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Christopher A. Plaisance

Abstract: This paper is a study conducted within the domain of textual scholarship, which develops a cartographic ontology of the four primary entity types dealt with by scholars working within this domain: (1) the text, (2) the document, (3) the version, (4) and the work. The specific ontology advanced is an Aristotelian realist treatment of the four entity types, which synthesizes (a) implicit Aristotelian ontologies present in the theoretical textual scholarly works of Greg, Tanselle, and Shillingsburg, with (b) explicit Aristotelian ontologies of textual entities put forward by Gracia and Bruin, to (c) develop a novel position that best describes the realities of these four entity types within two specific Aristotelian ontological frameworks: (1) the fourfold model of causation, and (2) the substance/accidence theory.

1. Ontological Questions

Within the domain of textual scholarship, there is a category of theoretical questions which have received comparatively less attention than other questions of theory (e.g. those of intentionality) — this category of questioning is that of the *ontological status* of the entities which constitute the domain's primary subjects.¹ To query an entity's ontological status is to inquire into the nature of its being, to ask what it means to say that such an entity *exists* (Loux 2006b, 13–15). In terms of textual scholarship, these ontological questions tend to revolve around the relationship of the literary work to the material documents which witness it. Solutions to this problem can be broadly categorized as either being derived from *realist* or *nominalist* poles of the ontological spectrum (Kelemen 2009, 15; Van Hulle 2004, 37).² Textual scholars whose ontologies are realist in nature will treat the work as an entity, whose being is, in some way, separate from the beings of the material documents reproducing the work's text. However, those scholars who tend more towards the nominalist pole of the spectrum will deny the existence of a work which is ontologically distinct from such

¹ I would like to thank Casen Keller for his assistance in reading an earlier version of this paper, and for providing valuable comments regarding the ontological schema and the relational symmetries presented therein — in particular, for his identification of the third symmetry, the principle of textual recursion. I would also like to thank the reviewers and editors of *Variants*, for their helpful suggestions, which have served (I hope) to clarify and focus several key areas.

² For a cogent discussion of the varieties of realist and nominalist ontologies within Western metaphysics, see Loux 2006b, 17–19.

material documents (Chartier and Stallybrass 2013, 201–02). In this way, while a realist position enables the scholar to speak of a given work as an entity in and of itself, which further allows him to identify a plurality of documentary witnesses — which both exist in a multitude of different forms materially and often disagree with on another textually — as *instances* of that single work; it necessarily commits the scholar to an ontology which admits the existence of non-physical beings, as the work itself is seen as something apart from the material documents. On the other hand, while a nominalist ontology which denies the existence of such non-physical beings more closely comports to the materialism which has come to dominate twentieth century academic discourse, it does not easily permit the scholar to identify any unity either between different material objects or between the slightly varied texts of two different editions of a work. It is for reasons such as this, Kelemen argues, that “most textual critics are Realists, believing that a change in the physical appearance of the work [. . .] does not change its substance, [and] does not make it into a new work” (Kelemen 2009, 15).³ The strong commitment to the materialism that nominalism with respect to textual entities necessitates makes it incredibly difficult, if not impossible, for the textual scholar to find theoretical justification for doing critical work itself. For if the work is not something apart from a material document, then any text resulting from a critic’s labour would be an entirely *new work*, rather than *new edition* of existing work.

Following the lead of the authorial branch of the intentionalist oriented critics, particularly Tanselle, my ontological approach to this question is rooted in realism rather than nominalism. Tanselle argues that any historical approach to a literary work as something more than a mere physical artifact “must be able to distinguish the work itself from attempts to reproduce it” and that “equating a reproduction with the work it aims to copy is incoherent” (Tanselle 1989, 13–14). The incoherence of the nominalist ontology is, from Tanselle’s perspective, due to the fact that it conflates the communicative *statements* of the work with the *means* of communication. For even though he agrees that such communication always requires a physical vehicle (e.g. sound waves, combinations of paper and ink, magnetic hard drives, etc.), the work’s existence as a work — the work *qua* work — does not depend on any single vehicle existing. He notes that “a literary work is not lost through the destruction of every handwritten, printed, and recorded copy of it, so long as a text remains in someone’s memory” (Tanselle

³ It is interesting to note here that Kelemen, in referring to the physical appearance of a *work* is himself engaging in precisely the kind of terminological confusion that this paper’s schema is intended to clarify. As we shall see in Section 3’s definitions, as a *work* is properly immaterial, it would be more proper to speak of changes in the physical appearance of *documents* instantiating a *version* of a *work*.

1989, 17).⁴ This is to say that for the critic whose orientation is at all concerned with the historical transmission of a work, his ontology must allow for the work itself to transcend discrete physical instances of the work through existing as an *idea*. If a nominalist ontology is adhered to, and the work treated as identical to the document, then there can be no historical continuity. If each document reproducing the work is viewed as a new work in and of itself, then it is nonsensical for the critic to speak of the two documents as having any unity or identity between them; they are inextricably *different* and *disconnected*. It is only through some species of ontological realism that it becomes sensible to speak of a work appearing in various forms through the centuries, or to speak of works being transmitted from one medium to another. To speak of such things is to accept the “recognition that literary works do not exist on paper or in sounds”, but rather that their existence — in some way — transcends these media (Tanselle 1989, 17–18).

However, this acceptance of a realist orientation towards the question of the work’s ontology immediately begets another question which must be addressed: if a work has *some* type of nonphysical existence, as the realist supposes, what is the precise *nature* of this existence? Among textual scholars, realists and nominalist alike, there is a near universal agreement that the answer to this question is *not* to be found in Platonic realism (Sutherland 2013, 54; Niles 2013, 205; Chartier and Stallybrass 2013, 201–02; Shillingsburg 1996, 43–45). The clearest articulation of this opposition to Platonic realism with respect to the question of a work’s ontology is found in Shillingsburg. In his *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age*, there is a detailed section on ontology, which is currently the most formally developed such treatment within the field of textual scholarship (Shillingsburg 1996, 41–52). Therein, Shillingsburg argues that although a work is ontologically ideal, “it is dangerous to think of the work as a Platonic ideal that the author strove to represent in some final or best version of the work” (Shillingsburg 1996, 43). This danger with respect to Platonic realism comes from the fact that the Platonic ideal is *wholly* transcendent with respect to change and instantiation (Loux 2006b, 41), which is to say that a work conceived of as real in the Platonic sense would necessarily be an immutable ideal existing indefinitely with no need for physical instantiation, and that all such attempts to instantiate the work physically would necessarily be flawed reflections of the transcendent ideal work (Shillingsburg 1996, 43). In this way, while the manifold problems with a Platonic realist ontology for dealing with literary works have largely kept Platonism out of the ontologies of textual critics, the question lingers as to what type of a realist ontology is acceptable for dealing with the specific problems presented by artifactual entities such as literary works.

⁴ This calls to mind the *ars memorativa* practices surrounding the oral transmission of the Vedas and Torah, where there are demonstrated traditions of these respective texts being transmitted orally through rigorous processes of rote memorization and recitation such that the text’s precise pattern of characters remains constant over a period of centuries (Holdrege 1996, 386–88).

In considering the previously quoted passage from Tanselle regarding the existence of literary works depending on their continued persistence either as material objects or in the *minds* of mankind (Tanselle 1989, 17), it becomes clear that a solution to the problem of the work's ontological status can be found through examining historical solutions to the problematic status of certain genera of *ideas* within Platonic realism. Since the Middle Ages, one of the most common expressions within the discourse of Platonic realism — specifically the traditions derived from Augustine's adaption of Plotinus's metaphysics — has been to describe these transcendental ideas as *thoughts in the mind of God* (Boland 1996, 66; Cary 2000, 56). In his clearest statement on the topic, Augustine tells us that "the ideas are certain original and principal forms of things, i.e. reasons, fixed and unchangeable, which are not themselves formed and, being thus eternal and existing in the same state, are contained in the Divine Intelligence" (Augustine 2010, 79–80).⁵ These ideas which spring forth from and are contained within God's mind are, within Platonic realism, conceived of as both *necessary* and *eternal*, insofar as their non-existence is strictly inconceivable. The necessity and eternity which characterize the being of such objects is, Augustine tells us, due to the fact that the horizon of their being is strictly determined by ontological situation *within* God's mind (Augustine 2010, 80–81). Classic examples of these genera of ideas are generally given by Platonic realists as mathematical objects. However, while it may be the case that some genera of ideas are real in the Platonic sense and that literary works are ideal, it is clear that such works do not at all comport to Augustine's description. Where Platonic ideas are necessary, literary works are *unnecessary* — it being possible to imagine a world in which a currently existing ideal literary work does not exist. And, where Platonic ideas are eternal, literary works are *temporal* — it being the case that such works invariably come into being at some discrete point in time, and can potentially pass into nonexistence.

2. Aristotelian Realism

If it is the case, then, that literary works are ideal rather than material, but that they are *not* ideal in the Platonic sense, in what sense *are* they real? At this juncture, Tanselle and Shillingsburg's guidance becomes less reliable. As we have seen, both theorists are clear that literary works are ideal objects, which are not identical with material vehicles of instantiation; however, both are also clear that the reality of such works cannot be explained by Platonic realism. So far, so good. But when it comes to specifically delineating what metaphysical alternative to Platonism *does* accurately reflect the ontological status of literary works, both are strangely silent. It is my contention that the theoretical understandings of the work's status in Tanselle and Shillingsburg can best be explained by appealing to Aristotelian realism, and that this also provides the most accurate

⁵ In the same work, Augustine further emphasizes that the Platonic ideas "exist nowhere but in the very mind of the Creator" (Augustine 2010, 81).

understanding of the truth of these entities' ontology.⁶ The implicit Aristotelian ontology present in Tanselle can be traced to Greg's textual distinction between substantives and accidentals, which is itself implicitly Aristotelian but also presented in a manner devoid of the broader context necessary to describe the work's ontological status. This thesis, of an *explicitly* Aristotelian ontology of the literary work has, to date, been advanced by only two scholars (Bruin 1999, 95): first, by Jorge J. E. Gracia (1996, 1–90); and second, by John Bruin (1999, 94–101) in his response to Gracia. However, though both Gracia and Bruin were writing after Tanselle and Shillingsburg, their ontologies were independently developed, and thus do not share the same vocabulary. What follows, then, is an attempt to: (1) demonstrate the implicit Aristotelian ontology present in Greg, Tanselle, and Shillingsburg; (2) demonstrate the compatibility of their implicitly Aristotelian ontologies with the explicit theories of Gracia and Bruin; and (3) to provide working definitions of the types of entities encountered by the textual critic as informed by this Aristotelian ontology of the work.

The implicit use of Aristotelian ontology within modern textual scholarship finds its earliest exemplar in Greg, whose distinction between substantives and accidentals is, both in essence and form, a "borrowing [. . .] from medieval scholastic philosophy" (Kelemen 2009, 15). Specifically, the metaphysical dichotomy between a thing's *substantia* and its *accidens* has its genesis in the Medieval Latin translations and interpretations of Aristotle which form the core of Thomism's philosophical canon (Feser 2014, 164–71; Wippel 1987, 13). In Greg's formulation, the primary task of the textual critic is to recover whatever text represents "most nearly what the author wrote" (Greg 1950/1951, 21). The method, by which this goal is best reached, he tells us, is as follows:

We need to draw a distinction between the significant, or as I shall call them "substantive," readings of the text, those namely that affect the author's meaning or the essence of his expression, and others, such in generally spelling, punctuation, word-division, and the like, affecting mainly its formal presentation, which may be regarded as the accidents, or as I shall call them "accidentals" of the text

(Greg 1950/1951, 21–22).

This textual ontology which Greg presents is clearly drawn from the ontology which Aristotle delineates throughout his *Categories* and *Metaphysics* (Aristotle 1984a, 2^a11–4^b20; Aristotle 1984b, 990^b27–991^a8), whereby an entity's being is described as an essential substance which is expressed through a variety of accidental categories (Annas 1977, 146). Substance and accidentance operate, in Aristotle's ontology, in an identical fashion with the *subject* and *predicate* of a sentence in classical grammar (Aristotle 1984a, 1^a16–1^b25).⁷ As such, given

⁶ It is of interest to note that this seemingly *implicit* Aristotelian realism can also be found in the more general discussions of the ontological status of the work of art by Joseph Margolis. See especially Margolis 1968, 148–49; Margolis 1974, 187–90.

⁷ For a fuller examination of the subject/predicate argument, see Loux 2006b, 21–26.

the phrase, "Aristotle is happy," we identify "Aristotle" as the being's *substance* and "happiness" as its *accident*. A being's substance is that attribute without which it would not be itself, whereas an accident is an attribute which may or may not characterize the being at a given point in time. In this case, while the being in question is necessarily Aristotle (e.g. Aristotle cannot become Plato), but Aristotle is not necessarily happy (e.g. he might be sad, but that accidental sadness would not affect his being Aristotle).

In terms of the literary work's text, Greg applies Aristotle's ontology by construing the text's words and their order as the text's substance and such things as punctuation and spelling as the text's accidents — proposing that it is, essentially, the *words* and not the *punctuation* which define the text's being. It is, however, important to note that Greg's formulation here is an ontology of *the text* of a literary work, rather than an ontology of *the work itself*.⁸ Having been developed out of the particular issues involved with editing early modern texts (Tanselle 1995, 22), Greg's distinction between a text's words as substantives and punctuation as accidentals is not necessarily an appropriate theoretical framework within which to consider textual corpora developed outside of this narrow timeframe. This is because during the time period with which Greg was primarily concerned, authorial manuscripts generally omitted punctuation — which was added later by a publisher who may or may not have been relaying the specific intentions of the author. That being the case for early modern works, Greg's specific distinction makes a great deal of sense for those works. However, when considering modern — particularly 21st century — corpora, the textual landscape is vastly different, with many witnesses being typescripts or electronic objects keyed by the author himself. What this means is that, in terms of such works, both the words *and* punctuation marks will tend to be indicative of the author's intention. Therefore, in such cases, it makes more sense to treat *all* textual characters as substantial. Within such corpora, then, textual accidentals would largely be such things as the metadata and document source code, as well as any other formal elements — such as word division, fonts, typeface, etc. — which either the document's creator did not have authorial control over, or do not serve to impact the text significantly.

While Greg's formulation serves as an introduction into the application of Aristotelian realism into the field of textual scholarship, it does not address the fundamental theoretical issue of the ontological status of the work itself. It is the case that the Aristotelian categories can be used to resolve this question, but

⁸ It is worth noting here that this line of argumentation necessitates a terminological as well as an ontological distinction between the *text* and *work*, as distinct entity types. While the ontological case for this distinction is laid out plainly in the subsequent pages, the fact that a great many textual scholars have conflated these two terms does present something of a practical difficulty in terms of the near identity of these terms both in everyday speech and in a great deal of scholarly literature. I contend that while this difficulty is an obstacle to the easy acceptance of such an ontology, both the fact that the ontology demands such a distinction, and that there are no better terms in the common lexicon, present a need to overcome such obstacles.

for the answer to be sensible we must first examine the substance and accident distinction in terms of the issue of instantiation. Broadly speaking, this issue is the dividing line between Platonic and Aristotelian accounts of realism, with the Platonists supporting the position that uninstantiated properties are real and the Aristotelians rejecting the position in favor of the necessity of exemplification (Loux 2006a, 208; Loux 2006b, 41–43, Franklin 2008, 105; Tweedale 1988, 502–08). This to say that while a Platonic ontology would admit the reality of an ideal entity which is not at a given time materially instantiated (e.g. the ideal form of the square would necessarily exist even if it were the case that there were no materially exemplified squares at a particular point in time), the Aristotelian position demands instantiation as a necessary requirement for the ideal's existence (e.g. ideal squares are necessarily contingent on the concurrent existence of square material objects). As James Franklin says, "the Aristotelian slogan is that the universals are *in re*: in the things themselves (as opposed to a Platonic heaven)" (Franklin 2008, 104). What this means is that while both Aristotelian and Platonic realist ontologies admit the existence of ideal forms, they differ both in terms of the dependent relationships between the form and its instantiation as well as in the *posited location* of the ideals themselves. For the Platonic realist, the ultimate dependence of material particulars upon ideal universals necessitates the ontological location of ideals in some hyper-cosmic level of reality. However, for the Aristotelian realist, the codependence of form and instantiation necessitate the ontological location of ideal forms within their material instantiations.

3. Working Ontology

It is not my intent to argue here that Aristotelian realism as described above accurately describes the ontological statuses of *all* beings, but rather to argue that it provides the best answer to the ontological question of the literary work's status.⁹ In developing an Aristotelian realist ontology suitable for informing the theoretical foundations of textual critical work, there are four entities which must be defined: (1) the text, (2) the document, (3) the version, (4) and the work. Of these three entities, the text is the natural place to begin, as the three remaining entities are all textual in nature. According to Shillingsburg, "a text is the actual order of words and punctuation marks as contained in any one physical form, such as a manuscript, proof, or book" which itself "has no [. . .] material existence, since it is not restricted by time or space" (Shillingsburg 1996, 46). This delimitation is sound and provides a firm foundation for building the necessary subsequent ontology. The key point to note with this definition of text is that it is ontologically ideal in nature. As previously discussed, although texts do depend on material documents (i.e. the document is the text's *causa*

⁹ Indeed, in considering certain categories of beings (e.g. mathematical objects), I would argue in favour of a strong Platonic realist ontology. For mathematical Platonism generally, see Panza and Serini 2013, 1–15.

materialis), text itself is not a material object which can be seen or touched; it is a *pattern* which can manifest in a wide variety of physical objects, but is not defined or exhausted by any of them. Shillingsburg, here, is in agreement with Gracia, who identifies a text as “a group of entities, used as signs, that are selected, arranged, and intended by an author to convey a specific meaning to an audience in a certain context,” which “entails that texts are artifacts, products of conventionally established relation between certain entities and meanings in a context” (Gracia 1996, 6). This poststructuralist understanding of an author’s relationship with his written work is essentially grounded in Michel Foucault’s argument that the author of a literary work is not a *person*, but is rather a discursive *function* which emerged (in the historical sense) during the early modern period (Foucault 1998, 211; Nehamas 1986, 685; How 2007, 9; Chartier and Stallybrass 2013, 200). Under this theory, the writer is an “actual individual, firmly located in history” and is the efficient cause of his written works, but has no “interpretative authority over them” (Nehamas 1986, 686). The author-function, on the other hand, is seen as being the *formal* cause of a literary work — emerging from an interactive relationship between the work and its readership — whose nature is to guide the interpretation of the work, and whose nature is in turn determined by the work’s interpretation (Nehamas 1986, 686). In this way, Foucault sees the meaning of a work as being generated alongside the author-function — being neither objectively rooted to the work itself nor authoritatively determined by the writer himself, but rather emerging as a socially constructed value from the interrelation between the author-function and the discursive community within which the work is being read (Olsson 2007, 224). Within this poststructuralist understanding of the question of authorial intention, what Gracia adds to Shillingsburg’s ontology is the definition of text as an essentially *artificial* entity, whose existence is wholly contingent on both the author as the creative agency (i.e. the text’s *causa efficiens*) as well as the preexisting contextual relationship between the author and his intended audience (i.e. the text’s *causa formalis*).¹⁰ The final component to be addressed is the question of the text’s final causation (*causa finalis*), which in terms of the text proves to be the author’s intention *for the text*. This understanding of the term “intention” is quite distinct and must be understood wholly apart from any questions of meaning which have been discussed above in terms of the text’s formal and efficient causes. Here, following Shillingsburg, the term “intention” strictly and solely refers to the author’s intent to arrange a specific pattern of letters, punctuation marks, and spaces so as to constitute a text which will convey an intended meaning (Shillingsburg 1996, 35–36). Both Shillingsburg and Gracia are approaching text

¹⁰ For a full exposition of Aristotle’s theory of causation, see Aristotle (1984b, 1013^a24–1014^a25; 1984c, 194^a16–195^b30). In Aristotle’s model of causation, the *causa efficiens* is that which explains a process’s cause in terms of the external body initiating the process (e.g. the efficient cause of a boy is his father); whereas a *causa formalis* explains the process’s cause in terms of its inherent structure (e.g. the formal cause of the octave is the 2:1 ratio).

from an Aristotelian perspective — Shillingsburg implicitly, Gracia explicitly — with their formulations being complementary to one another. In synthesizing the two, we can develop a working Aristotelian ontological definition of text as being: *an artifactual pattern of letters, punctuation marks, and spaces, which is materially caused by the physical document(s) instantiating it, formally caused by the contextual author function, efficiently caused by its author, and finally caused by the author's intention.*

As the remaining three entities to be discussed — the document, version, and work — are all *textual* beings, they are all necessarily shaped by this ontological definition of the text. Given that the document is the being from the remaining category of textual entities which is perceptually closest to us, we will do well to examine it first. Shillingsburg rightly states that “a document consists of the physical material, paper and ink, bearing the configuration of signs that represents a text” (Shillingsburg 1996, 47). Such documents “have material existence”, with each new copy of a text, whether accurate or inaccurate” coming into being as “a new document” (Shillingsburg 1996, 47). This is to say that as objects whose ontological horizons are material rather than ideal, the document's ontology is defined by particularity and specificity, insofar as each particular document (e.g. each specific copy of a book pressing) is itself a distinct material being. However, as a *textual* entity, the document's ontological horizon is not *strictly* material, but has an ideal dimension as well. For, even as the document exists “as the material substratum” of a textual ontology, it is itself a *transmissive* medium which, by bearing its text, becomes more than a dumb object (Gabler 2007, 197–198). If we are to treat a document's text as a universal immaterial substance, then it is necessarily the case that the document itself is that text's particular material accident. In this way, even though the text itself does ontologically depend on instantiation *in principle*, as a universal it does not depend on the individual preexistence of any particular material document. The textual substance is the universal category which gives a sense of unity to the diverse textual accidents that are the different document copies of a single text. As Gracia illustrates, within the University of Buffalo's library, there are multiple material books bearing the title *Don Quixote*. While these documents differ in many ways — “they occupy different spatio-temporal locations; they are printed on different typescripts; the papers of the books have different consistencies; pages vary on the number of words they have; and so on” — the factor which ties these diverse beings together as a unity is that they are the specific material instantiations of an ideal textual pattern (Gracia 1996, 45). The document can certainly be treated as a substantial being in and of itself, but as a *textual* being, it is bound to be the ideal text's material accident.

The document's causation is quite different from that of the text. As a material rather than ideal entity, the document's *causa materialis* is nothing less than the specific material components used to construct the document. For a book, this would be such things as paper, ink, glue, cardstock, etc. — all of which are used to physically assemble the document itself as a material being. The document's

causa formalis, which informs the pattern and form of the document as a *textual* object would then be the document's text. For while it would be possible for two books with identical bindings, page counts, materials, etc. to be nearly identical materially, what distinguishes one from the other *as a specific book* is the text printed therein — making the text the formative element of the document *qua* textual being.¹¹ The document's *causa efficiens* would be the creator of the specific document. For manuscripts, this would be the author who obtained the paper and inscribed the words; whereas for books, this would be the network of individuals and processes which comprise the publisher and printer. And finally, the document's *causa finalis* would be the intrinsic ontological requirement of the text itself to be instantiated by a material vehicle; for the text's very existence is directly predicated on *some such* instantiation. As such, we find a working Aristotelian definition of the document to be simply: *a particular material textual accident of a universal immaterial textual substance, which is materially caused by the material components used to assemble the document, formally caused by the document's text, efficiently caused by the document's manufacturer, and finally caused by text's ontological need for material instantiation.*

When we speak of the text of a work — say, *Don Quixote*, to use Gracia's favorite example — as being instantiated by a document, the question which must be asked is *which* text is being instantiated. For, although there is a certain type of unity between *all* document copies of *Don Quixote*, the specific texts of various editions can differ greatly from one another due to a plethora of issues such as shifting authorial intentions between the publication of versions, editorial emendations, printing mishaps, etc. Therefore, it is the *version* whose ontological structure must next be investigated to contextualize and bring finality to the previous discussion of the document. Following Shillingsburg, a version can be identified as “one specific form of the work — the one the author intended at some particular moment in time” (Shillingsburg 1996, 44). The version is not a material being like the instantiating document, “but it is represented more or less well or completely by a single text as found in a manuscript, proof, book, or some other written or printed form” (Shillingsburg 1996, 44). This is to say that Shillingsburg uses the term *version* to specifically “refer to the nonmaterial authorial intentions” which take the ideal shape of a specific text and the material shape of either a specific handcrafted document or a specific class of manufactured documents which are, more or less, textually identical

¹¹ It is worth noting here that some scholars, particularly archivists, would perhaps argue that a document is *not* strictly speaking a “textual being”, but is an essentially unique and singular artifact, which is neither dependent on nor secondary to any text contained by it. This is, I think, less an ontological objection and more a question of focus. If the document is treated here as a quintessentially *textual* object, it is because this is a *textual* ontology designed to accurately map the entity types dealt with by textual scholars. Whereas the material focus of the archivist would, no doubt, demand a differently focused ontology, which cares less for textual content (and all of the subsequent textually ideal being like the version and work) and more for material grain and nuance.

(Shillingsburg 1996, 48).¹² While the document is necessarily a single individual material being, the version is a more elastic category and can refer either to unique material beings (e.g. manuscripts, typescripts) or to textually identical classes of beings (e.g. editions of a book). In each case, what distinguishes the entity as a version rather than a document is that the version is ontologically ideal (Shillingsburg 1996, 45). This means that even in the cases of manuscripts, where the version is instantiated in only a single document, the term version will refer to the document's textual substance rather than its material accident.

In terms of causation, as a textual being, we find that the version bears more similarity to the general case of the text than to the material document. As an ideal entity, the version's *causa materialis* is the text embodied in the specific class of documents (in this case editions of books, etc.) or the individual document (in the case of manuscripts, typescripts, etc.) which serve as the specific accidents of the version's ideal textual substance. Again, as is the case with the general case of the text, the textual version's *causa formalis* is the Foucauldian author function, which creates meaning through the contextual interplay between the author and his intended audience. The version's *causa efficiens* is the creative being who intended this text's creation. In the case of works where there was a sole author responsible for the composition of the version's text as well as the publication of the version as a class of documents, the *causa efficiens* is the singular author. However, as McGann argues, for more complex situations where the specific pattern of words, punctuation marks, and spaces which define the text were jointly ordered by an author working in conjunction with a publishing house, the *causa efficiens* would be the social network of individuals responsible. Regardless of whether or not the author engaged the assistance of a publisher in translating his version's text into a printed edition, the *causa finalis* of the version is the author's intention to express himself by means of a materially actualized text. As such, we may ontologically define the version as: *a particular immaterial textual accident of a universal immaterial textual substance, which is materially caused by the text of its instantiating class of documents, formally caused by the contextual author function, efficiently caused by its author or authorial network, and finally caused by the author's intention.*

The text, document, and version now having been defined in terms of Aristotelian ontology, the central question of the ontological status of the literary work may now be answered fully in terms of these prior descriptions. In terms of the two polarities we have been using to examine these terms — (1) the universal and particular polarity, and (2) the ideal and material polarity — the work is the polar opposite of the document in terms of extremity. Where the document is wholly particular and material, the literary work is wholly universal and ideal; where the document sits at the bottom of the ontological chain as its final link, the work sits at the top as the fountainhead which informs and shapes the beings of those contingent types of entities. In Shillingsburg's words, the work is wholly

¹² For a structuralist critique of the author-centric theory of the *version* which dominates Anglo-American theory, see Zeller 1975, 231–63.

“a product of the imagination”, which is “shaped variously, grows, is revised, changes, develops in the author’s mind”, and as it “achieves completeness of form in the imagination (aided by notes and drafts), the written representation of it achieves not only a fullness but also a stasis or rigidity” (Shillingsburg 1996, 42). This is to say that while both the version and the work are ideal, they differ insofar as the version is defined by temporal particularity — being a *version of the work* as formulated by the author at a particular point in time. Just as the document is a non-exhaustive accident of the version’s textual substance which it exemplifies, so is the version a non-exhaustive accident of the work’s textual substance which *it* exemplifies. In this way we can see something akin to a chain of emanation where the work is seen as the primary textual substance whose accidents are the various versions intended by the author at various points in time; the versions as textual substances are then exemplified through accidental documents which complete the descent of the wholly ideal and universal work into the wholly particular and material document.

Where the factor which characterized the version as universal was the fact that the documents which exemplified it were textually identical, the same is not true for works, as the very factor which differentiates one version from another is that they differ textually. Therefore, if it is not textual identity which universalizes the work, what is it? According to Gracia and Bruin, it is a semantic rather than textual universality which unites the various versions of a work and makes them identifiable as versions of the same single work. As Gracia tells us, “if the texts in question [i.e. versions] did not have the same meaning, syntactical arrangement, or type signs, then they would have to be considered different” (Gracia 1996, 88). This position is clarified by Bruin, who explicitly states that “the universality of the text is semantic”, which is what allows different readers to approach textually distinct versions of a single work and still know that they are reading the same work (Bruin 1999, 100). In causative terms, as an ideal textual substance, the work is very similar to the version. We are able to identify the work’s *causa materialis* as the specific versions intended by the author at different times, which is the sole real causative difference between versions and works. Identical to the version, the work’s *causa formalis* is the Foucauldian author function which contextualizes the author’s intentions within the meaning-creating relationship between readers and authors; its *causa efficiens* is the author or authorial complex responsible for creating the specific text which defines the work; and its *causa finalis* is the author’s intention to textually impart meaning. As such, the Aristotelian definition of the work can be stated as: *a universal immaterial textual substance accidentally exemplified through particular immaterial textual versions, which is materially caused by these same specific versions, formally caused by the author function, efficiently caused by its author or authorial complex, and finally caused by the author’s intention.*

4. Relational Symmetries

Within this ontological framework, three primary relational symmetries between the four textual entities suggest themselves: (1) a unitary vector of material causation linking the document, text, version, and work; (2) a nested relationship of substance/accidence dependencies between the work, version, and document; and (3) a recursive relationship between the material and formal causation of the text and document. That such relational symmetries are a necessary implicit consequence of the ontological formulation calls to mind Proclus' requirement that all manifold formulations which are reflective of the Good necessarily be constituted by the triad of beauty, truth, and symmetry (Proclus 1995, 3.6.1–5). And, although neither I nor Proclus would argue that symmetrical arguments are necessarily true, it is fitting that a true formulation would yield such implicit structural symmetries in the relationships between the key entity types.

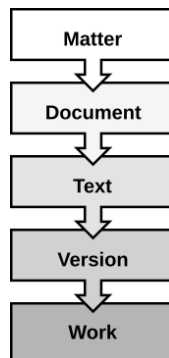


Figure 2.1: Vectors of Material Causation

The first set of relational symmetries implied by the above ontology is that of the unitary vector of material causation connecting the four key entity types within the ontological framework: the document, text, version, and work. This symmetrical relationship is easily displayed graphically (see Figure 2.1), insofar as the relations are simple and direct. We begin with the material constituents of a document (e.g. paper, ink, etc.), which serves as the *causa materialis* of the document; the document then serves as the material cause of the text; the text as the material cause of the version; and, finally, the version as the material cause of the work. There is, here, a strict line of succession, with one entity type functioning as the *causa materialis* of the next entity in the series — with a single vector thus connecting the document to the work in this manner.

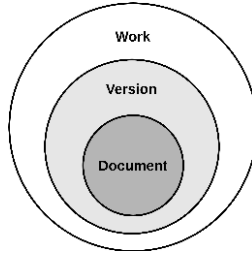


Figure 2.2: Substance/Accidence Dependencies

The second set of implied relational symmetries is the system of substance/accidence dependencies connecting the work, version, and document entity types within the ontological schema presented here. Graphically displayed through a Euler diagram demonstrating the nested relationships between the terms (see Figure 2.2), what we see here is a way in which all three terms are necessarily related to one another by virtue of being one another’s substance and/or accident. It is the case that while a version is the accident of the work’s substance, the document is the accident of the version’s substance — thus revealing a smooth dependent symmetry linking all three terms, with the version serving as the pivot key.

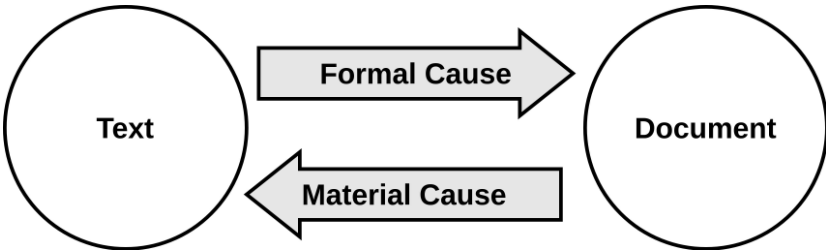


Figure 2.3: Principle of Textual Recursion

The third, and final, relational symmetry set which emerges from this ontological schema is that of the recursive relationship which exists between the text and document entity types by virtue of their respective material and formal causes. Graphically displayed as a cyclical process, what is necessarily implied by the ontologies of these two terms is that while the document is the *causa materialis* of the text, the text is itself the *causa formalis* of the document — the result of which is an endless recursive cycle connecting the two terms in a loop of ontological dependence (Figure 2.3).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, in response to the question of the ontological status of the four entities with which the textual scholar is concerned — (1) the text, (2) the document, (3) the version, (4) and the work — this paper has advanced an Aristotelian realist ontology. The ontology developed here both serves to harmonize prior Aristotelian theoretical work (both *implicit* and *explicit*) within the field of textual scholarship, and to develop a novel formulation which presents an internally and externally consistent ontological mapping of these four primary entity types, by defining them within the Aristotelian frameworks of (a) the fourfold model of causation and (b) the theory of substance and accident. The consequences of this new ontology can be grouped into three general categories: (1) broader theoretical ramifications for the *study* of textual entities, (2) practical methodological considerations for the *practice* of textual scholarship, and (3) special concerns related to both textual sources and editions witnessed as digital media.

First, the ontological schema advanced by this paper has ramifications for the theoretical study of textual entities both within the field of textual scholarship and the broader philosophical field of ontology itself. In both cases, the key feature is that of the model's accuracy concerning the truth of the entities and relationships under discussion. In terms of the larger philosophical ramifications, while the paper does *not* propose any modifications to the core Aristotelian theories involved, it *does* present a novel real-world application of these theories which serves to further demonstrate their veracity. Additionally, within this specific context of textual scholarship, the paper's model advances what is perhaps the most rigorous ontology — Aristotelian or otherwise — to date. The external validity and internal consistency yielded by the model's rigor results in a standardized vocabulary which has the potential to both increase the theoretical coherence of ontologies used within the field of textual scholarship, but also to better facilitate communication between theorists, by providing a common lexicon which distinguishes key concepts at a fine grain level of detail.

Second, the schema has additional practical considerations which translate the theory into methodological practice. In general, this is to say that the more accurate the theoretical underpinning is formulated, then the more effective practical methodology that rests on top of the theory. For example, a theoretical apparatus which more clearly delineates the distinctions between the *version* and *document* (and distinguishes both from the *work*) would be useful in developing a genealogical methodology which charts the emergence of distinct *versions* of a *work* through the evidence provided by clusters of related *documents* which witness the work's text. In developing such a methodology, the precision of the underlying ontology around which the theory rests would have a corresponding effect on the precision of the methodology itself — which is, in and of itself, reason for the textual scholar to strive for ontological precision and veracity.

Third, both the theoretical and methodological considerations of this paper's ontology take on a new importance in light of the fact that the field of textual

scholarship is currently facing transformative challenges from new media. These challenges faced manifest both as digital critical editions and as critical editions (digital or otherwise) which analyse digital witnesses (Gabler 2010; Pierazzo 2016). Indeed, this present ontological study emerged out of a larger textual critical project analysing a literary corpus composed almost entirely of digital documents.¹³ This project required several methodological innovations in order to treat these documents with the same rigor as an analytical bibliographic study would for traditional media (Plaisance 2016). And, while researching these new methods and techniques of analysis, it quickly became apparent that an ill-defined ontology would serve this new methodology poorly. It is my hope that this paper's ontological schema will provide a firm theoretical foundation for a new generation of textual scholars blazing trails amidst virtual stacks of the seemingly endless variety of digital documents.

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¹³ This corpus in question is that of the American occultist, Benjamin Rowe (1951–2002).

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