

Written Response: Making An Inventory on *The Library of Babel*

A Cataloguing

Here are the 12 things I documented about myself while inventorying this abstract text on an infinite hexagonal library:

- ① Imagine and sketch a structure of the library with a pencil;
- ② Write down the physical components of this library: space, rooms, shelves, books, librarians, etc.
- ③ Identify the text that serves as the main argument and other texts that interpret these main arguments. Also, look at the intertextual relationship between these texts.
- ④ Sort out the rules of this library (rules refer to the axioms and fundamental laws in this context).
- ⑤ Sort out the debate among people who use this library. Find out how these statements reflects the paradox between the limitation of human knowledge and the infinite existence of knowledge/universe.
- ⑥ Put the information together into one file. Think about how should the information be composed into an instruction to this library, if I'm the user.
- ⑦ Categorize the relevant text into components.
- ⑧ Keep most of the original text and omit some of the unnecessary text (here necessary means being most relevant to the specific component).
- ⑨ Arrange all contents in a blank A4-sized file, considering the purpose of cataloguing, the relationship between each part, and ensuring the consistency during reading.
- ⑩ Adjust the page, font, indentation, and the order of each paragraph.
- ⑪ Adding additional information into the text and mark the text in red.
- ⑫ Modify the blank space between lines.
- ⑬ Include indexes on the first page.

B On Cataloguing

The text itself sparks various interpretation, and I try to avoid reducing that richness into a one-dimensional summary. I consider this inventory as a guiding tool for people who feel disoriented in the dense imaginary space. Through the classification of conceptual elements while keeping most of the original text in indexes, readers can navigate to specific sections, which are sequenced from the infinite space, the rules made, people's obsession of

rationality and an additional lexical explanation on the word 'babel' (which have a meaning of both 'gate of god' and 'jumble or confusion'. Here taxonomizing provides an organized way of processing the abstract text.

C From Cataloguing

I can't help noticing how my action can actually be the evidence of what Borges suggested about humans' pursuit of knowledge and order in 'The Library of Babel'. This realization makes me reconsider how cataloguing, which can be seen as an action of shaping knowledge, is deeply intertwined with the concept of 'order'. Furthermore, the reflection on this action, as described by Foucault (1989), can break up 'the ordered surfaces' and 'the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things.'

Reference :

Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Library of Babel', *Collected Fictions*, [1944] 1998

Michel Foucault, 'Preface', *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, [1966] 1989