middle Belt conflicts, and the ongoing armed herders' attacks against pastoralist communities across the country. A Marcelian approach does not ignore these traumas; instead, it insists that true presence involves a shared confrontation with suffering. As Marcel notes, “to be present to someone in their suffering is not simply to witness it, but to suffer with them in a way that affirms their irreplaceable worth” (Marcel, *Homo Viator* 75). As such, National healing, therefore, requires more than commissions and white papers, it demands a communal willingness to listen, mourn, and affirm the humanity of those whose stories have long been

silenced. In this way, presence offers not just a critique of tolerance but a deeper vision of what co-existence could mean in Nigeria. It reimagines unity not as uniformity or quiet compliance, but as a dynamic and ethical engagement rooted in hope. As Marcel maintains, hope is not optimism but “a trust in being,” a belief that human relationships, even when fractured, can be mended through mutual availability and moral courage (Marcel, *Homo Viator* 58). Such hope is essential for a country whose citizens have grown weary of the broken promises and performative unity.

Ultimately, to move from tolerance to presence is to recognize that the Other is not a threat to be contained but a mystery to be welcomed. It is to affirm, in Marcelian terms, that co-existence is not just possible, it is necessary for the realization of our shared humanity. In this lies the true promise of national unity: not a nation stitched together by fear, but a people bound by the profound and sacred responsibility to be present for one another.

The Ethical Turn: From Objectification to Encounter

One of the most profound contributions of Marcel's philosophy to the discourse on co-existence is his critique of objectification and his call for a relational ethics grounded in encounter. Marcel was deeply concerned about what he termed the “technocratic spirit” of modernity; a mode of being that reduces human persons to functions, roles, or data points (Marcel, *The Mystery of Being I* 145). This reduction, he argued, leads to depersonalization,

where the Other is seen not as a subject to be engaged but as an object to be managed or feared. In a fragmented society like Nigeria, such objectification manifests in ethnic profiling, religious stereotyping, and regional distrust, all of which hinder the possibility of authentic communal life. In Marcelian terms, objectification is a metaphysical error with ethical consequences. When we relate to others merely as “cases” or “representatives” of a group for example, Tiv, Hausa, Igbo, Fulani, Christian, Muslim, we deny them the fullness of their subjectivity. We place them in categories rather than engage them as persons. This is particularly evident in political rhetoric, where the entire populations are often reduced to statistics or security threats. For instance, the portrayal of certain ethnic groups as inherently violent or the instrumentalization of religious identities for electoral gains reflects a deep ontological and ethical rupture (Osaghae 98).

Marcel offers an alternative vision: the encounter. Unlike objectification, which distances and isolates, encounter draws one into a space of ethical responsibility and mutual recognition. Marcel insists that in genuine human relations, “I am only myself in relation to another who is also a self” (Marcel, *Homo Viator* 85). This perspective is echoed in the African philosophical tradition as well. Thinkers such as John Mbiti, with his oft-quoted phrase “I am because we are,” affirm a communal ontology where being is co-constituted through relationship (Mbiti 141). Thus, Marcel's existential intersubjectivity resonates deeply with

the indigenous African worldviews, providing a fertile ground for rethinking co-existence in Nigeria. In Nigerian, the ethical turn from objectification to encounter demands a radical redirection on how people perceive and treat each other across fault lines. It is not enough to claim national brotherhood while perpetuating structural injustice or indifference. True encounter requires openness, humility, and the courage to transcend inherited fears. This is especially urgent in areas torn by violence, whether communal clashes in Plateau State, insurgency in the North-East, or separatist agitations in the South-East, where the Other is increasingly seen as a threat rather than a neighbour.

Education and civil treatise must play a central role in this ethical turn. Classrooms, public forums, and media spaces can be transformed into sites of encounter rather than battlegrounds of ideology. This will involve confronting the painful narratives but also creating spaces for shared storytelling, where communities can begin to see themselves reflected in the lives of others. As Marcel reminds us, "To be truly present to someone is to affirm that their life matters as deeply as mine, even if I cannot fully comprehend their experience" (Marcel, *The Mystery of Being I* 152). In this ethical agenda, reconciliation is not a political agreement but an ontological affirmation; a declaration that despite our histories of harm, we remain capable of re-encountering each other in hope. It requires not only structural changes but a profound metaphysical

healing, where citizens begin to see each other not as abstract categories but as fellow wayfarers, each bearing the mystery of being. This re-humanization of the Other stands as the moral imperative of national co-existence. Nigeria's future, Marcel would argue, hinges not only on the ballot box or security apparatus but on the courage to reclaim the Other as a partner in the shared project of being. In a world increasingly driven by alienation, this turn to the ethical is both a return to our deepest humanity and a path toward genuine national healing.

Hope, Brokenness, and the Possibility of Reconciliation

Marcel's philosophy is rooted not only in a deep awareness of the brokenness of human existence but also in an unwavering commitment to hope. In *Homo Viator*, Marcel's portrays human beings as wayfarers; existential travellers who remain perpetually *en route*, consciously aware of their vulnerability, limitations, and finitude, yet oriented toward transcendence and deeper meaning. As he notes, "Perhaps a stable terrestrial order can't be put into place unless man keeps an acute conscience of his journeying condition" (*Homo Viator* 432). This notion of brokenness is not pessimism; it is a metaphysical recognition of the human condition and the fragility that defines all meaningful relationships. In the context of Nigeria's fragmented social context, Marcel's insights into brokenness and hope offer a powerful framework for imagining reconciliation that is neither naïve nor abstract but

ethically grounded and existentially honest.

Nigeria has witnessed decades of ethnic violence, religious intolerance, secessionist movements, and systemic injustice. These ruptures have left deep wounds in the collective psyche of its citizens. To speak of reconciliation in such a setting risk sounding idealistic or even dismissive of the real pain unless it is framed within the recognition of shared brokenness. Marcel's metaphysical anthropology invites us to begin here, with the acknowledgment that all human beings are vulnerable, wounded, and in need of one another. In this shared woundedness lies the first possibility for genuine reconciliation. Marcel distinguishes between two kinds of hope: "functional hope," which is goal-oriented and often contingent on external success, and "ontological hope," which is a deeper disposition rooted in trust in the mystery of being (Marcel, *The Mystery of Being I* 162). Ontological hope does not guarantee outcomes; rather, it affirms the possibility of renewal even in the darkest of times. For a nation like Nigeria, torn by historical grievances and mutual suspicion, what is needed is not simply policy-driven optimism but this ontological hope, a belief that co-existence is still possible, not because of political convenience, but because of a shared humanity that transcends our divisions.

In Marcel's thought, hope is intimately tied to fidelity and presence. To hope is to remain faithfully present to the Other, even when reconciliation seems impossible. This is not sentimental tolerance but a moral stance

of availability (*disponibilité*), a willingness to be open, to listen, to forgive, and to journey with others toward healing (Marcel, *Homo Viator* 109). In practical terms, this calls for leaders and citizens alike to cultivate attitudes that resist the logic of retaliation and scapegoating. It requires religious leaders to foster interfaith dialogue that affirms dignity rather than fuels antagonism; it demands that media narratives highlight stories of solidarity and compassion amidst conflict. Furthermore, reconciliation in Nigeria must move beyond institutional frameworks to touch the interpersonal and communal dimensions of national life. Truth commissions, peace accords, and development programmes are necessary, but without a transformation in how people relate to each other on the ground, in markets, schools, places of worship, and neighbourhoods, co-existence will remain superficial. Marcel's emphasis on presence reminds us that healing begins with the small but radical act of choosing to see and affirm the Other.

In the African philosophical tradition, reconciliation is often tied to the concept of *Ubuntu*, "I am because we are." This communal vision harmonizes with Marcel's intersubjective metaphysics. Both recognize that reconciliation is not a return to a past unity but the forging of a new solidarity through ethical commitment and shared vulnerability (Tutu 35). Thus, the path to national coexistence lies not in forgetting our fractures but in walking through them together, guided by hope that is grounded in love and fidelity. Finally,

Marcel's philosophy challenges Nigerians to reject despair and embrace the hard but yet noble task of rebuilding relationships. Reconciliation, understood in this existential-ethical sense, is not a destination but an ongoing task, one that requires humility, courage, and above all, the hope that even the most divided society can rediscover its common humanity.

Toward a Philosophy of National Co-existence

As Nigeria continues to grapple with a deeply fractured national identity, Marcel's philosophical insights offer not only a metaphysical and ethical critique but also a constructive vision for reimagining co-existence. This vision does not emerge from abstract theorizing alone but is deeply rooted in the lived reality of human interdependence, suffering, and the hope for restoration. Marcel's legacy, particularly his reflections on intersubjectivity, availability (*disponibilité*), and the primacy of being, provides a transformative lens through which Nigeria's pluralistic tensions can be ethically and metaphysically navigated. One of Marcel's most profound contributions lies in his rejection of objectification, the tendency to reduce persons to functions, roles, tribes, or statistics. In Nigeria, this objectification often takes ethnic and religious forms, where the "Other" becomes a Tiv, Idoma, Hausa, Igbo, Fulani, Christian, or Muslim, before they are seen as a human being. This reductionism facilitates suspicion, resentment, and violence. Marcel's intersubjective philosophy resists such

dehumanization by insisting that each person must be encountered as a thou; a subject with depth, dignity, and mystery (Marcel, *The Mystery of Being I* 138). For national co-existence to flourish, this ontological reorientation is paramount. Nigerians must learn to approach one another not from a place of utility or fear, but from a stance of openness, reverence, and ethical presence.

Moreover, Marcel's idea of availability challenges citizens to move beyond passive tolerance toward active engagement. True co-existence requires more than constitutional provisions or political slogans or a change of national anthem; it demands the cultivation of interior attitudes of listening, empathy, forgiveness, and solidarity. It is not enough for different groups to merely "co-habit" in peace; they must be willing to share in each other's struggles and aspirations. Availability becomes the posture through which mutual understanding is nurtured and trust gradually restored.

Another key aspect of Marcel's philosophy is his emphasis on fidelity, a sustained commitment to the Other even in times of difficulty. In Nigeria's volatile environment, where betrayal, political corruption, and distrust are a commonplace, fidelity serves as a revolutionary virtue. It insists that relationships, whether between individuals or communities must be anchored not in convenience but in ethical responsibility. To be faithful in Marcel's sense is to remain present, hopeful, and willing to heal even when the wounds are deep. This fidelity is not only personal but can be social and

political. National leaders, institutions, and civil society must demonstrate fidelity to the Nigerian people by creating spaces where reconciliation is not only preached but practiced.

Furthermore, Marcel's legacy compels a rethinking of national identity. The prevailing model of identity in Nigeria often leans on exclusivist categories and historical grievances. But Marcel proposes an identity that is dynamic, relational, and open to the Other. He invites us to think of being not as a static possession but as a gift to be shared. National identity, then, is not something to be defended against the Other but something that must emerge in communion with the Other. In this sense, unity in Nigeria is not a political achievement but a metaphysical and ethical task, one that demands humility, openness, and hope. Marcel's thought does not offer quick fixes to Nigeria's socio-political crises. What it offers is far more radical; a call to reimagine being-together in light of a shared humanity and an ethical commitment. Co-existence, from a Marcelian perspective, is not a negotiation of differences but a transformation of hearts and minds. It is the courage to encounter the Other not as threat or rival, but as a fellow wayfarer on the journey of existence. This reimagining begins in classrooms, churches, mosques, marketplaces, and family homes, where individuals learn not only to tolerate but to see, hear, and be present to one another. It requires a shift from cynicism to hope, from isolation to community, from indifference to compassion. Marcel's metaphysical and ethical vision thus

remains urgently relevant, offering a humanizing path forward in Nigeria's quest for peace, justice, and unity.

Conclusion

The above exercise was focused on the Nigerian experience of diversity and how, instead of being a source of strength for national development, it increasingly tends to generate avoidable conflicts, destruction, and underdevelopment. It was observed that to set the country on the path of peace and prosperity in the midst of so much political, religious and ethnic plurality, mere chanting of mantras is inadequate –because the root of the problem seats deeper than mere rhetoric, it is an existential and moral disjuncture. Hence, Gabriel Marcel's notion of intersubjectivity was engaged to provide a social, political, and ethical framework for peaceful co-existence in the country. In the light of the evidence available, even where conflicts have bred high levels of animosity, Marcel's thought seems to provide hope for reconciliation and rebuilding. Thus, by repositioning the 'Other' in our consciousness, through Marcelian intersubjectivity, Nigeria stands a chance of victory over darkness, in the ongoing quest for meaningful and sustainable national coexistence.

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Marcelian Intersubjectivity and the Quest for National Co-existence

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