INTRODUCTION

Are texts individual, universal, or both? It is not difficult to conclude that my cat Chichi or the pen with which I am writing these words is individual. And there is no difficulty in concluding that cat and pen, by contrast, are universal. But what do we make of texts? Unlike the examples of individuals and universals cited, texts appear to share some of the characteristics associated with individuals and some of the characteristics associated with universals. On the one hand, texts are historical entities, produced at a certain time by an author within a determinate set of circumstances and thus would appear to be, like all other historical entities, individual. Yet, on the other hand, they seem to be capable not only of instantiation but also of multiple instantiation; indeed, often there appear to be many instances of the same text. Consider the text of *Don Quixote*. On the one hand, the text of *Don Quixote* is a historical entity, published in the early seventeenth century by Cervantes, within a determinate set of circumstances, and thus it would appear to be, like all similar historical entities, individual. On the other hand, the text of *Don Quixote* seems to be capable not only of instantiation but also of multiple instantiation as the several copies of it in the library and the one I have in my office indicate.

The example of *Don Quixote* leads us into another issue, the question of identity. Several volumes in the library of the University at Buffalo bear the title *Don Quixote* whose author is identified as Cervantes. These volumes have important differences among them: They occupy different spatio-temporal locations; they are printed in different typescripts, on papers of different consistencies, with varying numbers of words per page, and so on. But, in spite of these differences, we regard these volumes as copies of the same text, and indeed, users of the library have no trouble identifying them as such. So we may ask: What makes them the same? Indeed, we may pose the more general question: What makes texts the same?

One possible answer points in the direction of the author. But this answer raises problems of its own, for it is not clear that all texts require intention and consciousness. Could not the proverbial monkey type a copy of Hamlet? This example seems farfetched, but it would not be as odd or unlikely for a monkey at random to press keys in a typewriter and produce an expression like "Fire!" or "Excuse me!" And yet, our intuition tells us that texts require intention and consciousness of their meaning on the part of those who produce them. A text is intended to say something. The monkey has no such intention, however,

when it presses the keys of the typewriter, even if one were to concede it has some kind of intention. And the same could be said about the purported texts produced by computers or the expressions uttered by parrots. But if this is so, then texts do not require authors.

A similar question arises with respect to audiences. Some recent philosophers and literary critics have challenged the long-held view that texts without audiences are not texts. The claim that texts do not require audiences is based on various grounds, but perhaps the most impressive are the statements of certain authors themselves who say they do not have audiences in mind when they compose texts. Practitioners of the *nouveau roman*, for example, believe that for a writer the aim is to write, and whether the author is read or not is actually unimportant. From this point of view an audience is neither necessary nor important for the author, and if this is so, then its consideration could be neither necessary nor important for the existence or understanding of a text. Still it seems to be something in the nature of texts to have audiences because they are intended to be understood by someone. How can this intuition be reconciled with the view of those authors who reject the idea that they have anyone in mind when they produce a text?

These four questions should suffice to illustrate the problems that will be discussed in this book. These problems arise because we think about texts in what appear to be contradictory ways. We think of them as universal but also as individual, as one but also as many, and as having and not having authors and audiences. Philosophers have little tolerance, at least in theory, for inconsistency; it has always been their task to bring order into the conceptual frameworks we use, to understand the why and how, and to eliminate contradictions whenever possible. Hence the challenge texts pose for them. But there is more, for texts are the very stuff out of which philosophy is made. Some may want to think of texts as instruments of philosophy and others as essential to philosophy, but regardless of the view one adopts it is clear that philosophy as we know it cannot proceed independent of texts. If this is so, it would appear wise, and perhaps even necessary, for philosophers to address the philosophical questions we have raised in connection with texts.

This is what I have tried to do both in *A Theory of Textuality* and in this volume. In the former I have taken up primarily logical and epistemological questions, and here I turn to ontology, identity, authors, and audiences. Instead of the piecemeal approach characteristic of much contemporary philosophy, I proceed by presenting an overall view of textuality, for it is my belief that one cannot hope to solve the variegated problems that arise concerning texts unless one looks at the larger picture. This approach is unpopular today but I do not see how any other can yield the kind of understanding of textuality philosophers seek. Of course, there are dangers in such a procedure, but they are worth taking, for even if the theory presented here turns out to be inadequate, the

process of working through it will have produced a better understanding of the issues the theory seeks to solve. To guard against the dangers one must keep in mind the nondogmatic and heuristic aim of theories. The view presented here is meant as a conceptual framework whose function is to make sense of our experience, not to be superimposed on it.

The positions I defend in this book are intended to stand by themselves, but they become fully intelligible only when the logical grounds on which they rest are taken into account. Here is a summary of the pertinent grounds.[1]

I.   The Logic of Texts

The conception of texts I adopt is expressed by the definition of texts as groups of entities, used as signs, that are selected, arranged, and intended by an author in a certain context to convey some specific meaning to an audience. This definition makes clear that texts are complex entities and therefore composed of other entities. It also makes clear that texts include such things as expressions, sentences, paragraphs, and books. *Don Quixote* is a text, but so are '2 + 2 = 4' and 'Fire!'

Texts are composed of signs. The sentence, 'The cat is on the mat,' for example, is composed of the signs 'The,' 'cat,' 'is,' and so on. But signs are themselves constituted by entities that are used to convey meaning. Because these entities constitute signs and signs compose texts, these entities can also be said to constitute texts. Thus, the sentence, 'The cat is on the mat,' is composed of the signs 'The,' 'cat,' and so on and constituted by the marks on the page that also constitute the signs of which the sentence is composed.

It is important to distinguish the entities that constitute texts (ECTs), the signs that compose texts, and the texts themselves as well as the relation between texts and signs, on the one hand, and the entities that constitute them, on the other. Texts are composed of signs but texts and signs are constituted by entities that are used as signs to convey meaning. Thus the distinction between texts and signs, on the one hand, and the entities that constitute them, on the other, is that the latter, considered merely as the entities they are, have no meaning, whereas the former are related to a meaning an author or user intends to convey through them. The distinction between texts and signs rests on the fact that a text is always composed of more than one sign and the meaning of a text is at least in part the result of the meaning of the signs of which it is composed. Signs by contrast may be composed of other signs but their meaning is not the result even in part of the meaning of the signs of which they are composed.[2]

The entities that constitute texts have meaning only if they are used as signs which in turn compose texts; they have no meaning when considered in themselves, but they acquire meaning when they are used or taken as signs. Signs are those entities insofar as they are endowed with meaning. The marks

on the page that constitute the sentence, 'The cat is on the mat,' have meaning only if they are used as or taken to be signs.

Textual meaning itself is conceived as what is understood when a text is understood and thus as related both to texts and to the act of understanding. This somewhat neutral conception of meaning allows the meaning of texts to vary; it can accommodate the three most popular views of meaning while avoiding their difficulties. These views are the referential, ideational, and functional. It accomodates the first because textual meaning can be conceived as the things or states of affairs that we understand when we understand a text; the second because textual meaning can be conceived as the ideas expressed by a text; and the third because textual meaning can be taken as that in virtue of which a text carries out certain functions.

That the primary function of texts is to convey meaning does not entail it is their only function. Texts may and often do other things than produce understanding, but to do those other things they must also produce understanding. The production of understanding is a necessary condition for any other function a text may have, even if that other function is primary in the intention of the author or user.

The definition of texts makes clear another important point about texts; namely, that texts always presuppose an intention. The use of a text makes no sense unless this principle is accepted. But intention should not be confused with full awareness of what is intended or with full awareness of the intention. One may not have full awareness of the meaning of a text and yet have the intention to communicate it. And one may not have full awareness of the intention to convey meaning and yet intend to do so.

An important corollary of the definition of texts is that texts are conventional entities. Their conventionality refers to the relation of their meaning to the entities that constitute them, for there is no natural semantic connection between the meaning of the signs that compose a text and those entities or between the meaning of a text and those entities. The connection is the result of a convention established by those who use the entities that constitute texts as signs and components of texts. Signs are never natural in the sense of having a natural connection to a meaning. This conventional character applies also to the semantic significance of the arrangement of those signs and the role of context.

Context is anything that, not being part of a text, can affect the meaning of the text. Some contexts may depend to a great extent on the type of text in question, whereas others do not. The importance of context can be gathered from the fact that texts are intended by authors for certain audiences, and thus presuppose a language and so on. It is also clear from the fact that most texts are elliptical and, therefore, meant to be completed by additions that are not part of them and can be supplied only by an audience in a determinate context. The dependence of texts on context does not entail that they are equally dependent

on context or that they depend on context in exactly the same way. Different texts will depend on context in different ways and in different degrees.

One of the most significant results of the definition of texts I propose is that it narrows down the category of textuality considerably, ruling out all sorts of things that have been proposed as texts by recent hermeneuticists, literary critics, and philosophers of language. Texts constitute a narrow category of entities that have a very particular use, to convey meaning, and that are subject to strict conditions related to authorship, audiences, and contexts. At the same time, the conception of texts I propose allows complete freedom with respect to the choice of entities used as signs to make up texts. Indeed, the confusion between the two—namely, between texts and the entities that constitute them—is at least in part responsible for mistakenly extending the category of texts to entities that in fact are not texts.

The definition also makes possible the distinction between the category of texts and other categories sometimes confused with it, such as the categories of language, artifact, art object, and work. Most texts are composed of signs that belong to natural languages and those signs are arranged according to the rules of the natural languages to which they belong, but texts are not languages. Texts are not composed of rules, whereas languages are in part composed of rules. Texts have a concrete structure, whereas languages do not. Texts are historically determined, whereas living languages are constantly changing. Texts logically presuppose languages, whereas languages do not logically presuppose texts. Texts have particular purposes, whereas languages, except for artificial ones, do not. Most texts have identifiable authors, whereas that is not so with natural languages. Finally, texts have audiences, whereas languages do not.

The confusion of texts with languages may lead to the conclusion that texts, like most languages, are flexible, have no very strict identity conditions, and are independent of authors and audiences. The fact is, however, that texts are less flexible than languages, having concrete structures and generally identifiable authors and audiences. It is a mistake to conclude, then, that texts lack definition and determination. This is one of the reasons why it is important to understand the distinction between texts and language. Note, of course, that the distinction between texts and language does not imply that texts are not semantically flexible and are not dependent on their authors and audiences in various ways; it implies only that, if they are so, it is not because they are languages or like languages.

Texts should not be confused with artifacts either. The confusion of texts and artifacts is also understandable, for texts are always artifactual and therefore share with artifacts some fundamental features. Artifacts are entities that either are the product of intentional activity and design or, not being the product of intentional activity and design, have undergone some change or their context has undergone some change. This change, in either case, has to be the

result of intentional activity and design and the artifactual entity must be considered in the context where the change has occurred rather than apart from it.

Something similar occurs with the category of art object. Although some art objects may be texts, not all art objects are texts and not all texts are art objects. For something to be an art object it must be an artifact and it must be capable of producing an artistic experience. The first condition ties art objects and texts for, like art objects, all texts are artifacts. But not all texts are capable of producing an artistic experience. The conditions for objects to be capable of producing an artistic experience are two: They must be regarded as artifacts and as capable of producing an aesthetic experience. Thus the conditions of being an art object include being an artifact, being regarded as an artifact, and being regarded as capable of producing an aesthetic experience. Art objects are not required to be composed of signs, and even if their aim were to convey meaning, their primary function has to do with the production of an artistic experience. Texts, by contrast, need not necessarily be regarded as capable of producing an artistic experience even if they share the conditions of artifactuality with art objects. Nor does it make a difference that they also share having authors and audiences.

Finally, texts should not be confused with works. Works are the meanings of certain texts. Not all texts have meanings that qualify as works; works are the meanings of those texts that a culture regards as works because they fulfill certain criteria developed by the culture. This entails that no general rules apply to what constitutes a work for all times and places. It is not length, the degree of effort that it takes to produce a text, or the fact that it may be open to many and conflicting interpretations that determines which texts have corresponding works. The notion of work is culturally conditioned and determined by the functions particular cultures attach to certain texts.

The introduction of the notion of cultural function leads naturally to the consideration of various types of texts depending on the functions they have. The notion of function plays an important role not only in the determination of whether a text's meaning constitutes a work, but also in the context of textual understanding and interpretation.

Function may be understood in various ways, two of which are pertinent here. The first is the notion of linguistic function. Texts are linguistic in character and therefore derive some of their functions from this fact. Like language, they can be used to inform, direct, express, evaluate, and perform. Less fundamental, but no less important, however, are the cultural functions a text may have that do not derive from its linguistic nature. They depend on various cultural phenomena and how they affect the uses to which texts are put. Thus texts may be classified as legal, literary, philosophical, scientific, religious, political, historical, pedagogical, confesional, entertaining, inspirational, mnemonic, and so on. None of the various functions identified is to be regarded as exclusion-

ary. Texts may fulfill various functions at different times and at the same time, depending on a wide variety of factors. Nor are these functions jointly exhaustive, because they depend on many factors that may change according to the diversity of circumstances.

Texts may also be classified modally into actual, intended, or ideal. The actual text is the text that exists outside the mind of an interpreter. It is either the historical text, the contemporary text, or the intermediary text. The historical text is the text the historical author actually produced, whether we have it or not. The contemporary text is the text available to us in the original language in which it was produced; sometimes, when the historical text has survived intact, the contemporary text is the same as the historical text. The intermediary text is a text we do not actually have and is not the historical text but nonetheless existed at some time and functioned at that time as a contemporary text of an audience. The intended text is supposed to be the text the author of the text intended to produce but did not produce, althouth I have argued that this understanding of an intended text makes no sense. The intended text can be no more than a vague set of ideas and intentions concerning a text and its meaning. Finally, the ideal text is the text an interpreter thinks the historical author should have produced.

II. Outline

To facilitate the discussion of the issues I raise concerning texts in this book I have divided them into four different clusters, dealing respectively with ontological status, identity, author, and audience. Each cluster is discussed within a separate chapter.

Ontology seeks to develop a map of the world according to some fundamental categories. A substance-accident ontology, for example, will tell us that the world is composed of substances and accidents and will seek to explain the relations between the two. But an ontology that rejects substance will try to describe reality in other terms. Also, ontology will try to account for and explain the relations among the most fundamental attributes of being, such as unity, identity, similarity, and so on.

If ontology is a general investigation of the stated sort, an ontological characterization involves locating what is under investigation in a general categorial map. One might ask, for example, whether the thing in question is a substance or a feature. In turn, one might ask what a substance is and what its relation is to features. To define a human being as a featherless biped is not part of ontology, but it is part of ontology to determine whether human beings are substances or bundles of features.

Texts pose most of the fundamental questions that one may raise in ontological investigations. One may ask, for example, whether they are

substances or features and what is the basis of their identity, among other things. I have, however, decided to focus the ontological investigation of texts around the following categories: universality, individuality, physicality, aggregate character, substantiality, existence, and location. I also discuss the historicity of texts.

A different issue has to do with identity. I have framed this issue in terms of sameness and difference. Simply put, the question has to do with the determination of the necessary and sufficient conditions of the sameness and difference of texts. Because I argue that texts can be universal and individual, and because sameness and difference are conditioned by temporality, the question is divided accordingly. Hence, I discuss the conditions of the achronic (apart from time), synchronic (in time), and diachronic (through time) sameness of both universal and individual texts. The conclusions reached in the analysis are then briefly applied, mutatis mutandis, to difference.

Two other issues are raised in the chapter on identity. They are epistemic issues and have to do with the identification and reidentification of texts. Identification means the process whereby a knower is able to pick out something in such a way that the knower can distinguish it from other things. Reidentification has to do with identification at two or more times.

A different set of questions involves the author and audience of a text. With respect to the author I explore questions of identity, function, need, repressive character, and subjectivity. Four types of authors are discussed: historical, pseudo-historical, composite, and interpretative.

Consideration of the audience raises several issues of philosophical interest. I begin with the question of identity and follow with discussions of function, need, subversive and repressive character, and subjectivity. As with the author, the audience may be classified in various ways. I discuss five of these ways explicitly: author as audience, intended audience, contemporaneous audience, intermediary audience, and contemporary audience.

With the general direction indicated by these preliminaries in mind, we can now turn to the more substantive and detailed part of the book. I begin with ontological status.