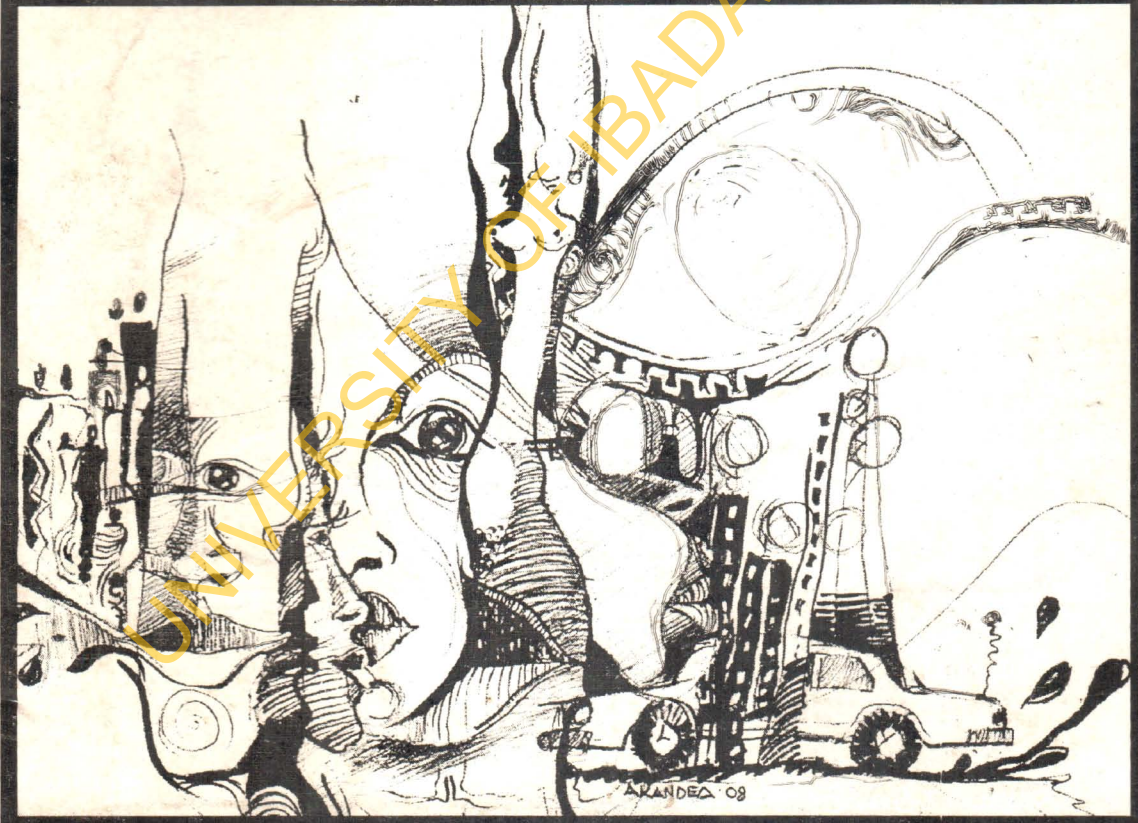


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IMAGES OF POST-COLONIAL IDENTITIES

LAYIWOLA Dele

In philosophizing over issues of heritage and identities, we are bound to traverse the vexing issues of TIME as a constant and as a phenomenon. The issue of time is a recurring principle of a cause precipitating an effect, and of an effect continually reinforcing its cause. Thus we can classify time as Time Past, Time Present and Time Future. But there is a fourth element which is Time Redeemed.

Traditional concepts of thought believe that time flows backwards. But does it also flow forwards? If it does, why is it that we remember only the past and not the corresponding future?

If we look at the way by which we have counted dates and time in the last twenty centuries, we seem to have reckoned time in the sense of causes leading to corresponding effects. Let us refer to this as a *linear concept of time*. But we may also look at time in ways by which cause and effect are cyclical. This makes it difficult to determine the exact sequence of cause and effect. In traditional parlance we do not know whether the chick precedes the egg or vice versa. But the states of matter and material universe continue to be constant in terms of solid, liquid and gas whereby the three states are reversible.

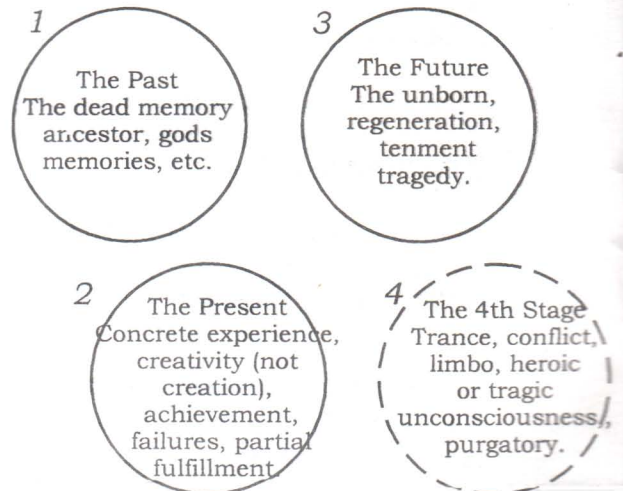
Like the chick-egg controversy, the seasons, in its repetitive phases, also constitute what we may call *non-linear or archetypal time*.

A combination of both linear and archetypal time or cyclical time will then result in the formation of a chain (see figs. 1&2).

Figure 1. *The Ontology of Historical Time*



Figure 2. *The Ontology of Archetypal Time*



It is left for us to explore the ways in which image-making, visualization and photography fit into the model we have described above. We choose to conceive of photography and visual art depending on which side of the coin we choose to look at. Stephen Hawking has tried to explain this movement of images in Space and Time with what he calls "The Arrow of Time". He argues that there is a visible pattern in which as time progresses, there is increased disorder: famine, wars, earthquakes, floods and sundry accidents. This disorder is called *entropy*. This predictable movement or order of time distinguishes the past from the future. Hawking distinguishes three arrows of Time:

1. Thermodynamic arrow of time: where disorder or entropy increases as time progresses.
2. Psychological arrow of time: the direction of time whereby as time progresses we are only able to remember the past and not the future.
3. Cosmological arrow of time: is the condition whereby the universe is expanding rather than contracting.

Let us, at this point, imagine the footage of a teacup falling off a coffee table and is thereby broken into pieces. Run the footage back and forth and see the cup go forward and backward. In the empirical world, the cup cannot run to gather its own pieces again. This is because the second law of thermodynamics, says that in any

closed system, disorder or entropy always increases with time. But archetypal or cyclical time tends to guarantee that all that goes comes back again.

In summarizing these ideas, the notion of post modernity captures the sense of flux and uncertainty which is a source of both anxiety as well as excitement in our cultures, and which continue to be reflected in the study of 21st century sub-cultures, super-cultures and anti-cultures. In this regard, the universalization of gender-unisex clothes, unisex toilets, transvestism and women's lib, are totalizing aspects of modernity. These continue to challenge the frontiers of post-colonial and post-modern man, and thought and the production of ideas within historical realities and geographical contiguities.

Theoretical as Hawking's theory of time may appear, we are able to extrapolate from it that what constitutes the movement of matter in space and rarefied time is analogical to what constitutes the movement of living matter- that is, mankind- in concrete time and space. This is what constitutes cultural or existential space in which identity-specific events occur. It is the arena where we do our day-to-day living and where we try to make sense or nonsense of our lives. Where, as in the case of the teacup, we mould an object or an idea for it (that is where we are culturally productive); then we make recourse to the third arrow of time in that

all productions and productivity-material or immaterial – including the language we speak – are all domiciled in the realm of culture. Modern man lives in a culture, sub-culture or anti-culture which has created him and which he in turn acts by recreating it, contorting or distorting it, or perhaps destroying it.

If he acts positively on it as scientific designs as artistic creativity does, his universe expands. If he contorts it without any form of finality, then he will continually remember the past. If he destroys the essence of it by negation, then the thermodynamic arrow of time applies whereby disorder or entropy increases with the passage of time.

In the context of Fine Arts, sculpture, painting and photography attempt the arrest of material time in space on canvass or on celluloid. These arts are thereby able to capture time past and time present. In the same context, musical notes and notation, dance, mime and acting are evanescent and cannot be held down by time. They therefore have to be reproduced anew each time. Attempts are made to hold them down by memory or by mechanical means and recording. These strive to capture aspects [though not essence] of the future and the possibilities that abound. This is why Aristotle says that he respects History for capturing the past but he prefers poetry for capturing the future:

The difference is that the one tells of what has happened, the other of

the kinds of things that might happen. For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concern with universal truths, history treats of particular facts.

In conclusion, we must appreciate the division of culture into high, medium and mass or popular depending on how may have enriched our world and us. But there are aspects of the genius across the various classifications. There must be a way of theorizing unity whilst allowing for the complexity of the modern post-colonial world. In photography and visualization or image-making, we gradually move away from the concept and conception of the one-dimensional man. Nature and culture have progressed through the third, fourth and fifth dimensions of space or time where space constitutes depth as time constitutes possibilities.

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