

Preliminary comment

The 33 manuscripts which contain all or portions of the First Part of Ockham's *Dialogus* may be classified into 5 basic groups or traditions:

- A. Bb Fi An Ce Na*
- B. Vg Va Lb Pa Pb Pc Vb Ar* Sa Ko*
- C. Sm Vd Ca Lc La Un Ax*
- D. Ba Di To Es Fr*
- E. Vc Vf Av Ox Br We

Manuscripts fully collated for our critical Latin text of 1 Dial. 6.1-15 have been highlighted in green. The asterix has been affixed to witnesses evidencing substantial contamination.

The main reason for assigning a manuscript to a specific group is *the quantitative and/or qualitative preponderance therein of readings which are peculiar to the group in which it has been included*, notwithstanding the presence of occasional confluences and/or idiosyncracies in a particular witness. *Each manuscript has its own genetic peculiarities*, which must always be kept in mind in the context of a conveniently simplified ordering system. **Fr**, for instance, borrows heavily from other traditions in many contexts, and thus does not belong to *D* in quite the same fashion as **To** or even **Ba**. Likewise, **We** does not belong to *E* in the same manner as **Vc** or **Av** (see further below).

The complex nature of medieval manuscript copying (and the consequent difficulties in tracing definitive and clear-cut affiliations and developing consistent stemmas) is well exemplified by manuscript **Na**. This witness has been dated by Cenci to the 14th century. Independent examination by Prof. Doyle of Durham University (Offler Archives, *Dialogus* folder) has not fully confirmed this assumption, though it seems likely enough. My own analysis indicates that the manuscript's reproduction of the First Part of *Dialogus* relies very strongly on exemplars of groups A (the preponderant model) and B, and exhibits only sporadically and in minor fashion

certain characteristics of *C* and *D*. The utilization of all these sources does not always seem to have been properly co-ordinated. Thus in 1 Dial. 1.3, where groups *A* and *B* usually describe the authors of the Canon Law as “viri acutissimi”, and groups *D* and *E* as “viri eruditissimi”, **Na** has “viri eruditissimi acutissimi” (as do **Ca Vd La Lc Fr**). In the same chapter, where group *B* has “indices” and some exemplars of group *D* “determinares”, **Na** has “indices et determinares” (while groups *A* and *E* normally prefer “intimares”). In 1 Dial. 2.21, **Na** has the same major omissions that we find only in some group *B* (**Pa Pz Ly Sa Lb Ko**) and in a few group *C* (**La Lc Vd**) texts. In 1 Dial. 5.34 **Na** includes (as do **Pb La** and **Sa**) an additional appearance of the paragraph-beginning term “**Discipulus**” in the middle of a sentence elsewhere wholly attributed to the Master (whereas **Bb Ca Un Pa Vb Lb Lc** have a superfluous scripting of “**Magister**” in the same place). This particular oddity (its presence in **Bb** suggests but does not prove that it might have been present in the margin of Ockham’s own unedited text) is partially resolved in the text of **We**, and in all manuscripts of group *E* (but not in those of group *D*, except for **Ba** which here borrowed from *E*), where the editor or editors of what I now believe (see further below) to have been *an early second edition* of the *prima pars Dialogi* provided what he (they) felt was an appropriate equivalent of the “missing” segment implied by the intrusive term. All this points to a very complex process of textual development and copying, and the gaps noticeable here and there in **Na** (e.g. in 1 Dial. 6.1, or in 1 Dial 7.60) possibly indicate an intermittent lack of interest in or capacity for proper editing.

Na is but one instance of what can be observed in many other manuscripts. **Va** for example (copied in 1437) is a *B* group text with multiple but not comprehensive integrated corrections from an *E* group exemplar. From time to time (for instance in **Pb** and **Lb**) we may even catch various adopted corrections *in statu nascendi* as marginal and interlinear glosses. On the other hand, *D* group manuscripts (the most idiosyncratic of the 5 basic groups) sometimes have a significant number of readings in common with the *B* group tradition (as, for instance, in 1 Dial. 6.1-15). The same kind of relationship may be discerned (though not systematically or universally) between groups *D* and *E*.

The leading exemplar of the *D* tradition (**Ba**, a mid-15th century manuscript) shares some very specific readings with **Va** (cf. the apparatus for 1 Dial. 6.1-15 at chs. 1 /thrice/, 5, 14 /four items/), readings which otherwise are only known to exist in the *E* tradition, and which cannot be found in any other exemplars of *B* or *D*. This demonstrates a fact proved in many other contexts, viz., that important elements of the *E* textual tradition were intermittently available to copyists (if not actually created by them) for *ad hoc* use.

If we focus on the extant manuscripts of the *E* tradition (leaving aside the **Br** fragment which John Scott links to **Vc**) we may recognize three sub-groups: (1) **We** (2) **Av Ox** (3) **Vc Vf**.

We, which I and others once believed to be a multiple copy-hands compilation of the later 15th century put together on the basis of at least two, and perhaps three, distinct manuscript sources, but with highly visible and sustained though not quite comprehensive affinities to **Av Ox Vc Vf**, has now been proved (or at least strongly argued) by a team of Leipzig researchers (led by Matthias Eifler) to be *one of the earliest extant manuscripts* of 1 Dial. Eifler is wrong, even on his terms, as to the specific date of the manuscript [he assumes it to be <1340-1345>, which is impossible given what we certainly know about the relationship between Ockham and his Franciscan dissident associates in the 1330's and 1340's: the "duobus exceptis" notion of **We**'s spurious prologue simply does not work in the context of the Munich situation at the time], but quite correct as to the general epoch of its emergence should the primary if not conclusive consideration be the dating of the paper used. The verified identity of **We**'s most recent paper watermarks would thus indicate, in my view, that, on this strict paper date basis, it was edited sometime between c.1353 and 1359 (possibly as late as 1362), most probably at the Munich court of Lewis (junior) (possibly but less probably at the Landshut court of Stephen) when these sons of Emperor Lewis the Bavarian were as yet unreconciled with the Avignon papacy (Lewis jr. was absolved in 1359, as was Ockham (posthumously), Stephen not until 1362).

The remaining witnesses of the extant tradition *E* were produced considerably later. Both the **Av Ox** and the **Vc Vf** groups go back to the same original through at least one intermediary, and common place names in **Av Ox Vc Vf** (cf. 1 Dial. 5.22-24) associate this original with the **March of Ancona** (which, of course, suggests but does not necessarily imply that this is where it (the original) was composed). Each "Ancona" sub-group has been edited further, and the immediate ancestor of sub-group 2 (**Av Ox**) has provided chapter headings analogous to those of **Ly. Vc** and **Vf** are products of the 1470's (**Vc** was the copy of Pope Sixtus IV), while **Av** and **Ox** are slightly earlier (**Ox** already existed in 1444). The common source of sub-groups 2 and 3, with its Table of Contents and Admonition to the Reader (both Table and Admonition were authored by one or more extremely competent though unfortunately anonymous editor or editors), would thus appear to be at least contemporary to the early Council of Basel if not slightly earlier. There is no proof (as yet) to indicate the survival of a comprehensive *E* text of the **Av Ox Vc Vf** variety independent of Table or Admonition. Nor does any of the "Ancona" texts reproduce the spurious prologue alluded to above, which is found in **We** and **Fr**, though it is mildly arguable that the Admonition just possibly uses language indicating some knowledge of this prologue.

It would thus seem on current evidence that tradition *E* was not much copied or referenced after ca. 1353/62 (cf. link to John Scott below as to the four interesting borrowings in some of the tradition *B* and *C* manuscripts), and that prior to "Ancona" it was only briefly and selectively consulted ca. 1420 or thereabouts by the initial editor(s) of tradition *D*, as demonstrated by the comparatively poor quality of the latter's early manuscripts (**Es To**) beyond the first third of *Pars prima*. In fact a very interesting if not paradoxical historical puzzle emerges here: how does one explain the odd fact that other manuscript traditions increasingly if slowly reference more and more portions of the **We** text as time goes on? Initially we have but a few **We** type variants in select mss. of the *B* and *C* groups (not earlier than the 1390's); then, in the 1420's, we have the earlier *D* tradition corrections (only as to the first five books), and then by ca. 1430 we get

“Ancona” (but again with big glitches in the latter portions of Book 7, and without the extra prologue) and the later *D* as well as some *B* texts, and finally, ca. 1460 we have the selective Frankfurt compilation (which has the extra prologue)... Everything except the date of the paper (or more properly except for the difficulty in explaining in non-controversial terms the utilization of century old paper for a work allegedly transcribed in the mid-15th century) seems to suggest that **We** comes at the end rather than at the beginning of the process of development. A tantalizing paradox indeed. But, at present, just that, akin to the fading smile of the Cheshire cat.

The textual archaeology of the Ancona subgroup of tradition *E* in 1 Dial. 6.1-15 intimates at first glance that its source either relied on an exemplar which had very little in common with tradition *B*, or else that, **in this segment**, the “Ancona” editor(s) of *E* (unlike tradition *D* in the same passages) deliberately chose not to draw on tradition *B* for assistance. Analysis of further segments where “Ancona” (whose contacts with *D* have been well-documented by John [Scott](#)) obviously and repeatedly borrows from *B* (cf. below at 1 Dial. 7.42-73) indicates the greater plausibility of the latter hypothesis. The clearcut and abundant evidence that both *D* and Ancona *E* do rely on tradition *B* as convenience dictates, becomes a powerful argument in support of the view that *D* and Ancona *E* are in many respects **derivative and conflated texts** rather than “pure” representatives of a neglected and subsequently rediscovered Ockham original. Certainly, neither *D* nor Ancona *E* as we have them can be anterior to *B*, even if we were to postulate that *B* was only sporadically available to the editors of *D* and Ancona *E*. There is also growing evidence that tradition *D* is closely linked to some manuscripts of tradition *C*, (which John Kilcullen’s analyses now permit to be classified as a distinct group) and may well have been a continuation and “correction” thereof (cf. [Introduction](#) to 1 Dial. 6.51-67).

In any event, none of these groups is able on its own to provide an exclusive basis for reconstructing the text whence stem all of our extant witnesses. Furthermore, the fact that (unlike the case of *Summa Totius Logice* or of other purely philosophical and theological Ockham works) **we do not possess a single manuscript of the *Dialogus* which may securely be dated to the author’s lifetime** [our oldest are **Bb**, a mid-14th century group *A* exemplar which belonged to the Basel Dominicans and **We** /group *E*/] raises special issues of authenticity. All groups to a more or less evident extent share a common text in the *incipits* and *explicits* of individual books of the First Part, as well as of the treatise as a whole. The systematic reference in this common text to “*Dialogi*” (plural) rather than to Ockham’s preferred “*Dialogus*” (singular) strongly suggests that the original of all our surviving manuscripts was **edited and published** sometime after Ockham’s death by a person or persons who (as many other contexts indicate) was or were not always totally familiar with the Venerable Inceptor’s intentions. There is actually no conclusive evidence that Ockham himself published any portion of the *Dialogus* before his death. The probable though not absolutely certain antiquity and specific nature of **We** further suggests that *there were two posthumous editions in fairly quick sequence*, and, as hinted earlier, that the second edition (**We**) was not initially widely published or utilized. There is no need to doubt that the reproduced texts remain substantially faithful to Ockham’s unpublished autograph, but the presence therein of occasional uncorrected errors (cf. for instance our [Introduction](#) to 1 Dial. 7. 65-73), as well as of additions, adjustments, or improvements some of

which go back to the very beginning of the *Dialogus*' textual history should perhaps make us more vigilant as to yet further "improvements" demonstrably or potentially attributable in the various groups to a significant number of post-Ockham editors. The most curious of these improvements are doubtless the "*prologus primus*" (in **We**) and its homologue in **Fr**, which I earlier discovered in 1975. The [text](#) of this spurious if interesting and historically useful prologue (an integral part of **We**, and therefore also composed in the putative 1353-1362 time frame) has been edited by my Australian colleagues. It is interesting BTW that the very specific references to 1 Dial. 5 found in 3 Dial.1 (whose existence, or at least the existence of some portions of it, is also attested c. 1360 in the Bremen ms.) are all to the **We** chapter numeration (**except one**, which follows the numeration of other traditions). Perhaps a clue to the state of Ockham's lost autographs, perhaps not. It is difficult to say since all extant independent mss. of 3 Dial.1 are from approximately the mid-15th century. The spurious prologue certainly knew (and echoed) the prologue to 3 Dial. 1 [Prologue of 3.1: "Salomonis utcumque sequendo vestigia". Spurious prologue of **We**: "Venerandorum virorum vestigia non relinquens"].

Group *A* contains some of the oldest manuscripts (**Bb** may well be **the** oldest of all extant *Dialogus* manuscripts, but this has yet to be verified by watermark analysis). These, however, have a few defective peculiarities and significant verbal omissions.

Group *B* represents the 14th century tradition which evolved into the printed editions (Paris 1476 and Lyons 1494 [the latter reprinted by Melchior Goldast in 1614]) and is therefore *the one most familiar to historical practitioners of the Dialogus*. It is the group to which belonged the lost manuscript by reference to which Pierre d'Ailly composed his abbreviation of the *Dialogus*. This group's text also has many defects.

Group *C* is clearly posterior in origin to group *B*, whose readings "contaminate" its text throughout, and, as mentioned earlier in connection with **Na**, has a number of readings in common with *D* (some *C* manuscripts more than others), including four notable variants (also shared with *E*) which John [Scott](#) has studied separately in his important article.

Groups *D* and Ancona *E* have some reasonably good late exemplars, but their tradition cannot be traced back much further in time than the 1420's. The frequent excellence of the text provided by Ancona *E* needs to be balanced by concerns for authenticity which cannot in all instances be positively resolved. We can demonstrate that Simon de Plumetot corrected his group *B* *Dialogus* exemplar (**Pa**, originally copied in 1389) by reference to a group *D* text sometime in the third or fourth decade of the 15th century. We know that Henry of Zoemerren's *Epithoma Dialogi* (c. 1460) was also based on a group *D* text. But, as mentioned, we lack any convincing evidence for the early existence of this tradition. There is even less evidence for the systematic continuity of the *E* tradition in the second half of the 14th century, indeed, well into the 15th, prior to the composition of the "Ancona" original ca. 1430. For these and other reasons mentioned above we cannot always fully identify the "good" readings shared by *D* and *E* (even those of **We**) with Ockham's authentic words. Strict analysis indicates that only **four** of the "significant" *DE* variants reviewed by John [Scott](#) in his most useful study [these four variants are not the same as the four variants mentioned a few lines above] represent readings absolutely required for

maintaining the integrity of Ockham's text (viz. variants 3, 19, 20, and 32). Most if not all of the remaining variants could easily have been the work of learned editors, beginning with those who produced *the two earliest traditions* of the text: (1) an initial version of *A* (posterior to 9 April 1348) which was the ultimate source of **Bb/An/Fi** etc. (**edition 1**); (2) a subsequent "corrected" version which was the source of **We** (*E*) as copied ca. 1353/62 (**edition 2**). The fact that **We** was prepared quite hurriedly, and had little immediate echo, would suggest a date closer to its terminus ante quem.

It should also be pointed out that the textual adequacy of group *E* (especially "Ancona") is not uniform or consistent, as the apparatus of 1 Dial. 6 (and that of 1 Dial. 7) clearly reveals. In many cases the "common text" of *E* has not been adopted in the preliminary version of our critical edition, either because it is obviously defective, or because it is superfluous (sometimes awkwardly so, as in 1 Dial. 6.14). Group *E* is particularly strong (though not infallible) in the recording of Biblical, Canon Law, and Patristic citations, and is frequently our best general witness, yet it needs to be supplemented and corrected by the other groups if the intended text of Ockham's *Dialogus* is to be adequately or nearly adequately approached. While the notion that tradition *D* and *all* of *E* may in fact have been as close in time to Ockham's original as *A* and *B*, and that their 14th c. intermediary texts have been "lost", is not entirely impossible (what is?), this seems a rather improbable *ad hoc* solution to the vexed problem of textual continuities, and the challenge of demonstrating the antiquity of the glaring systematic defects of earlier *D* is abysmally daunting to say the least. In the current state of the evidence, and in the absence of clear indications to the contrary, it is much safer and much more probable to accept that a given tradition begins with the direct and demonstrable sources of its earliest extant exemplars.

Whether or not to adopt subsequent editorial improvements into our final critical text is, of course, a distinct issue. It is conceivable that Ockham might not have been averse to the inclusion of such improvements into the text he was still working on in his scriptorium when death came calling. We have, after all, the evidence of the famous chapter 51 of Part I of the *Summa Totius Logice* as an indicator of his attitude towards such matters, as well as the concluding sentences of 1 Dial. 7.73. He may even have left small specific indicators as to this wish scattered in his autograph. Unfortunately we shall probably never know.

Chapters 1 through 15 of 1 Dial. 6 have therefore been reconstructed here on the foundation of a full collation of the 11 "best" and most reliable exemplars of our 5 manuscript groups, with occasional references to other witnesses. The two printed editions of the 15th century have also been carefully examined, though only that of Lyons (Trechsel) has been fully reported.

The “reliability” pattern which emerges in this first published segment of book 6 is quite interesting, but cannot as yet be fully conclusive for the entire book, and even less for the entire treatise. The manuscript which is closest to our critical text in these opening chapters is **We** (with an 87% rate of variants convergence), closely followed by **An** (86%), **Fi**, **Vc**, **Vf**, **Bb** (all at 85%), more distantly by **Ox** (83%, not counting a large textual omission at 1 Dial. 6.15), with **Va**, **Vd**, **Vg** and **Ba** trailing somewhat (all between 74% and 78%), and the historic Trechsel Lyons printed edition bringing up the rear at 72%. We should note however that many defective variants are unique to each discrete witness, whose value in confirming or denying most standardized readings is not drastically impaired by such erroneous idiosyncracies. Nor should we forget that, on balance, variant units and/or clusters only affect some 15% of the total text. A “reliability” rate differential of merely 13-15% between “best” and “worst” within that narrow 15% is hence contextually minimal.

My colleagues John Kilcullen and John Scott have kindly reviewed the first pre-posted version of 1 Dial. 6. 1-10, as well as the first posted versions of 1 Dial. 6. 1-50 and of 1 Dial. 7.42-51, for which I am most grateful.

I also thank my colleagues for verifying in a number of manuscripts the contexts of 1 Dial. 1.3 and 1 Dial. 5.34 mentioned earlier.

The anonymous 14th century scribe who copied our witness **Vg** recorded book 6 of the First Part as the “*secunda pars*” of this treatise. This is a useful perspective. For it is here, in this massive sixth book, that Ockham’s conflict with Pope John XXII begins to spill over into issues of immediate practical relevance to the dissident Franciscans of Munich. Is the Pope above the law? If not, how should one proceed to verify whether he is a criminal? How should one punish him if it turns out that he is? The very title of book 6 is pregnant with political passion. The tensions and not always restrained fury of this historic confrontation still reverberate through these pages, and Ockham’s powerful dialectic continues to fascinate and to inspire nearly seven centuries after the events to which it was applied.

The material presented by Ockham in this first segment of 1 *Dialogus* 6 had been utilized for doctrinal reconstructions in A.S. McGrade’s *The Political Thought of William of Ockham*, at p. 19 n.38, p. 88 n.23, p. 94 n.38, and p. 107 n. 78. It had been utilized for the same purpose in my *Political Ockhamism*, at p. 28 n.21, p. 35 n.34, p. 50 n.128, p. 96 n. 229, p. 98 n. 233, p. 158 n.249, p. 238 n.7, p. 261 n. 98, p. 263, p. 268, and pp. 290-292. A new perspective may be added to these earlier analyses. It is now arguable that Ockham knew the theories of Jean Quidort (“Johannes Parisiensis”, “John of Paris”), and may sometimes have quoted him *verbatim* in the *Dialogus*. The French Dominican thus plausibly joins Marsilius of Padua as a major source of the radical anti-papal doctrines discussed in 1 Dial. 6.6-9.

For the general context and meaning of 1 Dial. 6.1-15, see my *Fragments of Ockham Hermeneutics*, pp. 92-99.

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