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Philosophy and Literature in Jorge Luis Borges: *¿Aliados o Enemigos?*

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Allies or Enemies?

Philosophy and literature figure prominently in Jorge Luis Borges's fictions, but his understanding of their relationship ushers in important questions. How does Borges view the interaction between philosophy and literature? Are philosophy and literature allies or enemies in Borges's fictions? Or is the age-old clash between philosophers and literary authors just another narcissism of minor differences wherein the perceived masters and fools are equally eloquent and empty in their overestimation of arguments and stories to give purchase to claims of truth?¹

Certainly, there are thinkers who view the relationship between philosophy and literature as productive and useful. Martha Nussbaum argues that fiction provides an opportunity for select authors to serve as allies

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to philosophers through artful portraits of philosophical problems.² The central tenet of Nussbaum's claim is that some forms of literature have an instructive capacity to provide readers imaginative scenarios for salient features of traditional philosophical writing. In a similar spirit, Arthur Danto asserts that literature is, *inter alia*, a kind of "mirror" which is capable of leading readers toward a reflective transfiguration of self-consciousness.³ Stanley Cavell states that concerns over philosophical skepticism led him to be "pushed to pieces of literature to find the problem of the other,"⁴ specifically looking to the works of William Shakespeare for an attempt to overcome this puzzle. Frank B. Farrell maintains that "the space of literature" clears the way toward the fulfillment of a life well-lived, as well as promoting a human duty to preserve this meaningful means for the sake of future generations.⁵ And, more recently, Philip Kitcher identifies Thomas Mann as "a contributor to philosophical discussions" and treats *Death in Venice* as a philosophical exploration in its own right, subsequently pointing out a grade of "philosophical involvement" which can confer the status of philosophy on certain works of literature.⁶ As their own work demonstrates, Nussbaum, Danto, Cavell, Farrell, and Kitcher see the relationship between philosophy and literature, and between philosophers and literary authors, as united in guiding readers to greater awareness and understanding. In this fashion, philosophy and literature lead to an *indicium* of truth, a sign, a discovery, no matter whether the relationship is by some turns supplementary, and by other turns complimentary.

In some cases, the disparity between philosophy and literature is methodological and stylistic, but not essential: Style can serve to communicate substance as well as accident. As put by Hans Georg Gadamer, "The difference between a literary work of art and any other text is not so fundamental" and "literature is the place where art and science merge."⁷ However, while Gadamer finds junctional overlap in literature between what C. P. Snow called the "two cultures,"⁸ insofar as this polymathic union is potentially propaedeutic, he also states that art and science have different cognitive loci and "claims to truth." Philosophy, affirmed in the ancient and modern world as the queen of, if not also the science of, all the sciences, has employed stringent law-like criteria to determine the truth-value of its statements, as well as the use of "immanent

critique” so as to circumvent the Scylla of dogmatism and the Charybdis of relativism, only to continue navigating through several Siren systems of truth.⁹ No less beguiling and contentious is trying to determine the truth-value of a proposition in a work of fiction, leading some, like Bertrand Russell, to argue that every proposition in Hamlet is false¹⁰—*et sequitur*, that fiction is a form of anti-truth.

The anti-truth argument against fiction relies on a contrast that is drawn between philosophy and literature. Philosophy, the argument goes, aims to advance our understanding of truth, of reality, of ourselves, and is valued accordingly. Philosophers traditionally put forward theses, premises, and arguments; writing more *à la lettre* than in *belles lettres*. A philosophy that fails to state precise theses or which argues poorly in support of them is subsequently devalued. In contrast to the aims for which philosophy is read, literature is read, and subsequently valued, for reasons that seem innumerable different (e.g., fanciful diversions, emotional arousal, cathartic feelings, imaginative counterfactuals, etc.).¹¹ Literature is thus set apart from philosophy by the anti-truth camp, which does not believe that literature needs to appeal to any notion of truth in order to derive value.¹²

Borges’s notions of truth in fiction, as well as in philosophy, locate value in an antinomial character, what he refers to as “*comic truth*,” which is a kind of creative stimulant owed to an astonishing capacity “to tolerate cyclical and contradictory representations.”¹³ Under this view, truth in fiction and philosophy is an artform that requires *technē* without *telos*, unless the final end which serves as truth culminates in paradox, which is neither truth nor end. Floyd Merrell writes about Borges’s art of truth by stating that he “creates by positing the equivalent of deductive hypostats while promising no truths; in fact, he customarily proceeds to demolish supposed truths,”¹⁴ and with regard to these unsupported hypostatic ideas Clive Griffin states that Borges does not so much compose his stories “as vehicles for philosophical ideas,”¹⁵ rather than appropriating such ideas as a *terminus a quo* for his fictions; two views which seem to place Borges outside of Nussbaum’s allies camp.

Seen in this light, philosophy is just what Martin Heidegger called *Bestand*,¹⁶ a raw material or resource for arbitrary use, in this case

writerly. However, Marina Martín argues that Borges's innovative infusion of philosophy into his essays and fictions, citing, for example, George Berkeley's and David Hume's opposing dialectic in "A New Refutation of Time" and "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," is not so much appropriation as it is the performance of apologetics. With regard to Borges's defense of this dialectic, Martín finds that in the latter, "Humor and imagination mix together in this story to unfold the metaphysical problems involved in idealism,"¹⁷ which seems to place Borges back in the powerful allies camp.

Framed within this contesting backdrop, I believe that Borges is uniquely situated as an author in the study of the relation between philosophy and literature. The reason for this is that he is a writer devoted to philosophy at a level bordering on monastic devotion. However, Borges also seems to oppose Plato's preference for "one who is willing to engage in discussion in order to look for truth, rather than someone who plays at contradiction for sport,"¹⁸ by constructing his fictions as maieutic labyrinths to help deliver a sense of astonishment by agitating determinate ideas of truth and reality. Moreover, the labor for this Daedalian¹⁹ gift seems to be suffered for the pleasure of a peculiar pair of recipients, namely, for a writer and reader who delight in the delivery of newborn uncertainty more than in the birth of reality.

Plato famously bifurcated the world into reality and appearance, the definite and indefinite, the immutable and mutable—and placed the mimetic image of literature in the lowest rung of reality while extolling philosophy (*dialectic*) as both the capstone and object of reality, for the unchangeable Form of the Good is nothing but *the object of philosophical knowledge* which sheds light on all our visions of other Forms.²⁰ However, perhaps knowing better than any other reader to abide by the Lawrencean dictum to "trust the tale and not the teller,"²¹ Borges is able to see straight through Plato's mythopoetic authorization of philosophy via the lie in words (*logois psuedos*) because words, whether used in literature or philosophy, victimize writers and readers alike as irremediable true lies (*alethos psuedos*). The upshot is that philosophy cannot stand on its own if supported only by technical arguments because it seems to need the rarefied myths and stories Plato called "useful fictions,"²² and

Borges admiringly remarks of this skillful, constitutive blend that “Plato could do both” (Heaney, et al., p. 75).²³

Shlomy Mualem notes how “Borges’ ‘philosophical fiction’ and Plato’s ‘intellectual dramas’ are perhaps the most intricate records in Western history of attempts to artfully interweave *mythos* and *logos*.”²⁴ Plato is commonly interpreted as spinning stories into his arguments, which implies a qualitative distinction until one sees, as Heidegger did,²⁵ and as I imagine did also Borges, that the opposition of *mythos* and *logos* is a but a clever and revolutionary artifice. For Borges, Plato is as much thinker as dreamer (*CON*, p. 160), as much a philosopher as a mythmaker, moving from using *mythos* for the sake of *logos* to, conversely, using *logos* for the sake of *mythos*, as he expressed in his panegyric passage on “Immortality” of the literary license Plato used in the *Phaedo* to tell of Socrates’s final moments.²⁶

Plato’s *Republic* also sets out to construct an Ideal city by having Socrates use stories and arguments via first-person narration. In his inimitable way, Borges also creates a world in Ideas using first-person narration in his story “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” but without the realist subterfuge, for while Tlön, like Plato’s Ideal city, is also supported by metaphysics, “metaphysics is a branch of the literature of fantasy.”²⁷ Plato’s *Kallipolis* and Borges’s Tlön are equally fantastical and unlikely ever to see the light of day. The ultimate Socratic ironization of philosophy is that it requires lies, stories, those mimetic and *unreal* constituents of language which, much like the series of dreamers in “The Circular Ruins,” are ontologically impoverished and thus constitutionally incapable of imparting reality, but rather only other unrealities.²⁸ And even the mature Plato admits in the *Seventh Letter* that written language is a destitute means to kindle the advent of reality and truth (341c).

Here one might argue that a great deal of Borges’s literary work is hostile to philosophy for the reason famously given by Ana María Barrenechea, namely, that he is a writer “pledged to destroy reality.”²⁹ That Borges’s auctorial aims differ from traditional philosophical writing is well documented. This is one reason why Bruno Bosteels has ascribed the term of “antiphilosopher” to Borges.³⁰ We can see how this appellation might refer, given that Borges’s fictions often challenge the conviction with which traditional philosophers have expounded their ideas

of truth and reality. However, is Borges “pledged” to destroy anything certain or real? Moreover, given his unconventional interpretation of philosophy, is he rather a pro-philosopher?

Consequently, the thesis I should like to defend is that Borges can satisfy *and* dissatisfy the allies camp because (i) while his fictions make use of a great many theses in the history of philosophy, they can be understood as allied with philosophy by providing the imaginative scenarios that Nussbaum believes are so necessary to this coalition; however, (ii) because his stories question philosophy’s hold on reality, they can also seem to fall into the enemies camp by countervailing any claim philosophy has on truth; although, (iii) ultimately, the manner in which Borges forges an enduring alliance between philosophy and literature will be for reasons not traditionally accepted by those in either the allies or enemies camps.

A Dialectic of Perplexity

Philosophy, wrote Plato³¹ and Aristotle,³² begins in wonder, puzzlement, and perplexity (*thaumazein*), not in certainty, which is its presumptive goal. Borges’s fictions accept the premise of the antecedent without any conviction of arriving at the consequent aim. Order, certainty, and invariance make not only for a dull world, but also lead to the disuse and eventual atrophy of the imagination in “the motionless and terrible museum of the Platonic archetypes.”³³ Chaos, uncertainty, and variance propel philosophy and literature forward, thereby motivating continuous creation and deliberation. Philosophy may well be born in wonder, but its *activity* dies in certainty, a moribund entelechy that can be suspended if held in a recursive state of wonder-begetting-more-wonder which can keep one philosophizing in a warren of aporias that are so beguiling as to not ever desire to leave. For example, in a revealing interview published in 1977, Borges states:

I suppose philosophy springs from our perplexity. If you read my works, my sketches, whatever they are, you find that there is a very obvious

symbol of perplexity to be found all the time, and that is the maze. A maze and amazement go together, no?³⁴

Borges's wordplay in this passage is a clever subversion of Plato and Aristotle, and deserves brief commentary. For Borges, a maze (a symbol of perplexity) is doubly *poietic*: It is created and creative, by the writer for the reader, resulting in amazement: a maze *ment*, the added suffix to "a maze" (Latin-*mentum*) confers a production, in this case, the making of stories from which to offer perplexities for the sake of engaging in the activity of philosophy.

Both Plato and Aristotle view *poiesis* as necessarily tied to *mimesis*, for nothing springs forth *ex nihilo* and thus must be modeled upon some action, image, or idea. I imagine Borges would agree with this view about the craft of making because he converts ideas from the history of philosophy into images to construct his stories: a *poieses* using puzzling *mimeses*. For example, as conveyed in "The Garden of Forking Paths," instead of writing a *Bildungsroman*, in which a narrator or character develops greater levels of self-knowledge, Borges composes a novel of puzzlement (*Verwirrungsroman*), a narrative that keeps his characters circulating within loops of uncertainties, a style described by James Irby as, "a constant dialectic of contradictory dualities."³⁵ Heidegger wrote that "philosophers are the thinkers *par excellence*,"³⁶ but for Borges, they are a puzzled lot. While this might be viewed negatively by those who seek to find literary allies for philosophies offering signs of reality, it comports with Borges's view of how philosophy thrives on doubt and uncertainty. Indeed, in the manner of the dialectical games of Tlön, specifically, through the method of negation, Borges views all of philosophy as persisting through the power of the negative, "[W]hen somebody refutes somebody else in philosophy, he's carrying on the argument" (Dennis Dutton, et al., p. 337), rather than ending it. For Borges, refutation does not eliminate a philosophical position, but rather keeps the activity of philosophy flowing forward. Jon Stewart makes the point that in the story "Funes the Memorious," Borges "alludes to Locke, and when we examine this allusion carefully we can see that he uses Locke's criticism of nominalism as his starting point here."³⁷ Hence, refutations, criticisms, and negations all help to propel a continuing dialectic

of perplexities, which can serve as fresh entrances into, and enduring alliances with, philosophy.

Subsequently, when a reader first enters into the “visible unrealities” (*irrealidades visibles*)³⁸ of Borges’s stories, she is, in all likelihood sublimely both puzzled and delighted by her encounter. David Foster Wallace writes that it is Borges’s fascination with metaphysics that gives his “stories their mythic, precognitive quality (all cultures’ earliest, most vital metaphysics is mythopoetic), which quality in turn helps explain how they can be at once so abstract and so moving.”³⁹ These sentiments were shared by Michel Foucault, who, in *The Order of Things*, reports his reaction to the categorial plenitude of “a certain Chinese encyclopedia”: “That passage from Borges kept me laughing a long time, though not without a certain uneasiness that I found hard to shake off.”⁴⁰

The reasons for this abrupt, yet satisfying, mystification with the typical Borges tale are legion, but can be attributed to the suffusion of philosophical *rompecabezas* (puzzles) into his stories, which are surprisingly alluring because they frustrate certain complacencies of traditional literary and conceptual categories. Yet for all of the uncanny elements in Borges’s stories, still do they seem reassuringly familiar because, as aptly conveyed by Paul de Man, “all have a similar point of departure, a similar structure, a similar climax, and a similar outcome; the inner cogency that links these four moments together constitutes Borges’s distinctive style.”⁴¹

Moreover, Borges’s stories are unusually brief, indeed, sometimes unexpectedly so, and narrative emphasis seems to be placed upon whimsical excursions, which frustrates the primacy of traditional Aristotelian plots. To give just two illustrations of this seeming fancy: in the wonderful, though wickedly named, portrait of thug-life “Monk Eastman, Purveyor of Iniquities,” the profluence of the story’s terminal conclusion is halted by the appearance of “a common alley cat, blissfully ignorant of death, was pacing, a bit perplexedly, about the body” of the story’s slain protagonist.⁴² Daniel Balderston has provided an instructive juxtaposition between Herbert Ashbury’s and Borges’s portraits of Eastman.⁴³ Whereas Ashbury employs a diegetic technique to narrate the story from within so as to drive the plot forward to the close of Eastman’s death, Borges uses a mimetic mode of storytelling to render

Eastman's ignominious end from a point outside the text in order to have the reader linger in the irony of a menacing brute who in life relished the company of pedigreed cats, is in death approached by a vulgar street cat, his *Doppel*-animal. In the former, time is followed linearly to the end; in the latter, time is suspended by a doubly suggestive metaphor pertaining to the character and to the plot.

Similarly, in the dream-like story "The South," Borges again halts the progression of plot to digress on how a huge black tavern cat goes about experiencing its life *ex tempore*, living, as he puts it, "in the eternity of the instant,"⁴⁴ which, like Eastman's animal totem being "blissfully ignorant of death," is another insertion of a lingering metaphor in a story where the lines of demarcation that would subtend fiction and reality, as well as the narrative past, present, and future are very much distorted. Through the two examples above—one, with the purveyor of iniquities lying prostrate in *pallor mortis*; the other, before the white-knuckle moments of Dahlmann's knife fight—we can view the point of these digressions finding value in the symbolic sense of the cats' living outside of time as a self-referencing metaphor for how the digressions themselves are placed outside of the forward flow of the plot by an author who seems to be stabbing at the heart of profluence by including these scenes around violent deaths.

Thus it is via textual encounters like these, and they are ubiquitous in Borges's works, that the reader enters a maze that entangles her at a story's every point, which is to say at no single point. And it is in this sense, as an invitation to wander around in wonder, that allows ideal readers like Errol Morris to enter the corridors of perplexity:

I first read ["Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*"] in the early 1970s, in the New Directions paperback edition of *Labyrinths*. I talked about it at length with my then girlfriend, the artist Sherrie Levine. The story deeply affected both of us, and it is arguable that it became a basis for some of her subsequent artistic work. Among other themes, the question of authorship.⁴⁵

Morris, a filmmaker of genuine philosophical enthusiasm, finds in Borges, who he considers "A genius among geniuses" (Morris, p. 177),

a clearer exposition of what he takes to be Thomas Kuhn's confused theory of paradigmatic incommensurability, "Kuhn resembles an addled version of Borges—without the irony, without the humor, without the playfulness" (Morris, p. 33).

That Borges's illusory fictions serve as plainer elucidations than that of the Princeton philosopher of science, whose writing style in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* has been described as "snappy...engaging...a page turner....engrossing" as well as being "easily comprehended by even the most non-science oriented social scientist,"⁴⁶ is clearly an abusive bit of irony by Morris. However, one can find less acerbic portraits of Borges's association with philosophers in, for example, William Gass's appraisal of the alliance between Borges and Ludwig Wittgenstein:

If, as Wittgenstein thought, "philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language," then Borges's prose, at least, performs a precisely similar function It is not the subject of these compulsions, however, but the manner in which they are produced, that matters, and makes Borges an ally of Wittgenstein.⁴⁷

Such a harmonious coalition stresses the poietic partnerships that are possible between literary authors and philosophers, its resulting impressions, and the *amazement* that binds allies; particularly, as Gass puts it: "Thus the effect of Borges' work is suspicion and skepticism" (Gass, p. 129).

Allies, of a Kind

Students of Borges's stories will note that while he is not a philosopher,⁴⁸ he deals *aesthetically* with philosophy by drawing from its fecund spring of ideas:

I have used the philosophers' ideas for my own private literary purposes....I have no personal system of philosophy. I never intend to do that. I am merely a man of letters. The same way, for example, that Dante used theology for the purpose of poetry, or Milton used theology, why shouldn't I use philosophy, especially idealistic philosophy, for the

purposes of writing a tale, a story? I suppose that is allowable, no? (Dennis Dutton, et al., p. 339)

As we have seen, Borges's fictions often serve as sites of delightful disruption, and in stark contrast to writers of the Realist tradition, he uses philosophy to set his works on the expressly unsteady edge of accepted systems of knowledge and reality. However, philosophy is not the only medium where from Borges uses ideas, which can be seen ranging over to the paradoxical practice of mathematicians providing rigorous proofs of inconsistent truths, which is captured in Floyd Merrell's attempt to "map connecting lines between Borges's work...and certain aspects of twentieth-century mathematics, logic, and physics" (Merrell, p. xiv). Among some of the relations Merrell investigates are the affinities between Borges's "The Circular Ruins" and Alfred North Whitehead's spatio-temporal concerns with "simple location"; Borges's "The House of Asturian" and "The God's Script" with Georg Cantor's theory of infinite sets; and Borges's antipodal stories "The Zahir" and "The Aleph" and certain parallels to Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorems. In all of these stories, Borges is not only seen as using certain mathematical ideas in his fictions, but also, recalling a criterion for allied membership, as providing striking narratives to stimulate what Daniel Dennett calls "intuition pumps"⁴⁹ to vividly illustrate astounding mathematical innovations. In *The Mind's I*, Dennett writes appreciatively that, "Borges draws our attention to different ways of thinking about oneself,"⁵⁰ *which is not limited to philosophical notions of the self, but applies no less to new ways of thinking about mathematics.*

N. Katherine Hayles provides an example of how the paradoxical model of Cantor's set theory can be thought about as mirrored in Borges writing:

Also possible are literary texts that try to re-create the continuum within the text. This immediately involves the author in paradoxes of self-referentiality, for the enabling premise that the text is part of the whole also implies that the whole can be contained within the part, leading to the infinite regress of a part containing a whole within which is contained the part.⁵¹

Hayles also writes that Borges is attracted to the interconnectedness and self-referentiality of field concepts, “because its discontinuities reveal that everything, including itself, is no more than a game” (Hayles, p. 138). Her allusion to a self-referential game is suggestive of mathematical Formalism, whose guiding idea is that mathematics is not a body of propositions representing an idealized realm of reality, but rather is like a self-contained game or set of rules, without harboring any ontological commitments to objects in reality.

In a provocative and suggestive passage, Hayles describes Borges’s writerly strategies in a way that seems to reflect that of mathematical Formalism:

This complex strategy (which may not appear in its entirety in any given story) has the effect of dissolving the relation of the story to reality, so that the story becomes an autonomous object existing independently of any reality. The final step is to suggest that our world, like the fiction, is a self-contained entity whose connection with reality is problematic or nonexistent. (Hayles, p. 143)

Borges’s stories, like mathematical algorithms, are not weighed down by any perceived correspondence to reality, but are rather free of such encumbrances. Can Borges’s writing be seen as allied with Formalism? Consider Alan Weir’s description of game Formalism:

The game formalist sticks with the view that mathematical utterances have no meaning; or at any rate the terms occurring therein do not pick out objects and properties and the utterances cannot be used to state facts. Rather mathematics is a calculus in which ‘empty’ symbol strings are transformed according to fixed rules. [Johannes] Thomae puts it this way:

For the formalist, arithmetic is a game with signs which are called empty. That means that they have no other content (in the calculating game) than they are assigned by their behaviour with respect to certain rules of combination (rules of the game).⁵²

Subsequently, game Formalists view mathematics as linguistic characters which can be manipulated within the confines of a game, as one

of many possible games, which is arbitrary and unrestricted. As Cantor himself famously avers, “the essence of mathematics lies in its freedom,” which means, as Morris Klein explicates, “that mathematics is distinguished from other fields by its freedom to create its own concepts without regard to transient reality.”⁵³ In other words, mathematics, like certain notions of philosophy and literature, is a discipline that can be read as independent of physical reality, and whose freedom is delimited only by the creative imagination of the human mind to produce what Mary Leng calls *useful fictions*: “Mathematical hypotheses, on my view, are best thought of not as truths by convention (for they do not have the status of truths), but rather, as conventionally adopted useful fictions.”⁵⁴

Useful fictions are not only found in mathematics, but also used in philosophy. We have already seen their place within Plato’s philosophy (*Republic*, 384cd) and have also noted how Borges is often read as employing a dialectic of Skepticism and Idealism in his fictions to question the essential features of external reality. Within these philosophies, the justifications given for Archimedean points of objective knowledge are also called to task as being mere fictions, which can be subsumed under the category of what Berkeley called “a fiction of our own brain”:

Upon the common principles of philosophers, we are not assured of the existence of things from their being perceived. And we are taught to distinguish their real nature from that which falls under our senses. Hence arises skepticism and paradoxes. It is not enough, that we see and feel, that we taste and smell a thing; its true nature, its absolute external entity, is still concealed. For, though it be a fiction of our own brain, we have made it inaccessible to all our faculties.⁵⁵

Borges, who was introduced to Berkeley by his father at the age of ten (Heaney, et al., p. 75), finds enduring themes in the bishop’s Idealism and Immaterialism, views which posit that one cannot conceive of an object or a sensible quality as existing unperceived: “Berkeley maintains that matter is a series of perceptions and that these perceptions are inconceivable without a consciousness that perceives them.”⁵⁶ Borges also alludes to Berkeley’s most famous thesis, “*Esse rerum est percipi*: perception is the being of things: objects only exist in so far as they are noticed: on this

genial platitude rests and rises the illustrious edifice which is Berkeley's system"⁵⁷; which prompts Gene H. Bell-Villada to remark correctly that:

Bishop Berkeley's absolute idealism, which holds that physical matter does not exist and that the universe is nothing more than a projection of our minds, is seldom taken seriously by philosophers today other than as a means of eliciting discussion. Berkeley's hypothesis and his defense thereof is a classic sophistry in that it accepts no arguments from outside its own thought-provoking *parti pris*. Because of its very outrageousness, however, absolute idealism can engender similarly extravagant, farfetched, and thought-provoking corollaries.⁵⁸

Following Bell-Villada, we can begin to see, recalling Nussbaum, how Borges can serve as an "ally" of Berkeley's Idealism within the provocative scope of his literary constructs. For not only does Borges artfully frame Berkeley's philosophy in his writings, but also such philosophies of *esse rerum est percipi* are entirely appropriate to fiction insofar as the "world" which fiction creates is ideally perceived by the reader, and in this perception there is nothing material whatsoever that lies beyond the fictional world. Here I might add that Borges shares with Paul de Man the view that "fiction asserts, by its very existence, its separation from empirical reality."⁵⁹ Indeed, this allied adoption of Berkeley into Borges's work produces a radical move insofar as, *pace* Realism, one's perception of fictional worlds need not be viewed as representations of sensory reality and that the order which is projected onto reality is nothing more than a confirmation bias that wants to find, as put by Donald Shaw, "a rigorously orderly world more acceptable than our own."⁶⁰

This is a key point to note, for it raises the question of whether there is a tension between reality and the words used to express it. If Borges's alliance with Berkeley has any bearing, then there would also appear to be an unbridgeable gap between reality and language. Is reality in any sense verbal? Sketched within Borges's writings is an answer that lends support for the Berkeleyan position against a materialist semantics, for Berkeley argued that the words a physical realist uses to describe external realities "have no stable essence in the nature of things,"⁶¹ which is espoused by Borges's declaration in his essay "Quevedo," "I shall not say that

[language] is a transcription of reality, for reality is not verbal,”⁶² as well as in his thoughtful caveat in “Avatars of the Tortoise”: “It is hazardous to think that a coordination of words (philosophies are nothing else) can have much resemblance to the universe” (*AT*, p. 114). But what of these coordinated words and how do they add to the dialectic of perplexity that Borges finds so valuable in his alliance with philosophy?

The Philosophy of *Not-As-If*

Several commentators note that the idealistic philosophy from which Borges draws posits our knowledge of things *heuristically*, that is, in the manner of *as-if* the things we perceive and conceive are real, for such things are merely analogous to images or pictures which we produce in order for us to have interaction with the external world.⁶³ Borges’s readers will also note that while these ideas provide amusing provocations for his literary imagination, his commitment to believing that they produce substantive claims or systematic accounts of reality remains skeptical: “Perhaps no systems are attainable, but the search for a system is very interesting” (Dennis Dutton, et al., p. 339).

The philosophy of *as-if* is posited most famously by Immanuel Kant in its analogical sense, i.e., in the mode of a leading “*as if*” something is real or true, without ascribing any reality or truth to the thing itself, for example, as used in his aesthetic and teleological theory of “purposiveness without a purpose” (*Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck*) and his use of a “guiding thread” (*Leitfaden*) in his historical essays.⁶⁴ Borges takes up the topic of guiding threads or leading clues in his poem “*El hilo de la fábula*” (The Thread of the Fable):

The guiding thread is lost; the labyrinth is lost as well. Now we do not even know if what surrounds us is a labyrinth, a secret cosmos, or a haphazard chaos. Our beautiful duty is to imagine that there is a labyrinth and a guiding thread. We will never come upon the guiding thread; perhaps we find it and we lose it in an act of faith, in a rhythm, in dreams, in the words that are called philosophy or in pure and simple happiness.⁶⁵

This passage is striking for how it seems to employ the trope of *as-if*, most notably in the poem's call to imagine that there is a thread to lead our way toward grasping reality. However, the most salient feature of the poem is that even the *as-if*, the imaginary thread spun by so many philosophers, along with the objective reality toward which we are being directed, is itself lost to those very same coordination of "words that are called philosophy." Not only does Borges cast doubt on the objective reality of the world, thereby positing the fictionality of the real, but I believe that he is also making, as seen in "The Thread of the Fable," a bolder claim: The reality of the world is questionable, and so is our guide to pretending that it is—"We will never come upon the guiding thread"—thus our guiding threads, our leading clues, our *as-ifs*, are also lost to us. In other words, the fable, the *as-if*, *pace* what Hans Vaihinger, building on William of Ockham's early engagement with *ficta*⁶⁶ and Kant's innovative use of the regulative basis of transcendental ideas as useful *heuristische Fiktionen*,⁶⁷ himself called "analogical fictions" (Vaihinger, pp. 25–32), is a misleading escort.

Silvia G. Dapía points out Vaihinger's view that "only what is perceived is true," although maintaining that fictions "can work *as if* true, even though false and recognized as false."⁶⁸ Such fictions are recognized as false because we create them out of practical need, which is expressed by Vaihinger via his quotation from Kant's unpublished 1791 *Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*: "Practically we create these objects ourselves, according as we consider the Idea of them to be helpful to the purpose of our pure reason...[In reality, however,] these ideas have been arbitrarily created by us" (Vaihinger, p. 304). For Vaihinger, the philosophy of *as-if* is meant to help lead the procedure "for finding our way about more easily in the world" (Vaihinger, p. 15). *Christine De Lailhacar* writes that "*Heuristics implies the legitimacy of an als ob* (as if) philosophy, which comes close to fiction."⁶⁹ However, in contradistinction to Vaihinger, who treats the *als ob* as consciously false presuppositions that nevertheless can prove utile and fruitful, I should like to add that Borges extends such analogical fictions in a double move that denies any legitimacy to this heuristic procedure—(i) not only to things and objects that are but fictive shadows, but also, more startlingly, (ii) to the fiction that we have reliable capacities to perceive, and thus know, such fictions as

well. How can perception serve as heuristically useful if the subjective apparatuses of perceiving and conceiving are constitutionally unreliable?

Dapía points out how in addition to Vaihinger, Borges drew admirably from Fritz Mauthner's critique of language (Dapía, p. 7), which casts additional doubt on how much faith we ought to accord to the guiding threads of empiricism and rationalism:

Mauthner coins the term "Zufallssinne" (*contingent senses*) to condense his conviction "that there are definitely forces at work in the real world that will never be able to generate sense impressions in us" (*Beiträge* 1: 360). Furthermore, since our reason rests on our sensations, Mauthner speaks of "Zufallsvernunft" (*contingent reason*), too (*Beiträge* 2: 689). Indeed Mauthner arrives at the conclusion that our access to reality is limited or restricted in two ways. On the one hand, as we have already pointed out, our sense apparatus selects certain aspects of the world while discarding others (*Beiträge* 1: 330- 31). On the other hand, our concepts also hinder our access to reality.⁷⁰

Given these doubts, uncertainties, and the contingencies of sense and reason, we can begin to understand how Borges takes any confirmation or refutation of the reality or unreality of objects and subjects to be but a procedural stratagem.⁷¹ The descriptive use of language, whether received from the senses or reason, will never be sufficient to describe reality, which is a problem not only for offering an objective take on reality, but also for any kind of Archimedean standpoint for subjectivity. Dapía is again insightful in her remark that:

Borges, who has already accepted Berkeley's claim that the external world is constructed out of our sense-experiences, now accepts Hume's claim that "there is not, behind the face, a secret self-governing our acts or receiving our impressions" and concludes: "We are only the *series* of those imaginary acts and those errant impressions" (Dapía, p. 84).

Here we note how Hume's refutation of Berkeley inspires Borges to erect the scaffolds of Skepticism and Idealism that will serve to "support" the world of Tlön. The contributions of Berkeley and Hume, the latter of which is famously attributed by Kant as interrupting his "dogmatic

slumber,”⁷² have the opposite effect on Borges, producing a Morphean usher to,

A world of evanescent impressions; a world without matter or spirit, neither objective nor subjective; a world without the ideal architecture of space; a world made of time, of the absolute uniform time of the *Principia*; an inexhaustible labyrinth, a chaos, a dream—the almost complete disintegration that David Hume reached. (*NRT*, p. 321)

Here it might again be claimed with Marina Martín that:

By not taking sufficiently into account the weakness of human reason and the narrow limits to which it is confined, we end up bordering and even finally diving into the realm of fiction, or as Hume himself puts it “[w]e are got into fairyland”... This type of observation matches Borges’ position and spirit quite well.⁷³

If our interaction with the world takes its lead from an *as-if* guiding thread, then the escorting hands of Idealism and Skepticism lead us into the dreamlike world of “*as-if* there is an *as-if*,” or as Borges puts it, “Idealism holds that there was a dreaming, a perceiving, but not a dreamer nor even a dream” (*NRT*, pp. 329–30).

The philosophy of *as-if* is supposed to get us started toward a discovery of truth, all of which now amounts to a fiction of the *fiction* charged with helping us discover external reality—thus, Borges seems to employ not a philosophy of *as-if*, but rather, as stated above, one of *as-if* there is an *as-if*, or perhaps one of *not-as-if* we have any justification to conceive, experience, feel, or know anything at all with regard to fact or fiction. We see this, for example, in Borges’s use of this astonishing device in “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” to describe the proliferating imposition of fictive systems in a world where no real systems exist:

One might well deduce, therefore, that on Tlön there are no sciences—or even any “systems of thought.” The paradoxical truth is that systems of thought do exist, almost countless numbers of them. Philosophies are much like the nouns of the northern hemisphere; the fact that every philosophy is by definition a dialectical game, a *Philosophie des Als Ob*,

has allowed them to proliferate. There are systems upon systems that are incredible but possessed of a pleasing architecture or a certain agreeable sensationalism. The metaphysicians of Tlön seek not truth, or even plausibility—they seek to amaze, astound. (*TU*, p. 74)

For Borges, a philosophy of *as-if* is but one fictional system adrift in rising seas of fictional systems. In spite of its fictionality, Vaihinger's philosophy of *as-if* is supposed to lead the way; however, as noted in "The Thread of the Fable" and "A New Refutation of Time," Borges writes that not only can the world be conceived as but one of many fictions, but also that our imaginary destinal guides, our leading "threads," our heuristic fictions, are fictive constructs as well. And while this might seem against philosophy's aim to offer a way into grasping truth and reality, and while it might also run counter to the coalition between philosophy and literature to jointly offer truths, Borges is not so much an antiphilosopher as he is pro-philosophical because the proliferation of systems *as-if* there are systems of *as-if* is what keeps the dialectic of perplexity, i.e., the philosophy he values so much, moving forward.

Consequently, it is indeed in this dialectic of perplexity that we can detect Borges's highest admiration of philosophy and its capacity to contribute to a meaningful life:

I think that people who have no philosophy live a poor kind of life, no? People who are too sure about reality and about themselves....I think that philosophy may give the world a kind of haziness, but that haziness is all to the good. (*CON*, p. 156)

Valued more for its mystifications than its clarifications, Borges professes Socratic humility in stating, "If I am rich in anything, it is perplexities, not in certainties" (*CON*, p. vii)⁷⁴; "I am neither a thinker nor a moralist, but simply a man of letters who turns his own perplexities and that respected system of perplexities we call philosophy into the forms of literature"⁷⁵; and "What is a history of philosophy, but a history of...perplexities.... I merely wish to share those perplexities with you."⁷⁶ And in this amazing dialectical sense, rich in perplexities, circulating refutations in eternal loops of recurring astonishments, philosophy

and literature, and philosophers and literary authors, are, for Borges, indeed more allies than enemies.

Notes

1. See 607b-d of Plato, *Republic* in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper and trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) for the ancient derogatories.
2. Martha C. Nussbaum, "Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism," *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (October 1998), p. 349: "I claim that Henry James is a powerful ally of Aristotle, and one whom Aristotle badly needs if he is to convince us of his claims."
3. Arthur Danto, "Philosophy as/and/of Literature," in *Literature and the Question of Philosophy*, ed. Anthony J. Cascardi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 22.
4. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 476; as well as Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays by Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
5. Frank B. Farrell, *Why Does Literature Matter?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 24.
6. Philip Kitcher, *Deaths in Venice: The Cases of Gustav von Aschenbach* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 19–20.
7. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2006 [1975]), pp. 155–156.
8. C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
9. E.g., inter alia, coherence, deflationary, and pragmatic theories. In a reply to John McDowell's charge in *Mind and World* that he has deliberately plugged his ears to correspondence theories of truth, Richard Rorty writes in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 151, that it was McDowell who was irresistibly "seduced by an empiricist siren song"

- in which the realist notion of truth is drawn to correspondence between our judgments, propositions, and reality.
10. Bertrand Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 294.
 11. See Richard Eldridge, *Life, Literature, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 1–26, for an insightful overview of the many ways literature can be read and enjoyed.
 12. A helpful explication of the pro-truth/anti-truth lines of argument is in Peter Lamarque’s chapter on “Literature and Truth,” in *The Opacity of Narrative* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), pp. 121–139.
 13. Seamus Heaney, Richard Kearney, and Jorge Luis Borges, “Borges and the World of Fiction: An Interview with Jorge Luis Borges,” *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Latin-American Issue (1982), pp. 71–78: p. 74.
 14. Floyd Merrell, *Unthinking Thinking: Jorge Luis Borges, Mathematics, and the New Physics* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1991), p. xi.
 15. Clive Griffin, “Philosophy and Fiction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jorge Luis Borges*, ed. Edwin Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 6.
 16. Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), esp. pp. 17–27.
 17. Marina Martín, “Borges, the Apologist for Idealism,” *Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*, Boston, MA, 10–15 August 1998. <https://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Lati/LatiMart.htm>. Accessed 21 August 2018.
 18. Plato, *Republic* in *Plato: Complete Works*, 539c.
 19. Plato’s Socrates proudly claimed his family’s lineage back to Daedalus, architect of the famed labyrinth. See Plato, *Alcibiades* in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 121a.
 20. Plato, *Republic* in *Plato: Complete Works*, 508e.
 21. “Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it.” D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, eds. Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth

- Vasey, and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 14.
22. Plato, *Republic* in *Plato: Complete Works*, 382cd.
 23. See also Borges in Richard Burgin (ed.), *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* (New York: Souvenir Press, 1973), p. 160. Henceforth, *CON*.
 24. Shlomy Mualem, *Borges and Plato: A Game With Shifting Mirrors* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2012), p. 13.
 25. Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 10: “*mythos* and *logos* are not, as our current historians of philosophy claim, placed into opposition by philosophy as such; on the contrary, the early Greek thinkers...are precisely the ones to use *mythos* and *logos* in the same sense. *Mythos* and *logos* become separated and opposed only at the point where neither *mythos* nor *logos* can keep to its original nature. In Plato’s work, this separation has already taken place.” See also, Mualem, *Borges and Plato*, pp. 19–49.
 26. Borges, “Immortality,” in *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. Elliot Weinberger (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 484–485.
 27. Jorge Luis Borges, “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 74. Henceforth, *TU*.
 28. I argue for this conclusion by offering a nonfoundational reading of this classic story in José Luis Fernández, “Borges and the Third Man: Toward an Interpretation of ‘Unánime Noche’ in ‘The Circular Ruins,’” *Borges, Language and Reality: The Transcendence of the Word*, ed. Alfonso J. García-Osuna (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 15–32.
 29. Ana María Barrenechea, *Borges, the Labyrinth Maker*, ed. and trans. Roger Lima (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 144.
 30. Bruno Bosteels, “Borges as Antiphilosopher,” in *Thinking With Borges*, eds. William Egginton and David E. Johnson (Aurora, CO: The Davies Group, 2009), pp. 37–47. See also Bosteels, “Radical Antiphilosophy,” *Filozofski vestnik*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2 (2008), p. 160.

31. Plato, *Theaetetus* in *Plato: Complete Works*: “For this is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wondering: this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else” (155c-d).
32. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*: “For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and first began to philosophize” (912b10-15).
33. Borges, “A History of Eternity,” in *Selected Non-Fictions*, p. 126.
34. Dennis Dutton, Michael Palencia-Roth, and Lawrence I. Berkove, “...Merely a Man of Letters: An Interview with Jorge Luis Borges,” *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol.1, No. 3 (Fall 1977), pp. 337–341: p. 339.
35. James E. Irby, “The Structure of the Stories of Jorge Luis Borges.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1962, p. 47.
36. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking*, pp. 4–5.
37. Jon Stewart, “Borges’ Refutation of Nominalism in ‘Funes el memorioso,’” *Variaciones Borges*, Vol. 2 (1996), pp. 68–86: p. 71.
38. Borges uses “visible unrealities” to mean the incorporation of philosophical tropes into literature. See, e.g., Borges, “Avatars of the Tortoise,” *Other Inquisitions 1937–1952*, trans. Ruth L. C. Simms (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000 [1964]), p. 114: “Art—always—requires visible unrealities.” Henceforth, *AT*.
39. David Foster Wallace, “Borges on the Couch,” *New York Times Book Review* (November 7, 2004).
40. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994), p. xvii.
41. Paul de Man, “A Modern Master (1964),” in *Critical Writings 1953–1978*, ed. Lindsey Waters (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 125. Originally published in the *New York Review of Books*, November 19, 1964.
42. Borges, “Monk Eastman, Purveyor of Iniquities,” in *Collected Fictions*, p. 30.
43. Daniel Balderston, “Borges and *The Gangs of New York*,” *Variaciones Borges*, Vol. 16 (2003), pp. 27–33.
44. Borges, “The South,” in *Collected Fictions*, p. 176. Borges’s reading and use of Arthur Schopenhauer’s philosophy is well known in the literature. This passage stands out to me for its resonance with

Schopenhauer's view that, "The Animal is the embodiment of the present It is just this *complete absorption in the present moment*, peculiar to animals, which so much to the pleasure we derive from our domestic pets." See Arthur Schopenhauer, "Additional Remarks on the Doctrine of the Suffering of the World," in *Parerga and Paralipomena, Vol. 2*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), §153, p. 296.

45. Errol Morris, *The Ashtray: (Or the Man Who Denied Reality)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), p. 34–35.
46. Adam Timmons, "Why Was Kuhn's Structure More Successful than Polanyi's Personal Knowledge?," *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 2013), pp. 306–317: p. 309.
47. William H. Gass, "Imaginary Borges and His Books," in *Fiction and Figures of Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 128–129. Originally published as "Imaginary Borges," in *New York Review of Books*, November 12, 1969.
48. Jean de Milleret, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1967), p. 116: "You want to make me into a philosopher and thinker; but the fact is that I repudiate all systematic thought because it always tends to deceive one." Quoted from Merrell, *Unthinking Thinking: Jorge Luis Borges, Mathematics, and the New Physics*, p. 245, n. 1.
49. Daniel C. Dennett, *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), p. 5.
50. Daniel C. Dennett, *The Mind's I* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 457. Dennett makes great use of Borges's writing throughout the text to frame thought experiments about selfhood. Jon Stewart, "Idealism in Two Stories from The Book of Sand," *Variaciones Borges*, Vol. 7 (1999), p. 50, notes that "while some, indeed perhaps most, readers see [Borges'] stories merely as examples of a fiction of fantasy, others see them as thought experiments based on philosophical premises."
51. N. Katherine Hayles, *The Cosmic Web: Scientific Field Models and Literary Strategies in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 24.

52. Weir, Alan, "Formalism in the Philosophy of Mathematics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/formalism-mathematics/>.
53. Morris Klein, *Mathematical Thinking from Ancient to Modern Times: Volume 3* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 1131.
54. Mary Leng, *Mathematics and Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 261. For the utility of the Fictionalist account, see also Hartry Field, *Science Without Numbers: A Defense of Nominalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
55. George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues in Principles of Human Knowledge and Thee Dialogues*, ed. Howard Robinson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 103.
56. Borges, "Immortality," in *Selected Non-Fictions*, p. 486.
57. Ronald J. Christ's citation from Borges' early book of essays *Inquisiciones* (Buenos Aires, 1925) in *The Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Allusion* (New York: NYU Press, 1969), p. 19.
58. Gene H. Bell-Villada, *Borges and His Fiction: A Guide to His Mind and Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), p. 37.
59. Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 17.
60. Donald L. Shaw, *Borges' Narrative Strategy* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1992), p. 164.
61. George Berkeley, *An Essay on Motion in Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. by Desmond M. Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), §67.
62. Borges, "Quevedo," in *Other Inquisitions 1937–1952*, p. 40.
63. For a considered study of the use of analogical devices to be used when talking about knowledge of a reality which reason cannot attain, see Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of As-If*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952 [1924]). Commentators who have written on Borges's use of this heuristic fiction are, among others: Carter Wheelock, *The Mythmaker: A Study of Motif and Symbol in the Short Stories of Jorge Luis Borges* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 21–26; Floyd Merrell,

Unthinking Thinking: Jorge Luis Borges, Mathematics, and the New Physics, pp. 16–19, 25–28; Alejandro Riberi, “Tlön and the Philosophy of ‘As If’,” *Variaciones Borges* 15 (2003), pp. 207–220, also published in *Fictions as Cognitive Artefacts. The Case of Jorge Luis Borges’ ‘Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius’* (Auckland: Magnolia Press, 2007); David E. Johnson, *Kant’s Dog: On Borges, Philosophy, and the Time of Translation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), pp. 15–17; Silvia Dapía, *Jorge Luis Borges, Post-Analytic Philosophy, and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 6–8, and, most recently, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *As If: Idealization and Ideals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 107.

64. See, respectively, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §§10–17, and *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective* in Pauline Kleingeld (ed.), *Toward Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, Peace, and History*, trans. David L. Colclasure (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 8: pp. 17–18.
65. Jorge Luis Borges, “El hilo de la fábula,” in *Los conjurados* (Madrid: Alianza, 1985), p. 61. The English translation is from Bosteels, “Borges as Antiphilosopher,” in *Thinking With Borges*, p. 41.
66. I.e., with the *fictum theory* of concepts. See William of Ockham, *Ordinatio, d. II, q. VIII* in *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*, trans. O. F. M. Philotheus Boehner (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1964), pp. 44–46.
67. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A771/B779.
68. Silvia G. Dapía, *Jorge Luis Borges, Post-Analytic Philosophy, and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 6.
69. Christine De Lailhacar, “The Mirror and the Encyclopedia: Borge-sian Codes in Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*,” in *Borges and His Successors: The Borge-sian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. Edna Aizenberg (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), p. 163.

70. Silvia Dapía, “The Metaphor of Translation: Borges and Mauthner’s Critique of Language,” *Variaciones Borges*, Vol. 21 (2006), pp. 23–85: p. 27.
71. See, e.g., Jorge Luis Borges, “A New Refutation of Time,” in *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 317. Henceforth, *NRT*.
72. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 4: p. 260.
73. Marina Martín, “Borges Via the Dialectics of Berkeley and Hume,” *Variaciones Borges*, Vol. 9 (2000), pp. 147–162: p. 157.
74. Cf. Plato, *Meno* in *Plato: Complete Works*. Note Socrates’ response to Meno about his constant promulgation of perplexity: “for I perplex others, not because I am clear, but because I am utterly perplexed myself” (80c).
75. See Borges’s “Foreword,” in Christ, *The Narrow Act: Borges’ Art of Allusion*, p. ix.
76. Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1967–1968* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 2.