

# KANT'S DOG

DAVID E. JOHNSON

*In a certain way, it is always too late to pose the question of time.*

—Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*

It is well known that Kant was notorious in Königsberg for his strict adherence to routine; he was so regular, Ernst Cassirer reports, that the citizens of Königsberg were able to set their clocks by his movements.<sup>1</sup> The most public articulation of this regularity was his daily walk through the city. It is doubtful Kant took a dog along on his constitutional; nevertheless, at the moment in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that he determines the possibility of the conceptualization of sense perception, which Heidegger considered the very heart of Kant's critical project and which ultimately turns on the regulation of the synthesis of time,<sup>2</sup> Kant trots out man's best friend. Although he needs this dog in order to demonstrate the trick of temporal synthesis that makes any sensible conceptuality possible, it is also clear that he needs to keep this dog on a tight leash; he cannot afford to let it run off or go astray. On one reading, then, the *Critique of Pure Reason* institutes a sort of philosophical leash law. Indeed, Kant holds the dog so tightly that it is always already a dead dog—philosophical roadkill.

In literature there is perhaps no more memorable instance of the problem of conceptuality than Jorge Luis Borges's "Funes el memorioso." Within that text, the key moment is the unforgettable example of Ireneo Funes's particular observation of the manifold that others reduce to a dog: "Not only was it difficult for him to see that the generic symbol 'dog' took in all the dissimilar individuals of all shapes and sizes, it irritated him that the 'dog' of three-fourteen in the afternoon, seen in profile, should be indicated by the same noun as the dog at three-fifteen, seen frontally" [*Collected Fic-*

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*This essay has multiple origins, not least among them an ongoing discussion with Lisa Block de Behar and William Egginton about Borges and philosophy. I thank them for this conversation. My understanding of time, both in Kant specifically and in philosophy more generally, owes much to Martin Hügglund's penetrating reading of philosophy's difficult relation to the question of temporality. His work and friendship have been enormously important to me. I would also like to thank the members of the University at Buffalo's Philosophical Reading Group for their commitment to the reading of philosophy.*

1. See Cassirer 9–10. Also see Stephan Körner's introduction, where he writes, "A person's form of life is his manner of dealing with the world in which he finds himself, not the sum of his mannerisms and trivial habits. There is for example, as Cassirer shows, a deep similarity between the form of life of a Kant, by whose daily habits the citizens of Königsberg were able to set their watches, and the form of life of a Rousseau, who threw away his watch so that he would 'no longer find it necessary to know what time of day it is'" [xv–xvi; Körner cites Cassirer's Rousseau, Kant and Goethe [1945]]. For a discussion of Kant's social habits and their relation to his philosophy, see Clark.

2. Heidegger writes: "The Schematism chapter is not 'confused,' but rather is constructed in an incomparably lucid way. The Schematism chapter is not 'confusing,' but leads with an unheard-of certainty into the core of the whole problematic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*" [Kant 80].

tions 136].<sup>3</sup> For Funes the inability to synthesize the manifold of experience under a general concept also contaminates the possibility of self-recognition: “His own face in the mirror, his own hands, surprised him every time he saw them” [*Collected Fictions* 136].<sup>4</sup> His surprise at his face and hands as much as his frustration at the generic concept “dog” must be read within the context of Funes’s rejection of Locke’s suggestion of a rigorously particular language: “In the seventeenth century, Locke postulated (and condemned) an impossible language in which each individual thing—every stone, every bird, every branch—would have its own name; Funes once contemplated a similar language, but discarded the idea as too general, too ambiguous” [*Collected Fictions* 136].<sup>5</sup> In Funes’s account, the untenability of Locke’s language does not lie in the impossibility of a language grounded upon absolute singularity; he does not argue, for example, that even the most radical empiricism must ultimately depend upon the possibility of ideality. Rather, he argues that insofar as it does not account for the temporal difference of the same from itself, such a language is always already too general.<sup>6</sup> In short, “every individual thing, every rock, every bird, every branch,” in Funes’s eyes, are each and every one more than one. The dog at 3:14 seen in profile is not the same dog when seen at 3:15 in full frontal view. For Funes, the possibility of identity conceived as self-identity and, accordingly, as self-possession over time, is suspended. My face and hands are always different from themselves; they always surprise me; thus they are not mine. In *Signs of Borges* Sylvia Molloy remarks that Funes’s attempt to construct a rigorously particular language can only be “sustained by Funes’ attention” and that the words of such a language “finally *make sense* only to him. Indeed, all that holds them together . . . is Funes *himself*” [118, emphasis added]. On Molloy’s account, the singularity of Funes’s language, grounded as it is only in Funes himself, explains “the narrator’s inability to *reproduce*” it [118]. Yet, Molloy fails to read the maximal effect of Funes’s radical empiricism: namely, the impossibility of any irreducible “himself” that could function as a point of reference. There is no unity of consciousness that guarantees to Funes a “himself” or “I” that grounds “his” perceptions and possible cognitions. Another way of saying this is that temporality makes impossible the “as such” or the “in itself” of any concept, including the concept of identity. There is always only the possibility of conceptualization, which is another way to say that the concept is impossible. The concept “dog,” therefore, can never be self-identical, unique, or selfsame; hence, it cannot be a concept. That it cannot be is an effect of time.

Like so much of Borges’s work, “Funes el memorioso” is dedicated to what, in “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan,” Borges calls the riddle of time. In “Funes,” however, Borges stresses the effect of time on the possibility of thought in general. That “Funes” concerns temporality and specifically the temporality of memory is clear from the story’s opening paragraph, in which the verb *recordar* (to remember) is used six times in the first five sentences and parenthetically referred to as the “verbo sa-

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3. The Spanish reads: “No sólo le costaba comprender que el símbolo genérico perro abarcara tantos individuos dispares de diversos tamaños y diversa forma; le molestaba que el perro de las tres y catorce (visto de perfil) tuviera el mismo nombre que el perro de las tres y cuarto (visto de frente)” [*Obras completas* 1: 489].

4. “Su propia cara en el espejo, sus propias manos, lo sorprendían cada vez” [1: 489].

5. “Locke, en el siglo xvii, postuló (y reprobó) un idioma imposible en el que cada cosa individual, cada piedra, cada pájaro y cada rama tuviera un nombre propio; Funes proyectó alguna vez un idioma análogo, pero lo desechó por parecerle demasiado general, demasiado ambiguo” [1: 489].

6. On Locke and language, see Bennington, who refers to “Funes” [125] in order to set up a reading of Locke on language; although his discussion of “Funes” is rather limited, it is nonetheless quite suggestive.

grado" [1: 485]. From the beginning, "Funes" concerns memory, the recollection and repetition of the past. Moreover, from the beginning, the story situates the narrator's memory—fallible, always already a matter of faith, governed by belief (*creer*)—in opposition to the infallibility of sacred memory, which only one man has a right to claim.<sup>7</sup> "Funes el memorioso," therefore, is the fallible memory of the one whose memory is infallible. The narrator's first memory of Funes, however, has nothing to do with Funes's memory; rather, it highlights his peculiar ability to tell time: "I recall the short baggy trousers . . . , the straw-soled cotton slippers, the cigarette in the hard visage, all stark against the now limitless storm cloud. Unexpectedly, Bernardo shouted out to him—*What's the time, Ireneo?* Without consulting the sky, without a second's pause, the boy replied, *Four minutes till eight*, young Bernardo Juan Francisco. The voice was shrill and mocking" [*Collected Fictions* 132].<sup>8</sup> "Chronometric Funes" [1: 486], as everyone calls him, always knows the time, like a clock, but without the need to consult a watch or any other external technology for marking or counting or calculating time. In short, Funes has the most radical sort of internal time consciousness, except his time consciousness is figured on the basis of a mechanical, ostensibly external, device: a watch. Indeed, such time consciousness, according to Husserl, is not internal at all. Rather, it characterizes what he calls objective time, the assumed "datable, measurable, historical, and cosmic time" of daily life [Zahavi 81]. Although Funes is capable—without technological aid—of calculating, apparently immediately, objective time, he is apparently not yet Funes the memorioso.

Molloy figures the shift from "chronometric Funes" to "Funes the memorioso" in terms of affectivity. Before the accident, when he is still "cronométrico Funes" and thus capable of what appears to be the immediate intuition of calculable time, Funes is described in a way that locates him seamlessly within his circumstances—the clothes, the sandals, the cigarette, the look, the sky; he is in a certain way entirely determined by or through his apparent context. After the accident, however, when he is incapable of forgetting and no less incapable of the synthesis necessary to calculate time as a unity, he is described as being "as monumental as bronze" [*Collected Fictions* 137], entirely cut off from the circumstances of life, thus, dead [Molloy 74–75]. In many ways this seems to be the opposite of what might be expected. On the one hand, the ability to calculate time immediately but without recourse to external technology ought to remove Funes from circumstances, for to be seamlessly immersed in one's context seems contrary to the possibility of marking time. We lose ourselves, we say, in life; we become absorbed in the minutiae of life and lose track of time. Before the accident, however, Funes never loses count. On the other hand, Funes's later inability to forget signals his absolute immersion in his circumstances; he literally has lost "himself" in time, but being lost in time implies not only the impossibility of time's calculation, but also the impossibility of not being affected. Already, then, there is the suggestion of Borges's engagement with Kant, for Kant claims that time is the pure, a priori form of the intuition of sensibility. In Kant, there can be no cognition of being affected without the a priori intuition of time, without time necessarily informing, literally giving form, to such affection.

Only after his accident, when he is "hopelessly crippled" [*Collected Fictions* 132; *Obras completas* 1: 486], does Funes realize that ". . . he had been what every man

7. On memory, forgetting, and time, see Augustine, *Confessions*, books 4, 10–11; see also Derrida, *Archive Fever*, and "Circumfessions"; Lyotard, *Confession* of St. Augustine.

8. "Recuerdo la bombacha, las alpargatas, recuerdo el cigarillo en el duro rostro, contra el nubarrón ya sin límites. Bernardo le gritó imprevisiblemente: '¿Qué hora son, Ireneo?'. Sin consultar el cielo, sin detenerse, el otro respondió: 'Faltan cuatro minutos para las ocho, joven Bernardo Juan Francisco'. La voz era aguda, burlona" [1: 485–86].

[*todos los cristianos*] was—blind, deaf, befuddled, and virtually devoid of memory” [*Collected Fictions* 134].<sup>9</sup> For nineteen years he had lived as in a dream: “he looked without seeing, heard without listening, forgot everything, or almost everything [*de casi todo*]” [*Collected Fictions* 134–35, translation slightly modified].<sup>10</sup> The phrase “almost everything” (“*casi todo*”) speaks volumes about “chronometric” Funes and his conversion into Funes the memorious: only in forgetting almost everything was he capable of telling time. Furthermore, forgetting “*casi todo*,” almost everything, makes possible the telling of the story in the first place. Borges remarks: “I will not attempt to reproduce the words of it, which are now forever irrecoverable. Instead, I will summarize, faithfully, the many things Ireneo told me” [*Collected Fictions* 134].<sup>11</sup> The possibility of telling the story is determined in the possibility—that is, the necessity, the inevitability—of forgetting. Only in forgetting is the story possible at all. This means that Funes “the memorious” could never tell his own story, not because he forgets himself but, on the contrary, in remembering everything he cannot forget (in order) to remember himself. Indeed, upon recovering his senses, in coming back to consciousness after the accident, Funes literally appears to have recovered his senses *and* to have lost himself: “the present was so rich, so clear, that it was almost unbearable, as were his oldest and even his most trivial memories. . . . Now his perception and his memory were perfect” [*Collected Fictions* 135].<sup>12</sup>

The infallibility of memory results in Funes’s rejection of a language analogous to the one Locke postulated and also rejected: a nonideal language, “an impossible language in which each individual thing—every stone, every bird, every branch—would have its own name” [*Collected Fictions* 136].<sup>13</sup> In Locke’s case, such a language is impossible because, in the final analysis, language is necessarily ideal: “All Things, that exist, being Particulars, it may perhaps be thought reasonable, that Words, which ought to be conformed to Things, should be so too, I mean in their Signification: but yet we find quite the contrary. The far *greatest part of Words*, that make all Languages, *are general Terms*: which has not been the Effect of Neglect, or Chance, but of Reason, and Necessity” [*Essay* 409]. For Locke there are two reasons why the relation of words to things is necessarily ideational, hence universal. First, because “it is beyond the Power of humane Capacity to frame and retain distinct *Ideas* of all the particular Things we meet with: every Bird, and Beast Men saw; every Tree, and Plant, that affected the Senses, could not find a place in the most capacious Understanding” [*Essay* 409]. Locke argues that inasmuch as it is considered “an instance of a prodigious Memory” for a general to recall all the names of his soldiers, “We may easily find a Reason, why Men have never attempted to give Names to each Sheep in their Flock, or Crow that flies over their Heads; much less to call every Leaf of Plants, or Grain of Sand that came their way, by a peculiar Name” [*Essay* 409]. Second, and more importantly, to give every particular thing its own proper name would go against the principal interest of language. Locke writes:

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9. “[É]l había sido lo que son todos los cristianos: un ciego, un sordo, un abombado, un desmemoriado” [1: 488].

10. “[M]iraba sin ver, oía sin oír, se olvidaba de todo, de casi todo” [1: 488].

11. “No trataré de reproducir sus palabras, irrecuperables ahora. Prefiero resumir con veracidad las muchas cosas que me dijo Ireneo” [1: 487].

12. “[E]l presente era casi intolerable de tan rico y tan nítido, y también las memorias más antiguas y más triviales. . . . Ahora su percepción y su memoria eran infalibles” [1: 488].

13. “un idioma imposible en el cual cada cosa individual, cada piedra, cada pájaro y cada rama tuvieron un nombre propio” [1: 489].

*If it were possible [to have no general terms], it would yet be useless; because it would not serve to the chief end of language. Men would in vain heap up Names of particular Things, that would not serve them to communicate their Thoughts. Men learn Names, and use them in Talk with others, only that they may be understood: which is then only done, when by Use or Consent, the Sound I make by the Organs of Speech, excites in another Man's Mind, who hears it, the Idea I apply it to in mine, when I speak it. This cannot be done by Names, applied to particular Things, whereof I alone having the Ideas in my mind, the Names of them could not be significant, or intelligible to another, who was not acquainted with all those very particular Things, which had fallen under my Notice. [Essay 409–10]*

In order for communication *with others* to be possible, according to Locke, language must be conventional, which means it must be universalizable.

Funes, too, rejects the idea of a rigorously empirical language, but not on the grounds that language must be universalizable in order to be communicable, and thus to be language at all; rather, a particular name of every particular thing, according to Funes, is already “too general, too ambiguous” [*Collected Fictions* 136]. An individual name for every individual thing is too general because it ignores the effect of temporality on perception: “Funes remembered not only every leaf of every tree in every patch of forest, but every time he had perceived or imagined that leaf” [*Collected Fictions* 136].<sup>14</sup> According to Funes, not only should every leaf of every tree in the forest have its own particular name, but, because of what Borges elsewhere calls the “heavy-laden flight of time,” every leaf of every tree *every time it is perceived or imagined* must be named particularly.<sup>15</sup>

Funes’s memory apparently makes possible the impossible project of a radical empiricism, that is, of a perception rigorously grounded in experience. The example of the dog is instructive: Borges no doubt could have done without the spatial reorientation—the shift from profile to frontal view—because for Funes the dog at 3:14 cannot be the same as the dog at 3:15, whether he changes position or not. Pushed to the extreme, it is obvious that in Funes’s eyes the dog can never be identical to itself: there can be no moment, no instant or now, in which the dog appears as itself; rather, the dog is always no longer and not yet the “same” dog, that is, it is no longer and not yet “itself.” Not a second goes by in which the dog appears as “itself.” For Funes, there can be no identity if identity is understood as being-in-itself or as being-self-identical. This means that the concept “dog” is also impossible, for in order to regulate—subsume or comprehend—the manifold of sense data, the concept must be self-identical.

Borges ultimately concludes that despite his vast and infallible memory, Funes was incapable of thought: “He had effortlessly learned English, French, Portuguese, Latin. I suspect, nevertheless, that he was not very good at thinking. To think is to forget differences, to generalize, to abstract. In the teeming world of Ireneo Funes there was nothing but almost immediate details” [*Collected Fictions* 137, translation modified].<sup>16</sup> Eleven years earlier, in “La postulación de la realidad,” Borges had already arrived at this conclusion: “The conceptual simplification of complex states is often an

14. “Funes no sólo recordaba cada hoja de cada árbol de cada monte, sino cada una de las veces que la había percibido o imaginado” [*Obras completas* 1: 488].

15. See “La nadería de la personalidad” [*Inquisiciones* 104; *Selected Non-Fictions* 9].

16. “Había aprendido sin esfuerzo el inglés, el francés, el portugués, el latín. Sospecho, sin embargo, que no era muy capaz de pensar. Pensar es olvidar diferencias, es generalizar, abstraer. En el abarrotado mundo de Funes no había sino detalles, casi inmediatos” [*Obras completas* 1: 490].

instantaneous operation. The very fact of perceiving, of paying attention, is selective; all attention, all focusing of our consciousness, involves a deliberate omission of what is not interesting. . . . For us, living is a series of adaptations, which is to say, an education in oblivion" [*Selected Non-Fictions* 61].<sup>17</sup> It will be necessary to take up the understanding that would posit Funes's "almost immediate" (*casi inmediato*) experience, on the one hand, and the "often" (*muchas veces*) instantaneous operation of discrimination (forgetting) constitutive of reality, on the other hand. Borges subtly undermines these ostensible positions through the qualification of immediacy (it is only "almost" and therefore not immediate at all) and instantaneity (which is only "often" instantaneous, hence, not instantaneous as a rule and therefore not instantaneous at all); in both cases, he inscribes time as the condition of possibility both of Funes's infallible memory and of the instantaneous operation of forgetting necessary to thought. Before turning to the problem of time, however, it is worthwhile considering the list of languages Funes "effortlessly learned," if only because of what appears to have been forgotten.

In 1918, during his family's residence in Lugano, Switzerland, Borges taught himself German with the help of an English-German dictionary. He was inspired to do so by reading Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, the protagonist of which is a professor of German Idealism. Borges remarks: "In the beginning I tried to read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, but it defeated me, as it does the majority, including the majority of Germans" [*Autobiografía* 44, translation mine].<sup>18</sup> In fact, Borges suggests that it would be better to read the first *Critique* in any language other than German.<sup>19</sup> At the end of World War I, then, Borges takes up German, which Rodríguez Monegal calls the first language Borges chose to learn, but which was his fifth language after English, French, Latin, and Spanish. Borges claims German came to him fairly easily and within two or three months he was able to read Heine's poetry without a dictionary; yet, despite this apprenticeship to German through poetry, for Borges "German was . . . the language of the philosophers" [Rodríguez Monegal 136]. Borges *seems to* share this predilection with at least two important German philosophers, Hegel and Heidegger. In the *Science of Logic* Hegel claims, "German has many advantages over other modern languages; some of its words even possess the further peculiarity of having not only different but opposite meanings so that one cannot fail to recognize a speculative spirit of the language in them" [32]. Heidegger was perhaps a bit blunter when, in the posthumously published *Der Spiegel* interview, he remarked that the German language had an "inner relationship . . . with the language of the Greeks and with their thought"; this was confirmed for him, he noted, by the French, who "When they begin to think, they speak German, being sure that they could not make it with their own language" [113]. Yet, in 1942, at the height of World War II and the year in which Heidegger delivered his lectures on Parmenides and Heraclitus, German is decidedly not forgotten by Borges, who from 1937 to 1945 dedicated a series of texts to German culture and Nazism, as

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17. "La simplificación conceptual de estados complejos es muchas veces una operación instantánea. El hecho mismo de percibir, de atender, es de orden selectivo: toda atención, toda fijación de nuestra conciencia, comporta una deliberada omisión de lo no interesante. . . . Nuestro vivir es una serie de adaptaciones, vale decir, una educación del olvido" [1: 218].

18. "Al principio intenté leer *Critica de la razón pura de Kant*, pero me derrotó como a la mayoría, incluida la mayoría de los alemanes." Borges's "Autobiography" was first published in the *New Yorker* in collaboration with Norman Thomas di Giovanni. Borges dictated his "life" in English. The Spanish is a translation. On Borges's encounter with German and Kant, see Rodríguez Monegal [134–36].

19. Rodríguez Monegal 134–36. For an analytical philosopher's account of why it should not matter that Kant be read in any language other than German, and why Borges perhaps should only be read in Spanish, see Gracia 85–107.

well as to Argentina's (in)famous Germanophilia, which were published principally in the Argentine literary and cultural magazine *Sur*.<sup>20</sup> This series culminates in "Deutsches Requiem," which appeared in the collection *El Aleph* (1949) and which concerns the Nuremberg Trials of 1945–46. The fact that Funes never learns German and thus the conspicuous absence of German from Funes's memory haunts "Funes el memorioso," for no Borgesian text more thoroughly and more overtly takes up the problem of language and conceptualization; no text more obviously considers the problem of philosophy, the problem and possibility of what we know, as a problem of language. That German, the language of the philosophers, will not have been learned, that it will have been forgotten to be inscribed in the list of languages, therefore, is perhaps no simple oversight, but another of Borges's riddles.

In 1941, in *La Nación*, Borges published a review of H. G. Wells's *Guide to the New World* and Bertrand Russell's *Let the People Think*, in which he writes: "Russell ascribes the theory of fascism to Fichte and to Carlyle. The former . . . attributes the superiority of the Germans to their uninterrupted possession of a pure language. Such reasoning is almost inexhaustibly fallacious; we can hypothesize that there is no pure language on earth . . . ; we can recall that German is less 'pure' than Basque or Hotentot; we can ask why an unmixed language should be preferable" [*Selected Non-Fictions* 209].<sup>21</sup> A pure language would require that language be atemporal, and Borges understood as well as anyone that language was temporal.<sup>22</sup> In "Nueva refutación del tiempo," for example, he notes that "All language is of a successive nature; it does not lend itself to reasoning on eternal, intemporal matters" [*Selected Non-Fictions* 324].<sup>23</sup> Despite the postulation of time's successivity, Borges understands that such succession necessarily comes up against time's essential negativity. He writes:

*the phrase "negation of time" is ambiguous. It can mean the eternity of Plato or Boethius and also the dilemmas of Sextus Empiricus. The latter . . . denies the past, which already was, and the future, which is not yet, and argues that the present is either divisible or indivisible. It is not indivisible, for in that case it would have no beginning to connect it to the past nor end to connect it to the future, nor even middle, because whatever has no beginning or end*

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20. Among these texts must be counted "Una pedagogía del odio" (May 1937), "Una exposición afligente" (October 1938), "Ensayo de imparcialidad" (October 1939), "1941" (December 1941), "Anotación al 23 agosto 1944" (October 1944), and "Nota sobre la paz" (July 1945). Publications in other magazines include "Definición de Germanófilo" (*El Hogar*, December 1940) and "Dos libros de este tiempo" (*La Nación*, December 1941). It is also worth considering other texts as belonging to Borges's particular concern for the politics of German culture during this period. "Yo, judío" (*Megáfono*, April 1934), for example, is Borges's affirmation, in response to a claim in *Crisol* (*Crucible*), an Argentine fascist publication, that his Jewish ancestry had been "maliciously hidden," of this ancestry and precisely in the name of his maternal heritage, Acevedo. See also his review of Louis Untermeyer's biography of Heinrich Heine, published in *El Hogar*, 5 August 1938. On Borges and Nazism, see Gómez López-Quiñones.

21. "Russell impute la teoría del fascismo a Fichte y a Carlyle. El primero . . . funda la superioridad de los alemanes en la no interrumpida posesión de un idioma puro. Ese razón es casi no inagotablemente falaz; podemos conjeturar que no hay en la tierra un idioma puro . . . ; podemos recordar que el alemán es menos 'puro' que el vascuence o el hotentote; podemos interrogar por qué es preferible un idioma sin mezcla . . ." [*Obras completas* 2: 103].

22. Here it would be worthwhile considering Benjamin's notion of pure language in relation to Borges's critique of its possibility. See Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator"; Derrida, "Des Tours des Babel"; Jacobs, *In the Language of Walter Benjamin*; and Fynsk, *Language and Relation*.

23. "Todo lenguaje es de índole sucesiva; no es hábil para razonar lo eterno, lo intemporal" [2: 142].

*has no middle. Neither is it divisible, for in that case it would consist of a part that was and another that is not. Ergo, the present does not exist, and since the past and future do not exist either, time does not exist. [Selected Non-Fictions 330–31]*<sup>24</sup>

In short, if the now is divisible, it is not, because it would be constitutively temporal, and time is negation, divisibility, difference. But if the now is indivisible and thus absolute, time in fact makes no difference: it is, rather, the “mere relation between atemporal objects” [2: 148], which means, simply, that time is not, and therefore that the indivisible now could not provide a basis or starting point for the thought of time.

Borges outlines the constitutive philosophical difficulty of thinking temporality and, thus, of thinking at all: namely, the impossibility of thinking incessant change, ceaseless differentiation, the “flight of time,” on the basis of an unchanging ground. The solution to this difficulty depends on the possibility of determining a way to think time temporally, hence, to ground the thought of temporality on the impossible “ground” of time.<sup>25</sup> To think time temporally, that is, to “ground” the thought of time on constitutive *extasis*, means, however, that thought remains ungrounded, that it cannot be identical to itself. The constitutive ecstasy of time indicates the direction of Borges’s response to his 1941 suggestion that “we” (*podemos . . .*) might interrogate the desire for a pure language, because constitutive ecstasy makes self-identity impossible at the same time that it makes such identity possible. The being-outside-itself of ecstasy means that every I is different from and to any possible “itself.” No I is ever *in itself*, purely or immediately. Indeed, “Nueva refutación del tiempo” recalls and makes explicit Borges’s critique of Schopenhauer in the early essay “La nadería de la personalidad,” at the conclusion of which Borges notes that according to Schopenhauer, “the self is a point whose immobility is useful for discerning, by contrast, the heavy-laden flight of time” [*Selected Non-Fictions* 9].<sup>26</sup> Thus Schopenhauer’s self has only a grammatical function; it is a placeholder, but one that remains, in his account, atemporal. Schopenhauer’s conception of the self as a point, or *punctum*, effectively reinstitutes precisely what Borges seeks to displace, the eternal I or the absolute self-presence and unity of consciousness. The conclusion to “Nueva refutación del tiempo” makes clear that Borges refuses Schopenhauer’s solution to the problem of time precisely because Schopenhauer’s notion of the I or self locates that subject outside time’s determination of infinite finitude: “Time is the substance of which I am made. Time is a river that sweeps me along, but I am the river; it is a tiger that mangles me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire that consumes me, but I am the fire. The world, unfortunately, is real; I, unfortunately, am Borges” [*Selected Non-Fictions* 332].<sup>27</sup> I am, then, that which destroys any

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24. “[L]a frase negación del tiempo es ambigua. Puede significar la eternidad de Platón o de Boecio y también los dilemas de Sexto Empírico. Éste . . . niega el pasado, que ya fue, y el futuro, que no es aún, y arguye que el presente es divisible o indivisible. No es indivisible, pues en tal caso no tendrá principio que lo vinculara al pasado ni fin que lo vinculara al futuro, ni siquiera medio que lo carece de principio y de fin; tampoco es divisible, pues en tal caso constaría de una parte que fue y de otra que no es. Ergo, no existe, pero como tampoco existen el pasado y el porvenir, el tiempo no existe” [2: 147–48].

25. See Derrida, *Margins* 29–67; for an elaboration of the implications of Derrida’s argument in “Ousia and Grammē,” see Häggglund.

26. “[E]l yo es un punto cuya inmovilidad es eficaz para determinar por contraste la cargada fuga del tiempo” [Inquisiciones 104].

27. “[E]l tiempo es la sustancia de que estoy hecho. El tiempo es un río que me arrebató, pero yo soy el río; es un tigre que me destroza, pero yo soy el tigre; es un fuego que me consume, pero yo soy el fuego. El mundo, desgraciadamente, es real; yo, desgraciadamente, soy Borges” [2: 149].



possibility of *being* "I am"; I am that which negates, consumes, the very possibility of *being* myself.

Borges's confessed inability to read Kant and his dismissal of the possibility of a pure language come together in "Funes el memorioso" and the example of the dog. It is, after all, Kant's dog. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the section devoted to "The Transcendental Doctrine of the Power of Judgment," and within that section, in the chapter "On the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding," Kant points out that it is not images of objects "that ground our pure sensible concepts" [273; A141/B180],<sup>28</sup> but rather schemata. The schema, according to Kant, is "the transcendental time-determination which . . . mediates the subsumption of" appearances under the categories [272; A138/B178]. In effect, the schema answers the question how pure concepts of the understanding, necessarily a priori and thus void of any empirical content, can be applied to intuitions of sense, that is, to objects of sense, or appearances, with which they must be homogeneous. The possibility of the homogenization of the fundamentally heterogeneous faculties of sensibility and understanding depends on schematism, or the operation of the transcendental schema, which, as the "mediating representation," as Kant calls it, between sensibility and understanding, "must be pure (without anything empirical) and yet intellectual on the one hand and sensible on the other" [272; A139/B178].<sup>29</sup> The possibility of sensible concepts thus depends on schematism's temporalization of the categories; in other words, only by way of a transcendental time-determination can categories, which are universal but empty, be made homogeneous with intuitions of sense, which are temporal but without rule.<sup>30</sup>

As "*in itself* always only a product of the imagination" [273; A140/B179, emphasis added], but nevertheless not an image, schematism names the "general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image" [273; A140/B179–80]. But this image should not be misunderstood as the ground of either transcendental or empirical concepts, for, as Kant writes, "it is not images of objects but schemata that ground our pure sensible concepts. No image of a triangle would ever be adequate to the concept of it. For it would not attain the generality of the concept, which makes this valid for all triangles . . . but would always be limited to one part of this sphere. The schema of the triangle can never exist anywhere except in thought, and signifies a rule of the synthesis of the imagination with regard to pure shapes in space" [273; A140–41/B180]. Moreover, it would be a mistake to think that images could more adequately supply empirical concepts: "Even less does an object of experience or an image of it ever reach the empirical concept, rather the latter [the concept] is always related *immediately* to the

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28. The A/B pagination indicates the first (A) and second (B) editions of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and correspond to the Akademie Edition of Kant's works.

29. Kant's definition of schematism comes close to Hume's understanding of belief. In Hume, belief operates the synthesis of temporality that makes thought possible; yet Hume, not unlike Kant after him, is unsure how it operates. He calls it "a secret operation" that takes place "without being once thought of" [104]; elsewhere he defines it as "that certain je-ne-scai-quoi, of which 'tis impossible to give any definition or description, but which everyone sufficiently understands" [106]. See Hume 98–123, 628–29. Of interest here is the mutual ground of both Humean empiricism and Kantian transcendentalism.

30. "The concept of the understanding contains pure synthetic unity of the manifold in general. Time, as the formal condition of the manifold of inner sense, thus the connection of all representations, contains an a priori manifold in pure intuition [recall that time is the a priori intuition of the form of all sensibility]. Now a transcendental time-determination is homogeneous with the **category** (which constitutes its unity) insofar as it is **universal** and rests on a rule a priori. But it is on the other hand homogeneous with the **appearance** insofar as **time** is contained in every empirical representation of the manifold" [272; A138–39/B177–78].

schema of the imagination, as a rule for the determination of our intuition in accordance with a certain general concept" [273; A141/B180, emphasis added].

Put simply, although the faculty of sensibility through the mediation of the imagination provides representations (images or appearances) to the faculty of the understanding, the understanding is concerned only with the unity of this synthesis and not with any individual or particular intuition; therefore, the understanding is not concerned with an image of sense, but only with the formal and pure condition of possibility of the image. The pure concept, as "referring" only to the schema of sensibility and not to any particular intuition, is thus necessarily a priori, hence, free from and uncontaminated by any sensible intuition. Kant's examples are several, beginning with the image or representation of number in five dots (. . . .) as opposed to the schema of the number five in general. To be sure, "Funes el memorioso" also rehearses the example of number in Funes's development of a numbering system that fails any conceivable criterion for a system that could perpetuate itself, synthetically, *ad infinitum*, which is what a numbering system must be able to accomplish. Although Borges devotes a good deal of time and space to describing Funes's number system in order to dismiss it as lacking a necessary transcendental principle, the most arresting figure in "Funes el memorioso" is the dog Borges borrows from Kant's last example of the operation of transcendental schematism; it is this dog Borges takes for a philosophical walk in the park: "The concept of a dog signifies a rule in accordance with which my imagination can specify the shape of a four-footed animal in general, without being restricted to any simple particular shape that experience offers me or any possible image that I can exhibit *in concreto*" [273; A141/B180]. This is the dog Borges trots out; it is Kant's dead dog.

Why is Kant's dog always already dead? The dog is dead because it can live only insofar as it is temporal; yet, in order to be conceived it cannot be temporal. All objects of experience, according to Kant, can be such only insofar as they are temporally determined.<sup>31</sup> For time, in Kant's understanding, is the pure form of intuition, and there can be no objects of cognition that are not grounded in possible intuitions of sense. Yet concepts are not themselves temporal. How, then, does Kant arrive at the conceptual unity of the object that is "as such" only a manifold of appearances and therefore as yet unconstituted "as such"? In order to answer this question, Kant sketches out the threefold synthesis necessary to any possible conceptuality: that of the apprehension of appearances in the intuition, of the reproduction of representations in the imagination, and of recognition under concepts of the understanding. The synthesis of reproduction in the imagination, whether empirical or transcendental, is the most important of the three, in part because without this synthesis sensibility could never be accommodated to the understanding and thus no knowledge would be possible. As Kant explains, without the synthesis of reproduction, "Not even the purest and most fundamental representations of space and time could ever arise" [230; A102].

Were the synthesis of reproduction impossible, there could be no cognition, but not simply because there would be no concepts of the understanding; on the contrary, Kant asserts, without the synthesis of reproduction there could not even be "the purest and most fundamental representations of space and time," which means there would be no intuitions of sense to provide content to concepts. Thus concepts would remain empty. This means that "before" the possibility of the a priori intuition of space and time, there

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31. Kant writes: "Wherever our representations may arise, whether through the influence of external things or as the effect of inner causes, whether they have originated a priori or empirically as appearances—as modifications of the mind they nevertheless belong to inner sense, and as such all of our cognitions are in the end subjected to the formal condition of inner sense, namely time, as that in which they must all be ordered, connected, and brought into relations. This is a general remark on which one must ground everything that follows" [228; A98–99].

is *already* repetition, reproduction. Hence, before the forms of space and time—and in the Transcendental Aesthetic Kant privileges time, the form of inner sense—there is already time or, rather, temporalization insofar as there is already repetition, a doubling that cannot not take time even as it makes possible the consolidation of time “itself” as an intuition of sense. Thus, on Kant’s account, there must be time or temporalization *before* time; and the place or site—the citation—of this temporalization is the imagination, which Kant says operates spontaneously. The imagination interrupts; it arrives unexpectedly. In its spontaneity, the imagination is free.<sup>32</sup>

The synthesis of reproduction makes possible retention, which is necessary to the possibility of thought, because without retention we could not sustain a thought from its beginning to its end. Kant does not, however, figure retention as uninterrupted perdurance or absolute self-sameness or constancy; on the contrary, he understands retention as the transcendental necessity of repetition. “Now it is obvious,” Kant asserts, “that if I draw a line in thought, *or think of the time from one noon to the next*, or even want to represent a certain number to myself, I must necessarily first grasp one of these manifold representations *after another* in my thoughts. But if I were always to lose the preceding representations (the first parts of the line, the preceding points of time, or the successively represented units) from my thoughts and *not reproduce them when I proceed to the following ones*, then no whole representation and none of the previously mentioned thoughts, *not even the purest and most fundamental representations of space and time, could ever arise*” [230; A102, emphasis added].<sup>33</sup> Although time is the formal condition of all sensibility and thus the ground of all cognitions of experience, what it gives to consciousness in the form of appearances or representations is unknowable outside of or before their homogenization with a concept of the understanding in schematism. There is no cognition, hence no experience of time prior to sensibility’s (i.e., time’s) schematization with categories of the understanding. What is cognizable must therefore be determined temporally. This means that insofar as in sensibility time is the form of succession, in order for there to be the cognition of time, that is, an experience of time, there must be the possibility of time’s determination in the transcendental operation of the imagination. The possibility of the cognition of time thus depends on time’s being interrupted, its being repeated or doubled, in the synthesis of reproduction. The temporalization of the concept of time in the schematism therefore synthesizes time, determines it, precisely in order to reproduce—that is, synthesize—time as an object of cognition. Were time not reproduced and thus represented as an object of cognition, we could not know that time is change; indeed, we could not say that time *is* at all. In sum, Kant’s determination of time as the a priori form of inner sense is possible only in the transcendental possibility of repetition in the spontaneous operation of the imagination. In other words, time can be posited only as being in itself, or as Kant puts it, as “Time itself” and as that which “does not elapse” [275; A144], only if “time” is

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32. *Because it is free, the imagination is unruly. Thus Kant attempts to delimit its field of play within the first Critique, and he dismisses it altogether from the second Critique, which concerns practical (that is, ethical) concerns. But insofar as the imagination is spontaneous, it might be worth considering it as the faculty of freedom.*

33. *Kant’s example of thought’s need for retention and thus for reproduction, “one noon to the next,” already indicates the problem of schematism’s relation to transcendental apperception, for noon is the “time” that never shows “itself” even in its diurnal repetition. It is, then, the return of the same that nevertheless could never be constituted as an “itself” in Kant’s conceptualization were there no unity of consciousness, what Kant calls transcendental apperception; yet, at the same time, the necessary unity of consciousness for auto-affection is made impossible by the failure of noon to show up. For important readings of noon in Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*, see Derrida, *Ear 1–38*; and Gasché, “Autobiography.”*

always already temporalized in the transcendental imagination.<sup>34</sup> Kant can conceptualize an unchanging time and thus can argue that “change does not affect time itself” only if schematism provides a priori for the possibility of sensibility—and of time as pure form—as a sensible concept of the understanding.

It is clear that schematism or the transcendental operation of the imagination determines time in the understanding and thus renders time knowable as such. Indeed, we could say that insofar as it determines time transcendently, schematism produces the unity of time or the possibility of time *in itself*. Accordingly, schematism is constitutive neither of the understanding nor of sensibility, but of the possibility of cognition, which requires the homogenization of intuitions of sense with concepts of the understanding. Despite its constitutive necessity, however, Kant remains troubled by the possible side effects of the imagination’s spontaneity, so much so that he attempts throughout the *Critique of Pure Reason* to delimit its field of play, and in the *Critique of Practical Reason* he excludes it altogether. Stated another way, if Kant’s principal example of schematism is the dog, he recognizes that we could never take the dog for a walk without schematism, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, because schematism is necessarily free or spontaneous, it is always possible that this dog will run away from us [see Menninghaus 1–2, 15–31]. In short, Kant needs a leash. But once he attaches the dog to the leash, what will keep the dog from coming to its end?

It should be obvious that Kant is in a something of a bind. On the one hand, the imagination is necessary to cognition; on the other hand, it threatens the very security of transcendental philosophy. In Kant’s account, because schematism is always an operation of the productive or transcendental imagination, it is the synthesis that makes possible sensible conceptualization; it is therefore the possibility of the *cognition* of temporalization, hence of time as movement, change. But as productive, it is also spontaneous, free, unruly. Although necessary to Kant’s determination of the “in itself” of the concept of time, the imagination, according to Kant’s most extensive elaboration of it in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, cannot be said to have an “itself.”

Because anthropology is an empirical science, the *Anthropology* rightly concerns only the empirical imagination, which Kant calls the “sensory productive faculty” [*Anthropology* 64].<sup>35</sup> It is, of course, for precisely this reason that Heidegger dismisses Kant’s “attempt to experience by means of Anthropology what is more original about the power of imagination” as “unsuccessful” [Kant 93]. Nevertheless, despite this necessary limitation, Rodolphe Gasché argues, the operation of the empirical imagination “reveals certain traits and presuppositions that must have their corresponding structures in transcendental imagination” [“Leaps” 38]. The most important operation of the imagination in the *Anthropology* is the synthesis of temporality in the faculty of designation: “The faculty of understanding the present as a means of connecting the conception of what is foreseen with that of the past is the faculty of designation. The action of the mind in effecting this connection is designation (*signatio*), which is also called signaling” [*Anthropology* 83]. The present is the location of designation, which can only point away from “itself” in pointing toward the past and the future. Past and future are associated with one another in a present that can never be present “itself,” which means the location of the imagination is incessant *dislocation* and that it is the irreducibly vanishing limit of designation. The imagination, therefore, is the infinitely divisible site of temporalization. Pointing away from any possible “itself” and thus constantly vacating the possibility of an “in itself,” the imagination temporalizes.

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34. Writing on Hegel’s semiology, Derrida notes that in Kant, “the movement of the transcendental imagination is the movement of temporalization” [Margins 79].

35. It is important to remember that what the *Anthropology* calls productive imagination corresponds to what the *Critique of Pure Reason* calls reproductive imagination.



One of the effects of such temporalization, however, is the necessary possibility of the failure of the understanding, for in pointing away from “itself” and toward another, it is always possible that the imagination misses its mark. “All language,” Kant writes, “is a signification of thought; the supreme way of indicating thought is by language, the greatest instrument for understanding ourselves and others. Thinking is speaking to ourselves. . . . Consequently, there is also hearing ourselves inwardly (by means of the reproductive imagination)” [83]. This means, simply, that we talk to ourselves in the same way we talk to others. We understand ourselves, our thought, through language, which always comes to us from another and which always necessarily points away from itself in pointing toward thought. Yet, Kant explains, such understanding, which can never be immediate self-understanding, because the condition of possibility of understanding is time—that is, designation, referral—is never secure: “Yet even those who can speak and hear do not always understand either themselves or others” [85]. Because it is always possible that one might understand neither oneself nor others, the possibility of misunderstanding must be considered a *necessary* part of the structure of designation [see Derrida, *Limited Inc.* 48]. The temporalization necessary to communication, and therefore to the economy of sense and the calculation of meaning, also necessarily inscribes within that economy the possibility of *not* making sense; thus, it necessitates—as the condition of possibility of any meaning at all—a calculating with that which makes meaning impossible, the incalculable.<sup>36</sup> In Kant there is no meaning without a synthesis of temporality, and there is no synthesis of temporality without the faculty of designation, which requires, as the constitutive possibility of making sense, a look away from the present and thus a look away from the site that traditionally has been designated as the guarantor of the meaning of being. In other words, the faculty of designation necessarily inscribes the effects of time within the ostensibly closed circuit of sense, thus opening it toward the constitutive possibility of having been always already shorted out. No doubt the unruliness of the imagination gives Kant pause, for the imagination grounds all possible knowledge: “The principle of the necessary unity of the pure (productive) synthesis of the imagination prior to apperception is thus the ground of the possibility of all cognition, especially that of experience” [*Critique of Pure Reason* 238; A118]. What Kant elides in this passage is the constitutive *disunity*, *dislocation*, of the imagination. The synthesis of the imagination makes possible all cognition, but the imagination cannot be unified and thus cannot be conceived as the *ground* for cognition.

According to Kant, the highest degree of the faculty of designation “is called attribution” [*Anthropology* 83]. If Gasché is correct in noting that the structure of the operation of the empirical or reproductive imagination reveals presuppositions and traits of the transcendental or productive imagination, then it is necessary to ask in what way the highest degree of transcendental imagination can be understood as attribution. The answer has already been suggested: Kant argues that between sensibility and understanding “it is clear there must be a third thing, which must stand in homogeneity with the category on the one hand and the appearance on the other, and makes possible the application of the former to the latter. . . . Such a representation is the **transcendental schematism**” [*Critique of Pure Reason* 272; A138/B177]. Here it is not necessary to rehearse yet again the operation of schematism; of interest is only its mediating function, on the one hand, and its elision, on the other. In making possible the subsumption

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36. Derrida writes, “It is, finally, to the extent that talking always involves two, at least two (at least in the ‘at least’ of this ‘at least two,’ the structure of which is indestructible even when it enters into the composition of vast polylogues of  $2 + n$  voices), to the extent, then, that there is dialogue, there can be lie and inviolate secret” [Given Time 151].

of appearances to categories, schematism works like the faculty of designation insofar as it *attributes* images to concepts and *applies* concepts to images. Yet the schema is neither an image nor a concept;<sup>37</sup> rather, it is the rule of their possible homogenization. As that which mediates images and concepts, the schema is necessarily temporal: “an application of the category to appearances becomes possible by means of the transcendental time determination, which, as the schema of the concept of the understanding, mediates the subsumption of the latter under the former” [272; A139/B178]. In mediating sensibility and the understanding, even at the level of transcendental, schematism necessarily points away from “itself.” It never shows up “as such.” As Kant explains: “This schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their mere form is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty” [273; A141/B180–81].<sup>38</sup> In fact, to lay schematism before our eyes unveiled would already be to have lost sight of schematism, for the schema is neither an appearance nor an image, but only the transcendental time-determination that makes possible the homogenization, the coming-together or synthesis, of the category and appearances, of the universal and the particular. Following Kant’s logic, it must be impossible—not simply difficult—to see schematism, to have sensible intuition of it, although the condition of possibility of seeing anything at all depends on schematism.<sup>39</sup>

Insofar as schematism is the transcendental operation of attribution, however, according to the logic of empirical imagination and the faculty of designation, *misattribution* must be possible, which possibility must therefore be constitutive of the relation of sensibility and understanding. In other words, because temporalization is necessary to the operation of attribution—whether empirically as the referral of past and future in an infinitely divisible present that cannot present “itself” or transcendently as the attribution of images to concepts in a schematism that disappears in its mediating operation—it is always possible, hence necessary, that *misattribution* happen. It is always possible that images be *misattributed* to concepts, just as it is always possible that in talking to ourselves we *misunderstand* ourselves. Kant already recognized this possibility in the first *Critique*: “I note only that when we compare the thoughts that an author expresses about a subject, in ordinary speech as well as in writings, it is not at all unusual to find that we understand him even better than he understood himself, since he may not have determined his concept sufficiently and hence sometimes spoke, or even thought, contrary to his own intention” [396; A314/B370].

Whereas Kant admits the empirical possibility of such misapprehension in the *Anthropology*, to do so in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is much more damaging, for to admit that it is possible that images and concepts can be misattributed transcendently

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37. Heidegger’s reading of the schema in terms of the schema-image notwithstanding [see Heidegger, Kant 65–80 and 121–36].

38. In the *Critique of Judgment*, which does not concern determinative but only reflective judgments, Kant outlines the synthesis that, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he understands as the “synthesis of apprehension in sensibility.” What is of interest here is Kant’s understanding that this is likewise a synthesis—schematic in its structure—that escapes representation: “The universal communicability of the sensation (of satisfaction or dissatisfaction), and indeed one that occurs without concepts, the unanimity, so far as possible, of all times and peoples about this feeling in the representation of certain objects: although weak and hardly sufficient for conjecture, this is the empirical criterion of the derivation of a taste, confirmed by examples, from the common ground, deeply buried in all human beings, of unanimity in the judging of forms under which objects are given to them” [116; 5: 231–32, emphasis added]. On this issue, see Japaridze 69–71.

39. For the argument that transcendental schematism has a necessarily empirical, thus material, support, see Johnson.

undermines Kant's claim to have determined and explained the universal structure of the possibility of cognition. That transcendental misattribution is possible is nevertheless the inevitable conclusion of Kant's understanding of schematism as temporalization. Accordingly, in order to save the Critical project, Kant must find a way to restrain time, to put it on a leash and thus choke off its infinite referral. He does so by positing a point of absolute referentiality. Although the transcendental synthesis of the imagination is necessary for all knowledge, it is also the case, Kant insists, that "without consciousness that that which we think is the very same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be in vain" [*Critique of Pure Reason* 230; A103]. As the possibility of attribution, schematism makes possible the reproduction of representations and thus the homogenization of sensibility and understanding, but because schematism is constitutive temporalization, it cannot guarantee the identity necessary to thought; indeed, as Gasché points out, the imagination is always already distracted from "itself." Because schematism is not an immediate operation, but rather constitutive mediation, the attribution it effects can never be certain; the identification it exercises between appearances and concepts can only ever be provisional. Kant solves this problem by positing a unity of consciousness, which in the *Anthropology* he calls the "ego-concept," by virtue of which a man "remains one and the same person despite all the vicissitudes which may befall him" [*Anthropology* 9]. This same solution, however, will not work for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, because the *Anthropology's* ego-concept is empirical apperception, which, as Kant explains in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is "forever variable," hence, "it can provide no standing or abiding self in the stream of inner appearances" [232; A107]. Insofar as it is a "consciousness of oneself" determined by "internal perception" [232; A107], empirical apperception cannot provide the a priori ground of cognition, for "no cognitions can occur in us," Kant writes, "no connection and unity among them, without that unity of consciousness that precedes all data of the intuitions, and in relation to which all representation of objects alone is possible" [232; A107].

It is worth recalling what is at stake here. Experience, which is another name for the possibility of cognizing sense perceptions, is only possible in the spontaneous operation of the imagination to schematize intuitions of sensibility and concepts of the understanding. Schematism is thus the tracing that effects a transcendental time-determination as temporalization, the becoming sensible of understanding and the becoming conceptual of sensibility. But because the imagination is spontaneous and temporal, that is, because the imagination cannot be located in itself, it is always liable to *misattribution*, which makes Kant nervous. For this reason he ties the imagination to a ground that remains unaffected by time, to a "pure, original, unchanging consciousness" [232; A107], "the standing and lasting I" that "constitutes the correlate of all our representations" [240; A123]: "transcendental apperception" [232; A107]. Transcendental apperception is not a concept of the understanding; nor is it an object of sense. It is neither intuitable nor cognizable as such. It is the unity of consciousness, the "I think" that accompanies all my representations without ever being an object of representation. This unity of consciousness guarantees that all my representations belong to the same consciousness. Without the possibility that all my thoughts and representations belonged to the same consciousness, Kant remarks, "There would . . . be no determinate connection" of these representations, "but merely unruly heaps of them" [239; A121]. The transcendental unity of consciousness, transcendental apperception, functions as the dog's leash: "It is this apperception that *must be added* to the pure imagination in order to make its function intellectual" [240; A124, emphasis added]. According to Kant, then, "We therefore have a pure imagination, as a fundamental faculty of the human soul, that grounds all cognition a priori" [241; A124]; yet its necessity for the pos-



sibility of cognition notwithstanding, the imagination's spontaneity, which precisely makes possible all sensibility and understanding as well as their mediation in cognition, also always threatens to go astray, to run off, wander, err. The transcendental imagination temporalizes and thus makes possible both the pure forms of sensibility (space and time) and cognition insofar as it determines the time of the concept; but this same spontaneity—which is neither time *itself* (which can only be a determinate time, hence a time schematized, but there is no schema of schematism) nor time in itself (for were it *in itself* it would no longer be spontaneous and mediating), but rather time as ecstatic, time as always already not one with or in itself, but time *beside itself*—cannot be contained, leashed, without becoming what it is not. In tying imagination to transcendental apperception, Kant holds the leash too tightly; it becomes a noose. The dog can't run around; it has no time for spontaneity, no time for life.

It would be a mistake to try to make "Funes el memorioso" follow Kant too strictly, to make Borges's dog heel to Kant; but it is nonetheless clear that insofar as Funes perceives anything at all, he is capable of a synthesis of temporality. He is incapable, however, of reining in that synthesis, of limiting its spontaneity, its play. In Funes, the synthesis of the imagination in schematism has always already run off, been distracted, leaped away. Indeed, as Funes tells Borges, the narrator, "*my memory, sir, is like a garbage heap*" [*Collected Fictions* 135],<sup>40</sup> which Kant suggested would be the exact condition of an imagination that synthesized intuitions of sense and concepts of the understanding but without the possibility of referring these sensible concepts to an always already unified consciousness. Thus, understood within this Kantian frame, Funes lacks neither the empirical faculty of designation nor the transcendental possibility of schematism. Rather, he lacks the leash, transcendental apperception, the atemporal ground of the possibility of the unity of thought that nonetheless brings all thought to a halt insofar as it disciplines and orders thought. Transcendental apperception operates as the auto-abortion of all thought insofar as it denies that which is constitutive of the possibility of life and thought in the first place: time. Borges does not challenge the necessity of temporal synthesis for the possibility of thought; such a challenge would be absurd. In the figure of Funes he both articulates the necessity of the synthesis of time and jeopardizes the Kantian solution to the imagination's unruliness, namely, the atemporal anchor for the synthesis of temporality. This is clear from Borges's insistence on Funes's preoccupation with time both before and after the fall, which is to say, then, that the fall can be construed as neither a fall into nor out of time; rather, to credit Borges's reading of Saint Augustine, perhaps we fall *with* time.<sup>41</sup> "Cronométrico" Funes is Funes el memorioso insofar as no perception and no memory—however "absolute" and infallible—are ever possible without temporal determination, without the determination that takes time. Yet, because time can never be "in itself," because time can never be total or totalized, there can never be absolute, infallible perception or memory. Nor can there be a nontemporal location from which to determine time.

The upshot of this conclusion is that the solution to the problem of Funes's inability to think because of his too particular apprehension of the world and his too capacious memory, which result in his desire for an absolutely particular language, could never be an absolutely universal language. Borges dismissed this possibility in "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins," which was included in *Otras inquisiciones* in 1952, but was

40. "Mi memoria, señor, es como vaciadero de basuras" [*Obras completas 1*: 488].

41. Borges writes: "Hay una sentencia muy linda de San Agustín, que dice: Non in tempore, sed cum tempore Deus creavit caela et terram (*es decir: No en el tiempo, sino con el tiempo, Dios creó los cielos y la tierra*)" [*Obras completas 4*: 202] (*There is a beautiful sentence of Saint Augustine's that says, Non in tempore, sed cum tempore Deus creavit caela et terram [that is: Not in time, but with time, God created the heavens and the earth]*) [*my translation*].

first published in *La Nación* in 1942, which is to say, it was published in the same year “Funes” was written. In the note on Wilkins, Borges locates the origin of the project of an absolutely universal language in a letter in which Descartes remarks that “by using the decimal system of numeration, we could learn in a single day to name all quantities to infinity, and to write them in a new language, the language of numbers; he also proposed the creation of a similar, general language that would organize and contain all human thought” [*Selected Non-Fictions* 230].<sup>42</sup> A universal language would require that the meaning of every word be absolutely transparent; such a language would admit no translation, whether intra- or interlingual. This is the point of Borges’s ironic remarks about the Royal Spanish Academy’s claims for the expressiveness of the Spanish language at the same time that the “same Royal Academy produces a dictionary every few years in order to define those words” [229–30].<sup>43</sup> In short, all Spanish’s expressiveness expresses nothing but more words: every word expresses “itself” only in *other words*. A universal language, however, would be unable to do this, for at the moment more than one word meant the same thing, the universal language would necessarily require translation. Particularity would have crept into the universal system, interrupting it, forcing its repetition, definition. According to Borges, Wilkins understood this: “In the universal language conceived by Wilkins in the middle of the seventeenth century, each word defines itself” [230].<sup>44</sup> We know very well where this ends up: the wonderful arbitrariness of the Chinese encyclopedia, which nevertheless is neither more nor less arbitrary than any language.<sup>45</sup> “[O]bviously there is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and speculative,” Borges writes, and the reason is simple: “there is no universe in the organic, unifying sense of that ambitious word” [231].<sup>46</sup> In Borges’s account, there is no difference between so-called particular and universal languages. An absolutely universal language in which every thing is called by its own name, in which every word defines only itself, is finally nothing other than Funes’s dream of an absolutely particular language. Both posit a language without referral, a language, then, that would not be temporal.<sup>47</sup> Yet language depends on the possibility of saying things (words) in other words, on the possibility of referentiality. A language in which every word defines itself, in which *cat* means “cat” without the possibility—that is, the necessity—of further definition in other words, would be both absolutely transparent and absolutely meaningless. It would be language as tautology. Such an absolutely particular language, which would also be an absolutely universal language, would also, of course, not be a language at all; in its absolute auto-identity, it would not be able to communicate anything, not even itself as communicative.

The identity articulated in phrases like “cat is cat” or “I am I” means something to any possible auditor/lector/speaker only insofar as the sentence is neither absolutely universal nor absolutely particular. If “cat” or “I” were ever absolutely universal or

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42. “[M]ediante el sistema decimal de numeración, podemos aprender en un solo día a nombrar todas las cantidades hasta el infinito y a escribirlas en un idioma Nuevo que es el de los guarismos; también había propuesto la formación de un idioma análogo, general, que organizara y abarcara todos los pensamientos humanos” [Obras completas 2: 84–85].

43. “[E]sa misma Real Academia elabora cada tantos años un diccionario, que define las voces del español” [2: 84].

44. “En el idioma universal que ideó Wilkins al promediar el siglo XVII, cada palabra se define a sí misma” [2: 84].

45. *For a reading of the Chinese encyclopedia as it figures at the outset of Foucault’s Les mots et les choses, see Wicks.*

46. “[N]otoriamente no hay clasificación del universo que no sea arbitraria y conjetural. . . . [N]o hay universo en el sentido orgánico, unificador, que tiene esa ambiciosa palabra” [2: 86].

47. *On this problem, see Bennington 132–33.*

particular, it would be impossible to say or write such phrases. It would be possible to say only “cat” or “I.” The copula, Borges explains, is the operator of *monstruation*, of a certain monstrous doubling and deception, which inscribes and invalidates the universality of any absolute, whether of universality or particularity.<sup>48</sup> “I am I,” therefore, is always already both more and less than the absolutely universal or absolutely particular articulation of identity; it is the becoming particular of the universal and the becoming universal of the particular. To put this in Kantian terms, this operation marks the becoming sensible of the concept and the becoming conceptual of the intuition of sense, without, however, ever being referred to a single, stable point of reference. The copula therefore does not indicate being in the sense of stasis, of existence; it notes the possibility of becoming, of temporalization without recourse to any unity, without the determination of an absolutely self-present unity of consciousness. As the minimal articulation of identity, “I am I” indicates the structure neither of absolutivity nor of absolute, but of attribution and thus of finitude. This means that the doubling or mirroring instantiated in and by the copula necessarily inscribes difference, duplicity, within the structure of identity. It is always possible—precisely as the condition of possibility of identification in general—that in saying, “I am,” I am *not* I. This is because, insofar as attribution is necessary, no identity, no identification can ever be immediately given. I can only ever be attributed to I; this would be the law of identification. If this were not the case, if in fact there were the absolute guarantee of identity, thus, immediate auto-identity, not only would referentiality be unnecessary, it would be impossible. But so too would I, for I am only the possibility of referral. This is only to say that I am not one, that I am always at least two.

Finally, this doubling that I am and that is constitutive of the possibility of perception in the first place—thus, as well, the very mark of perception’s *impossibility*—already operates in Borges’s description of the absolutely singularizing memory and infallible perception of Funes. Recall that when seen in a mirror, and this is the only way one can ever see one’s “own” face, Funes’s visage appears new to him, surprising. It is not his own. Funes’s perception of his face is always already mediated, temporalized, repeated and repeatable. Funes’s perception is marked by doubling and duplicity from before the beginning, “preprimordially” and “normally,” as Derrida will have said of Husserl.<sup>49</sup> Time is the condition of possibility of any perception, however “almost immediate” (*casi immediato*) it may be; it is indeed the impossible condition of possibility of such immediacy. Temporalization must therefore also be constitutive of transcendental apperception, which is, in Kant, an ostensibly immediate point of referral that nonetheless can only be thought, that is, conceived, in and through its perception. There is no immediate perception, contrary to Kant’s occasional claim in the first *Critique*,

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48. *The best-known example of the copula, but not the only one in Borges’s text, is “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” in Obras completas I: 431–43; Collected Fictions 68–81.*

49. *Derrida concludes Speech and Phenomena by claiming that “[n]ew names indeed will have to be used if we are to conceive as ‘normal’ and preprimordial what Husserl believed he could isolate as a particular and accidental experience, something dependent and secondary—that is, the indefinite drift of signs, as errance and change of scene (Verwanderlung), linking re-presentations (Vergegenwärtigungen) one to another without beginning or end. There never was any ‘perception’; and ‘presentation’ is a representation of the representation that yearns for itself therein as for its own birth or its death” [103]. In “Signature Event Context,” Derrida calls this gesture of exclusion “typical of the philosophical tradition” and notes, “It consists in recognizing that the possibility of the negative . . . is certainly a structural possibility, that failure is an essential risk in the operations under consideration; and then, with an almost immediately simultaneous gesture made in the name of a kind of ideal regulation, an exclusion of this risk as an accidental, exterior one that teaches us nothing . . .” [Margins 323].*

and there is no atemporal unity of consciousness, for the condition of possibility of conceiving such apperception, of cognizing it, necessarily displaces it into time.<sup>50</sup> As a consequence, Kant's unchanging I has no voice of its own, no voice that is not always already the voice of another, in which to call—to present or to make present—his dog. Borges has let him loose for good.

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50. It would be necessary here to work through the relation of transcendental apperception to Kant's equivocal gestures toward the possibility of immediate perception, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, Kant's understanding of the imagination as a fundamental faculty of the human soul, and thus necessarily available to inner sense, at the same time that he excludes schematism, an operation of the transcendental imagination, from the possibility of auto-presentation, that is, from being perceived.

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