

# HEISENBERG

*By Osamudiamen Joseph*

On some days, when I'm caught in Lagos traffic after a long, harrowing day and my body is putting up futile resistance against the barrage of carbon monoxide (mixed with the stench of sweat and desperation mixed with noise pollution that carries to the depths of space), I half expect to see none other than Sisyphus in the lane beside mine, relentlessly pushing that boulder up Mount Olympus. Permanently hunched over, fingers bleeding into the dirt.

The man would stop all of a sudden— hands would let go of the titanic stone for a hot minute— and then raise his head in mighty contemplation, accentuating the picture by placing his arms akimbo and letting out a sigh every now and then. Striking The Thinker's famous pose, he'd welcome the arrival of an epiphany, one that would no doubt free him from his shackles, from the curse of the petty gods. It begins with questions like: Who am I? What do I want? Am I destined to do this forever? Or is there more out there?

Seeing this sight, I sigh with relief. Finally, an end to capital A—Absurdity has arrived. I can storm the halls of the intellectual dead (Nietzsche, Camus, Sartre, LeGuin) at long last, rousing the sleeping giants to life with my newfound knowledge, with the definitive answer to Life, the Universe and Everything.

I conjure up an image in my head of the man breaking his burden with his bare hands, reducing the boulder to dust first and then atoms, and then storming off the scene to free Prometheus and further complicate this whole thing. But I'm prone to fits of maladaptive daydreaming, and should know better by now.

An impatient horn jolts me out of my reverie. A moment passes before I look again. Sisyphus heaves a sigh, then two, then resumes his position, his fingers slipping into familiar patterns, into the deep impressions on the rock's surface. The Human Condition carries on without remedy. Futility reigns supreme.

Chaos rules again with an iron fist. The thin fabric of reality snaps back to its place without so much as a loose thread threatening to upset the natural order of things. And with a grunt and a Sisyphus disappears from view.

"Change?" I ask the belligerent conductor for the umpteenth time as I come to. He smiles, a really wide, sheepish smile, and then winks at me.

"Change." I repeat, unfazed.

"Change never dey oga mi. I no sabi whether e go dey before you drop sef. You go calm down well ni o. Na everybody for dis bus dey find change."

Of course.

I couldn't decide whether I was going mad with hallucinations myself. Just like the raging winds and dark skies couldn't decide if they were going to culminate in a thunderstorm. Or the abiku couldn't decide between the domain of the dead and the land of the living. Or Nigeria couldn't decide if she truly was the giant of the continent or a scared rabbit, fleeing from the noise of sudden thunder, halfway through a heart attack.

It was just another evening of deadly uncertainty in the heart of Lagos, zoo city.

I absentmindedly recite Hund's Rule of Multiplicity, Murphy's Law, the lyrics to Michael Jackson's Beat It, the Gettysburg address, and John 3:16, as the bus chugs forward, barely able to keep itself together, bringing me closer and closer to a destination filled with equal parts hope and despair. Schrodinger would have a field day with this place.

In the distance, a dog lets out a wolf-like howl. A bad omen on any day.