

BORGES AND WITTGENSTEIN ON THE BORDERS OF LANGUAGE:  
THE ROLE OF SILENCE IN "THE GOD'S SCRIPT"  
AND THE *TRACTATUS LOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS*



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**I**n an often-quoted segment from the third part of the *Theologia Mistica*, Pseudo-Dionisius writes as follows:

The higher we soar in contemplation the more limited becomes our expression of that which is purely intelligible; even as now, when plunging into the darkness which is above the intellect, we pass not merely into brevity of speech, but even into absolute silence, of thoughts as well as of words... we mount upwards from below to that which is the highest, and according to the degree of transcendence, so our speech is restrained until, the entire ascent being accomplished, we become wholly voiceless, in as much as we are absorbed in him who is totally ineffable (in: Nieli 88).

Pseudo-Dionisius points here at an internal relation between transcendental experience and silence. In this view, the movement from the borders of the world towards the realm of the Divine entails a digression from the borders of language; this process also entails a digression from the borders of subjectivity, since the subject is being merged with the Divine in a mystical union.

In the following essay, the linkage between the borders of the world, the limits of language, and the borders of subjectivity will be

examined via a comparison of two texts: Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and Borges' "The God's Script" ("La escritura del Dios"). Both texts explore the nature and scope of language and culminate in a mysterious demand for complete silence. The *Tractatus* aims at delineating the limits of meaningful language and possible thought: "The whole sense of the book", writes Wittgenstein in his introduction, "might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence" (3). In the same manner, in Borges' story "The God's Script" the imprisoned priest Tzinacán strives to decipher a divine magical sentence which is written on the skin of the jaguar. After an arduous quest he experiences a mystical vision in which he observes the universe as an infinite wheel of causes and effects. Thereafter the priest manages to decipher the divine sentence at last, and yet, most surprisingly, he refuses to pronounce the words that will grant him omnipotence power and he dies in silence.

I will try to demonstrate hereunder that, since the borders of the world are also the borders of language and subjectivity, silence in both texts is an indispensable consequence of the transcendental digression. In this view silence will be the expression of: 1) the viewpoint of the world from the outside, which Wittgenstein calls 'sub specie aeterni', and 2) the transition from psychological subjectivity to the 'metaphysical subject'.

#### A. SILENCE AND THE BORDERS OF LANGUAGE IN WITTGENSTEIN'S *TRACTATUS*

The phenomenon of silence is an ancient philosophical issue. Aristotle remarks that Kratylyus, the disciple of Heraclitus, used to move his finger in silence instead of talking in order to indicate that all things are in constant flux and hence it is impossible to provide any verbal description of the world (*Metaphysics* XI: 1010<sup>a</sup>12). Accordingly, some of the ancient Greek religious cults demanded absolute secrecy thus the name of one of these cults, '*mysterion*', means literally 'to close (one's mouth)', i.e. to keep the holy truth hidden and unspoken (Mortley 114). While silence of the religious rites is an ethical demand, the philosophical silence of Kratylyus is a metaphysical necessity that indicates the essential impossibility to speak due to

the nature of reality. Nevertheless, it seems that it was in Plato's dialogues that the seeds of serious linguistic skepticism are being sowed. Plato's attack on the written-word in the *Phaedrus* is well known. Here the written word is compared to motionless and helpless pictures which "if asked a question they remain solemnly silence" (*Phaedrus* 275d); Moreover, the written word damages memory and wisdom, hence it is an obstacle to real knowledge. Plato manifests a more substantial doubt concerning language in the *Sophist*. Here the analysis of the dialectical method, meant to separate entities, culminates with entities which are beyond knowledge and discourse: "The separation of each thing from all the others is the ultimate destruction of all discourse. For discourse comes through the combination of ideas with each other" (259e). Finally, Plato manifests his utmost linguistic skepticism in the *Seventh Epistle*, where he categorically negates any possibility to express his philosophy since language is essentially a 'weak instrument', an inappropriate medium for the manifestation of Truth (341 d-e). Such a platonic skepticism, preceded by the linguistic nihilism of the Sophists (especially Gorgias), was the springboard of a process which undermined the philosophical status of language (*logos*) and uplifted silence (*sige*), up to the point that the circle of Gnosticism held silence to be the impregnable expression of reality (Mortley 124). As remarked by Mortley:

Somewhere in the history of Greek thought there begun to develop a deep suspicion of discourse, and the corresponding belief that lack of words, or silence, would convey the deepest meaning sought... words came to be seen as directing attention to something which they themselves fail to capture... consequently the trend in late antiquity is to stress that the word itself, whether spoken, written or thought, may distract the mind from its goal of conceiving transcendent realities (110)

Such a preoccupation with the limits and the nature of language is also the philosophical core of modern era. This linguistic preoccupation is salient in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* which was labeled by one of its commentators 'the critique of pure language' (Stenius 220). Wittgenstein declares the goal of the book in his introduction:

The whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence. Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather – not to thought but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought). It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense (3)

The goal of the *Tractatus* is to delineate the boundaries of meaningful language which will lead towards the dissolution of pseudo-philosophical problems (4.112, 6.53, 6.521). Language, then, is the key for the solution of philosophical problems – and here lies the positive role of silence. Although we cannot think the other side of the boundary of thought, we can think the other side of the boundaries of speech – which is silence. Without silence on the other side it wouldn't have been possible to draw the boundary of language whatsoever, for in order to draw a meaningful boundary there must be something thinkable outside it (Black 308); thus silence is a necessary condition to the possibility of meaningful discourse. The importance of silence can be also seen in the motto of the book, drawn from Kürnberger: "... and whatever a man knows, whatever is not mere rumbling and roaring that he has heard, can be said in three words." Here, genuine knowledge is linked with meaningful language that ought to be surrounded not by the noise of 'mere rumbling and roaring', but by silence which is the expression of the realm of value (*Tractatus* 7). The relation between discourse and silence is not, then, a mere logical antithesis; silence constitutes the possibility of meaningful discourse by being its background, as Wittgenstein remarks in *Culture and Value*: "Perhaps what is inexpressible (what I find mysterious and am not able to express) is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning" (16e).

From this viewpoint, the arduous task of the book, the definition of the general form of any meaningful proposition, can be conceived as delineating the realm of silence, the realm of value or ethics, from the inside. As Wittgenstein writes to Ficker concerning his book:

My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is exactly this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside... I believe that where many others today are just guessing, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it (in: Engelmann, 143)

The sphere of the ethical, the transcendental realm which contains the most important things (i.e., ethics, aesthetics, the meaning of life, the mystical, religion, God) is being expressed only via silence whose opposite is nonsense as a feeble attempt to say what can only be shown (Black 379-381). Drawing the limits of meaningful language is thus the means, while the end of the book is to establish from the inside the realm of value *beyond* the reach of science. This is why Wittgenstein takes the unwritten part of the book to be the most significant. Engelmann, an intimate friend of Wittgenstein, supports this view:

When he nevertheless takes immense pains to delimit the unimportant, it is not the coastline of the island which he is bent on surveying with such meticulous accuracy, but the boundary of the ocean (97)

The dichotomy of fact and value, or world and transcendence, is being manifested within language in Wittgenstein's Showing Doctrine (see Mualem), which presents a sharp distinction between what can be said and what can be shown. In this doctrine, every proposition in language comprises two essentially different elements: 1) a bipolar statement that represents a possible fact in the world; 2) logical form that is being mirrored by language (*Tractatus* 4.12). Thus, Wittgenstein declares in 4.121:

Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them. What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent. What expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by means of language. Propositions *show* the logical form of reality. They display it.

From the viewpoint of the Showing Doctrine, it can be perceived that silence is the substratum whereon language shows its internal logical form. *We must be silent so that what we cannot speak of would*

*show itself via language*<sup>1</sup>. Wittgenstein, then, draws the boundaries of language; yet this blueprint of language is also the scope of the world. The argument is as follows:

- Logical space underlies language: “a proposition can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it” (*Tractatus* 3.42)
- Logic is the scope of the world: “logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits” (5.61).
- Thus, the limits of language are also the limits of the world: “*The limits of my language means the limits of my world*” (5.6).

The subjective formulation of 5.6 is not haphazard. ‘*my world*’ and ‘*my language*’ indicate that subjectivity is a dominant factor in the act of delineation of both language and world. Accordingly, propositions 5.6-5.641 deal with the relation between subjectivity and the world from the viewpoint of solipsism which Wittgenstein holds as essentially true yet unutterable (5.62). What is clear at this point is that Wittgenstein draws a very intimate internal link between language, world, and the self – as manifested in the conclusion of 5.62: “The world is my world: this is manifested in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) means the limits of *my world*”; hence “I am my world. (The microcosm)” (5.63). These propositions could have been conceived as a conspicuous declaration of solipsism, yet Wittgenstein continues to negate any possibility of speaking about the self, for the real metaphysical self does not belong to the world but rather “it is a limit of the world” (5.632). In this sense, the self of solipsism “shrinks to a point without extension” (5.64) so that he is located in the world like the eye in visual field (5.633)<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, solipsism in the *Tractatus* coincides with pure realism: the self is nothing but the viewpoint, which is the necessary condition of the world, and there

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<sup>1</sup> The role of silence in this view resembles the act of constriction in the Cabbala of the Ari of Zefat (Jewish Mysticism of Fray Yizhak Lurie Ashkenazy): in this stance, God constricts itself and a vacant space is being established; within this space the world will be created as a separate entity. God’s constriction as a negative act is the preliminary condition for the positive existence of an independent world (Scholem 105-108).

<sup>2</sup> This view accords with Schopenhauer’s observer of the object from an aesthetical viewpoint who becomes a pure will-less subject of knowing (Schopenhauer I: § 41).

only remains the reality “co-ordinated with it” (5.64). At this point two important conclusions can be drawn from Wittgenstein’s treatment of solipsism:

1. That the world is my world. As Anscomb puts it:

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world; but all languages have one and the same logic, and its limits are those of the world; therefore the limits of my world and the limits of the world are one and the same; therefore the world is my world (167).

2. Psychological subjectivity - which is within the world and which is hence being delineated by the metaphysical self that is the limit of the world - is being determined by language. In other words, it is language that forms subjectivity. As Tilghman puts it:

The metaphysical subject, the metaphysical ‘I’, is not something in the world, but the limit of the world. It has already been established, however, that the limits of my world are the limits of my language and from these equivalences obviously follows that the metaphysical ‘I’ is the limit of my language: I am my language (50).

The important point is that Wittgenstein establishes here a very unique equation in which the limits of the world (determined by logic) overlap the limits of language (determined by logic likewise) overlap the limits of the self (determined by the metaphysical ‘I’ which is the limit of the world) (Glock 447). This conclusion seems to be the crux of the system of the *Tractatus*: *in a methodological approach, it is language that indicates the boundaries of both the world and the self*<sup>3</sup>, which might explain why the *Tractatus* was nicknamed ‘the critique of pure language’ (Stenius 220).

The abovementioned analysis might illuminate the role of silence in the conclusive propositions of the *Tractatus*. It is true that Wittgenstein denies any possibility to say ‘the world has this in it, and this, but not that’, for “that would appear to presuppose that we were excluding certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case,

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<sup>3</sup> For the importance of language in delineating both the self and the world see also: Eli Freidlander 123-144. In his outlook, which reminds of the later thinking of Heidegger, the crux of the *Tractatus* is that the subject lives within the possibilities of language which pervade the world.

since it would require that logic should go beyond the limits of the world; for only in that way could it view those limits from the other side as well" (5.61). Yet, in the final stage of the book he deals with the unspeakable realm of value, manifesting 'the other side' of the boundary. He starts this stage with a declaration that the sense or value of the world must lie outside the world, since "In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: *in* it no value exists-and if it did exist, it would have no value." (6.41). Accordingly, God does not reveal himself within the world (6.432); the realm of value is placed outside the scope of the world.

And yet, what is the viewpoint from which the individual could observe value that is being located outside the world? Wittgenstein calls this viewpoint *sub specie aeterni*: "To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole – a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole- it is this that is mystical" (6.45). The literal meaning of the Latin notion 'sub specie aeterni' is 'under the aspect of eternity'. The notion appears in Spinoza's *Ethics* (part V, clause 26-33) thither the sage, reaching at the third and highest level of knowledge, perceives himself in relation to God as the totality of all things; thus, in Spinoza it is essentially the perspective of the divine mind.

Back to Wittgenstein, the notion of *sub specie aeterni* first appears in his Notebooks, in an aesthetical context that was probably driven from Schopenhauer (*Cambridge Companion* 439): "The work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*"<sup>4</sup>. This is the connexion between art and ethics" (*Notebooks* 83e). And in the *Tractatus* the notion of *sub specie aeterni* is a viewpoint of the world from outside, as a limited-whole, which is the mystical (6.45); thus it is clear that this viewpoint is essentially transcendental, i.e. a view *beyond* the scope of the world. In this stance, the observer necessarily digresses the limits of the world, so that it can be seen as a limited whole. Since the limits of the world are the limits of language, the viewpoint of *sub specie aeterni*, being transcendental, digresses language. The observer of the world from the viewpoint of *sub specie aeternitatis* is located

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<sup>4</sup> It seems that Wittgenstein does not distinguish between '*sub specie aeternitatis*' and '*sub specie aeterni*'.



beyond speech, in the realm of silence: *silence is the only possible expression of the mystical, seen sub specie aeterni*. In short: the transcendental viewpoint of the mystical is *sub specie aeternitatis*; the expression of the mystical is silence. The realm of value is, then, essentially ineffable in the *Tractatus*: "there are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical" (6.522). From the perspective of the Showing Doctrine, the latter proposition indicates that the mystical is the realm of showing, not of saying; though language cannot say the mystical, the mystical shows itself in language via the act of silence (Freidlander 148)<sup>5</sup>. From this viewpoint, it seems that the propositions of the *Tractatus* establish a process of apprenticeship, a movement towards the realm of value, so that the 'good' reader of the book goes beyond the limits of the world and of language. Thus, paradoxically, the propositions of the *Tractatus* are nonsense<sup>6</sup> according to its own meaning-criteria. Thus Wittgenstein admits in 6.54:

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them - as steps - to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.

'Throwing away the ladder' leaves the reader, the observer of the world *sub specie aeterni*, without words, beyond language. Now according to the abovementioned equation between subjectivity and the limits of language, the observer of the world *sub specie aeterni* is also being deprived from his psychological self and all that remains is an abstract metaphysical subject, 'a philosophical self', which is according to 5.641: "Not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the meta-

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<sup>5</sup> In the same manner, William James characterizes in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* mystical experience as being ineffable (293). Wittgenstein was deeply impressed by this book, as he writes to Russell in 22.6.12 (McGuinness 129).

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion in the question whether the *Tractatus* is self-refuting see: Freidlander, 146-153.

physical subject, the limit of the world – not a part of it”<sup>7</sup>. Consequently, the conclusive proposition of the *Tractatus* is a demand for silence: “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence” (7). Such a demand is the necessary outcome of two principles:

3. The realm of value is being located beyond the limits of the world hence beyond what can be spoken of. This is the scope of showing: we must be silent so that the ineffable could show itself. The viewpoint of the world *sub specie aeterni* is beyond what can be said by language.

4. Being located in the realm of value the observer loses his psychological subjectivity. There is no *one* that can speak, no individual self that can manifest its own world; there remains only an abstract philosophical self. The viewpoint of the world *sub specie aeterni* is beyond the limits of psychological subjectivity.

#### B. THE ROLE OF SILENCE IN BORGES’ “THE GOD’S SCRIPT”

According to George Steiner, poetical silence is a modern phenomenon although silence is an ancient philosophical problem. The silence of the poet is a refusal to write, “a suicidal rhetoric”, as it was in the case of Friedrich Hölderlin and Arthur Rimbaud. It is an act of “insurgency against the irresponsible abuse of words in our inhuman verbal culture” (47-49).

Let us turn now to Borges. In his œuvre, language is a frequent philosophical and literary issue. In an interview held in 1962, Borges considers language as the most important philosophical problem besides the notion of time (Jaén 119). In his essays and fiction he obsessively probes the phenomenon of language: its nature, its limits, its origin, its ability to express the universe. He also examines the possibilities of different kinds of languages such as nominalist language (“Funes el memorioso”), idealistic language (“Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”), Divine language (“La escritura del Dios”), Analytical Language (“El idioma analítico de John Wilkins”) and cabbalistic

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<sup>7</sup> For the resemblance of Wittgenstein’s ‘metaphysical self’ to Schopenhauer’s ‘abstract observer of the universe’ see: Glock 439.

language ("La rosa de Paracelso"). One of his most prominent stories, "The Library in Babel" ("La biblioteca de Babel"), depicts a universe which is actually a huge library: a linguistic universe. More specifically, among the linguistic issues that Borges probes, the notion of silence is a dominant problem. Silence is also the philosophical center of the story "The God's Script" ("La escritura del Dios").

Among the works that deal with Borges' treatment of language, there are two thorough studies that examine the issue of silence: Jaime Rest's *El laberinto del universo* and Gabriela Massuh's *Borges: Una estética del silencio*. Jaime Rest observes language as the central problem of Borges' work. He argues that Borges perceives language as a cage, so that the narrator dwells in 'a prison-house of language'. The main argument is that language is an imperfect medium and thus every attempt to depict the universe with words must be fragmentary and artificial (121-123). According to Rest, Borges' view of language could be summed up as nominalistic due to his harsh linguistic skepticism (193). Thus, Borges upholds the nominalistic silence that is the acknowledgement of language's weakness (195). This nominalistic silence, continues Rest, is equivalent to the mystical silence that is the refusal to utter any transcendental experience (172). Yet, it seems that one important distinction between the two is that nominalist silence refers to the relation of language and the world (of facts) whereas mystical silence refers only to the relation of language to the transcendental realm, which is beyond the world. Thus the *via negativa* of the mystics is meaningful only against the background of mundane language, while the nominalistic approach manifests an essential skepticism concerning the very nature of every possible language.

So the question remains open: what kind of silence does Borges uphold? Gabriela Massuh provides an alternative explanation. She observes silence as the cardinal poetic principle of Borges' aesthetics. Each one of his texts that deal with language, she argues, presents a process of abstracting language from its mundane features (space, time, etc.) up to the point where it culminates in silence (190). Silence, paradoxically, acts thus as a sort of transcendental language which expresses the whole range of possibilities simultaneously, without the act of elimination which is the necessary condi-

tion of every discourse (211-212). Silence is in this stance some kind of a ultra-language<sup>8</sup> which outreaches every concrete language, and the upmost goal of Borges' work is to reach at this transcendental language; hence it can be characterizes as an 'aesthetics of silence' (239). This outlook is indeed stimulating, yet the definition of silence as an archetypical language is, being paradoxical, logically problematic and raises some severe philosophical problems: what is the ontological status of such a language? Is every kind of silence, that of the dead for instance, a hyper-language? If silence is language and language is language, what is not-language? And so on. At this point, in addition to these commentaries and in the light of the abovementioned Wittgenstenian analysis, I will try to illuminate hereunder the role of silence in Borges' "The God's Script."

Firstly, a short sketch of the plot should be drawn. Tzinacán is the imprisoned priest of the pyramid of Qaholom which was destroyed by Pedro de Alvarado. Although being harshly tortured, he kept silent and didn't extradite the hiding place of the treasure. He lies in the darkness of his deep rounded prison. On the other side of the wall paces a jaguar. In order to fill up the passing time he begins to explore his memories. One day he remembers an ancient tradition: God has concealed in the world a magical sentence in the first day of creation; the decipherer of this sentence will gain an omnipotence power and overmaster evil. Tzinacán dedicates his whole being to the search for the divine sentence, the God's script. He finds out that the sentence is written on the fur of the jaguar, his imprisoned companion. After an arduous effort, the old priest envisions a mystical revelation: the total universe is seen as an infinite wheel of causes and effects. Then he deciphers the meaning of the God's script; he should only pronounce its fourteen words in order to be omnipotent and yet he refuses to speak and lies in silence in the darkness of his prison, waiting for his death:

Pero yo sé que nunca diré esas palabras, porque ya no me acuerdo de Tzinacán. Que muera conmigo el misterio que está escrito en los tigres. Quien ha entrevistado el universo, quien ha entrevistado los ar-

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<sup>8</sup> This stance resembles Heidegger's later mystical thought, where he tries to constitute the science of silence: *sigelogy* (from the Greek word 'sige', 'silence').

dientes designios del universo, no puede pensar en un hombre, en sus triviales dichas o desventuras, aunque ese hombre sea él. Ese hombre *ha sido el* y ahora no le importa. Qué le importa la suerte de aquel otro, qué le importa la nación de aquel otro, si él, ahora es nadie. Por eso no pronuncio la fórmula, por eso dejo que me olviden los días, acostado en la oscuridad (OC 1: 599).

Tzinacán's silence is the crux of the plot and also its cardinal enigma: for if he was willing to make such an enormous effort in order to decipher the God's script, why should he refuse to utter it once he has unmasked its meaning? And what is the relation between his mystical vision and his silence? These questions might be clarified via the viewpoint of the *Tractatus*: from this view, the main reason for Tzinacán mysterious silence is the digression from the limits of language and the self.

Let us turn to examine the figure of Tzinacán. Captured in his cell, the old priest is characterized most of all by silence. Being solitary, he leads an idealistic existence, a life within memory and thoughts. The whole plot is actually an inner monologue of Tzinacán; as Plato defines it, thought is some kind of silent discourse: "thought is a voiceless inner dialogue of the soul with itself" (*Sophist* 263e). Moreover, Tzinacán maintains his silence despite his torture (OC 1: 596). And when he does speak it is a paradoxical speech: he cries against the dumb prison walls where no one can hear him (597), and thereafter he cries in his dream when it was impossible to speak: the send crushes his mouth (597). His characteristic silence is most prominent when he refuses to pronounce the God's script.

The essence of the God's script, "una sentencia mágica", is as follows: 1) it is magical - it maintains an omnipotent power which can change the course of time (599); 2) It is mythical - it was written in the first day of creation (596); 3) it is divine - it was written by God hence it represents the possibility of an inhuman language: an absolute archetypical language. Indeed, Tzinacán reflects upon the nature of such a sentence:

¿Qué tipo de sentencia (me pregunté) construirá una mente absoluta? Consideré que aun en los lenguajes humanos no hay proposición que no implique el universo entero; decir *el tigre* es decir los tigres que lo engendraron, los ciervos y tortugas que devoró, el pasto de

que se alimentaron los ciervos, la tierra que fue madre del pasto, el cielo que dio luz a la tierra. Consideré que en el lenguaje de un dios toda palabra enunciaría esa infinita concatenación de los hechos, y no de un modo implícito, sino explícito, y no de un modo progresivo, sino inmediato (598).

God's language is examined against the background of human speech. While the universe is only implicit and being presented diachronically and fragmentarily in the latter, it is explicit and simultaneous in the former. The divine sentence is thus a symbol of an archetypal language:

Con el tiempo, la nación de una sentencia divina parecióme pueril o blasfematoria. Un dios, reflexioné, sólo debe decir una palabra y en esa palabra la plenitud. Ninguna voz articulada por él puede ser inferior al universo o menos que la suma del tiempo. Sombras o simulacros de esa voz que equivale a un lenguaje y a cuanto puede comprender un lenguaje son las ambiciosas y pobres voces humanas, *todo, mundo, universo* (598).

In accordance with Plato's doctrine of Ideas, we can see here that every possible human language is nothing but a shadow or reflection of the divine language. Thus Tzinacán, like the cabbalists, pursues the Idea of language – a search that is a frequent theme in Borges' work<sup>9</sup>. Such a search overlaps Wittgenstein's task in the *Tractatus*: to depict the general form of the proposition, i.e. of language: "The general propositional form is the essence of a proposition. To give the essence of a proposition means to give the essence of all description, and thus the essence of the world" (5.471-5.4711). Perfect (general, Ideal) language could totally reflect the universe. We have seen that Wittgenstein tends to bound the limits of the world and those of language; in *Lecture on Ethics* he goes one step further and bounds the very existence of both: "Now I am tempted to say that the right expression in language for the miracle of the existence of the world, though it is not a proposition *in* language, is the existence of language itself" (11).

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<sup>9</sup> The search for the Idea of language is prominent especially in the following texts: "La luna", "UNDR", "El otro tigre", "El Aleph", "Del culto de los libros".

Accordingly, Borges too tends to meld the enigmas of the world and language. In “La biblioteca de Babel”, for instance, the universe is a Hugh library whose catalogue is the aim of the librarians’ incessant search (OC 1: 468): the key to the riddle of the library (language) is the key to the enigma of the universe. The same stance appears in “Parábola del palacio”, where the riddle of the yellow emperor’s palace is the riddle of the perfect word of the poet (OC 2: 180). In a more explicit manner Borges links, in “El idioma analítico de John Wilkins”, the riddle of the universe with “the hidden dictionary of God”:

cabe sospechar que no hay universo en el sentido orgánico, unificador, que tiene esa ambiciosa palabra. Si lo hay, falta conjeturar su propósito; falta conjeturar las palabras, las definiciones, las etimologías, las sinonimias, del secreto diccionario de Dios (OC 2: 86).

The equation of the universe to a hidden divine book appears also in “El espejo de los enigmas” and in “Del culto de los libros”. The underlying idea, which is cabbalistic, clearly appears in one of the most constituent and ancient books of the cabbala: *Sefer Yetzira* (the book of creation) (Scholem 390) – a book that Borges mentions many times. In this view, the relation between language and the world is ontological, thus seeing the universe as a divine text is not a mere metaphor but rather a metaphysical assumption, as seen in Borges’ “La rosa de Paracelso”.

Back to “The God’s script”, this cabbalistic idea could illuminate the relation between Tzinacán’s mystical vision and the act of deciphering God’s script. In his vision, the priest observes the universe as an infinite wheel of causes and effects. He admits that he cannot depict, or forget, his revelation – and yet he describes it as an infinite wheel. Such a vision, he continues, leads the priest to the total *episteme*, a total understanding of the riddle of the universe: “Ahí estaban las causas y los efectos y me bastaba ver esa Rueda para entenderlo todo, sin fin” (599). And deciphering the riddle of the universe enables him to unmask the God’s script: “Vi infinitos procesos que formaban una sola felicidad y, entendiéndolo todo, alcancé también a entender la escritura del tigre” (599). From the viewpoint of the *Tractatus*, the content of Tzinacán vision is the world of facts as a limited whole, which is the mystical, and his stance is sub specie

aeterni (*Tractatus* 6.45). The universe thus is seen from the outside, beyond its limits and thus beyond the limits of language as well.

Tzinacán thus foresees both the totality of the universe and God's script which is the archetypical language that reflects simultaneously the whole universe (*OC* 1: 598). He has unfolded the secrets of the world and of its great mirror, divine language. Yet, he is situated now outside the boundaries of both. According to the *Tractatus*, the viewpoint of sub specie aeterni entails two consequences: 1) it is beyond what can be said, the ineffable realm of showing - thus Tzinacán says: "Entonces ocurrió lo que no puedo olvidar ni comunicar" (598); and 2) the observer becomes a metaphysical self, an abstract beholder which is not in the world but the limit of the world, lacking any particular subjectivity - thus Tzinacán says: "Ese hombre ha sido él y ahora no le importa" (599). In the light of these consequences, the silence of (who once was) Tzinacán is indispensable due to the following reasons:

1. There is no concrete language within the world that can describe the archetypical language.

2. Saying the divine sentence and changing the course of time contradicts the accidental and factual nature of the universe as an infinite wheel of causes and effects.

3. There is actually no *one* that can speak. The subjectivity of Tzinacán has been dissolved; all that remains is an abstract philosophical subject.

### C. THE ROLE OF SILENCE: CONCLUSION

It is worthwhile to conclude at this point the role of silence in "The God's Script" and the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. In the *Tractatus* the whole range of reality is divided into the realm of saying, which deals with facts in the world, and the realm of showing, which deals with ethics, aesthetics, the meaning of life, and value. Meaningful language expresses the former, the factual world, whereas silence expresses the latter. Silence thus is the other side of language and thus it enables Wittgenstein to draw the line of meaningful discourse since, although we cannot utter the other side, we can think it. Thinking the realm of saying is constructing a picture of a possible



fact; thinking the ineffable realm of showing is *sub specie aeterni*, perceiving the world from outside as a limited-whole. The main point is that silence is the expression of the realm of showing, which cannot be said and yet can be thought. Thus, Wittgenstein declares in *Culture and Value*:

But it seems to me too that there is a way of capturing the world *sub specie aeterni* other than through the work of the artist. Thought has such a way – so I believe – it is as though it flies above the world and leaves it as it is – observing it from above, in flight (5e)

Within the realm of showing, the viewpoint of silence - being outside the realm of the world and language - entails the dissolution of particular subjectivity: all that is left is a metaphysical or philosophical self, a silent abstract beholder.

The same process can be seen in Borges' "The God's Script": Tzinacán manages to decipher the divine sentence after a mystical revelation in which the universe is seen as a Hugh wheel of causes and effects: this is the universe seen *sub specie aeterni* as a limited-whole from the outside. Only now can Tzinacán decipher the God's script since it is the total reflection of the universe: observing the total universe is knowing its tantamount reflection – archetypical language of divinity. Yet, this viewpoint of Tzinacán necessarily entails, according to the *Tractatus*, his silence: for he is now beyond language, beyond psychological subjectivity.

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