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ROMAN INGARDEN

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47.1. Short biographical note

Roman Witold Ingarden was born on February 5, 1893 in Kraków as an Austrian citizen. In 1912, after attending the Gymnasium in the same city, he started to study philosophy at the Jan Kazimierz University of Lvów. Here he came in contact with Kazimir Twardowski, one of the many brilliant students of Franz Brentano. Partly because of dissatisfaction with the positivistic tendency of the philosophy department (Ingarden 1998, 409), Ingarden left Lvów to continue his studies in Göttingen under another well-known pupil of Franz Brentano: Edmund Husserl. In Husserl’s phenomenology, Ingarden found the alternative to positivism he was looking for. For his part, Husserl considered him to be one of his best students and accepted to supervise his PhD thesis. In 1916, Ingarden followed Husserl to the University of Freiburg, where they had occasion to discuss philosophy on a daily basis and, in 1918, he defended his thesis on *Intuition and Intellect according to Henry Bergson*.

From 1918 until 1924, Ingarden worked as a Gymnasium teacher in different cities of the newly re-established state of Poland. Even though his teaching load contemplated up to thirty hours per week, in 1923 Ingarden was able to submit his *Habilitationsschrift* with the title *Essential Questions: A Contribution to the Problem of Essence*. The text was published in Husserl’s *Jahrbuch für philosophische und Phenomenologische Forschung* (Ingarden 1925) and reviewed twice in *Mind* (by A.C. Wing in 1926 and by Gilbert Ryle in 1927).

The defense of his *Habilitationsschrift* led to Ingarden’s appointment as a *Privatdozent* in 1925, and then, in 1933, as a Professor at the Jan Kazimierz University of Lvów. In this period, Ingarden worked on what would become his most famous work, *The Literary Work of Art* (1931). One should stress how the real focus of Ingarden’s study is not so much on aesthetics but rather on ontology. In turn, the ontological focus is strictly linked to Ingarden’s interest in one of the oldest riddles of philosophy: the existence of the (external) world. From this perspective, *The Literary Work of Art* may be seen as a preparatory work to address this problem. According to Ingarden, only once a clear understanding of the ontological status of fictional objects has been developed is it then possible to address the question as to whether the world as a whole is a fiction or not (Ingarden 1931, IX–XIII).

Ingarden’s interest in the problem of the existence of the world is best understood on the background of his intellectual biography. As addressed above, Ingarden was drawn to Husserl’s
approach to philosophy as an alternative to positivism. But, as many of Husserl’s students, Ingarden strongly resisted his alleged turn to idealism in *Ideas I* (Hua III/1). In the years that followed the publication of the *The Literary Work of Art*, and partly building on the analysis of this work, Ingarden thus set himself to the ambitious task of providing a fully fledged defense of the existence of the world. Even the difficult years of World War II, a time at which the Jan Kazimierz University had to be closed (1941–1944), were devoted to this project. This work led to the publication of the first two volumes of *The Controversy over the Existence of the World* in 1947 and 1948 (because of the different historical circumstances, this work was not written in German but in Polish). The planned third and fourth volumes, however, did not follow suit. As it happens, Ingarden was only able to complete what he labeled as the ontological analysis of the idea of world and mind, which are the essential features of the idea of the world and mind. But the metaphysical question as to whether what we think of as the world exists independently of the mind was left unanswered.

Ingarden’s inability to accomplish his project may partly be accounted for by his academic difficulties after World War II. Under Stalinization, and after having moved to the Jagellonian University of Kraków, Ingarden was banned from teaching (1949–1957). Ironically, the reason for this ban was Ingarden’s alleged idealism—a criticism indiscriminately leveled at the whole phenomenological tradition by orthodox Marxism. The fate of Ingarden, however, could have been much worse, and, once the ban was lifted, Ingarden was able to teach until his retirement in 1963. During the years from 1963 to 1970, he was also able to travel several times to international conferences in Western Europe. On June 14, 1970 Ingarden suddenly died because of a cerebral hemorrhage (for more details on Ingarden’s biography, see Mitscherling 1997).

47.2. Ontology and existential ontology

As already addressed, Ingarden was drawn to ontology because of his interest in the problem of the existence of the world. By ontology—one should note—Ingarden understands the study of pure, i.e. not empirical, necessities and possibilities. Or, as he phrases it, ontology is the a priori study of the contents of ideas—whereby by ideas we should not understand psychological but rather Platonic entities broadly construed. To give an example, it is purely necessary that a color has an extension and impossible that it has a pitch. Or, from the point of view of ideas, to have a certain extension is part of the content of the idea of color, whereas to have a certain pitch is part of the content of a different idea, namely the idea of sound (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §6). The ideas of color and sound are of course neither interpreted as psychological entities nor as the result of a psychological process. As addressed above, ideas are non-empirical—i.e. Platonic—entities.

Ingarden subdivides ontology into three kinds: formal, material and existential ontology. If we are interested in the form of a certain kind of entity, such as the classical distinctions between object, property and relation, then we are dealing in questions of formal ontology. If, on the other hand, we are interested in the material qualities of an entity, such as the above-mentioned ones of having an extension or a pitch, then we are doing material ontology. Finally, if we are interested in the existence of an entity, then we are doing existential ontology.

The notion of an existential ontology may seem redundant. This worry, however, is dispelled as soon as Ingarden’s approach to existence is taken into due account. Referring to the authority of Kant, Ingarden discards the view of existence as a property of objects. This, however, does not hinder him from considering existence to be a “character” of objects. By this, he does not mean that the domain of objects may, in a (Neo-)Meinongian fashion, be divided into two classes, those that exist and those that do not exist (cf. Chrudzimski 2015, 206–7). To Ingarden, if an
object loses the character of existence, there is simply no object left, and thus also no property. From the perspective of the contemporary debate, one may thus say that according to Ingarden existence is a non-discriminatory, i.e. universal property of objects. Nevertheless, this character of existence may be, so to speak, distinguished within an object (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §9). In addition, this character of existence may come in different forms: there are different kinds of being or existence. Consequently, one may develop a discipline within ontology which focuses on the different kinds of existence: existential ontology. As we will soon be able to see, it is this kind of ontology that is crucial to the analysis of the controversy over the existence of the world.

Within existential ontology, Ingarden distinguishes between two groups of questions. On the one hand, we have questions related to the mode of being of an entity, whereby one may find the usual distinction between real (or concrete), ideal and possible being. These distinctions are exclusive: no entity can have two modes of being. On the other hand, we have questions related to the existential moments of an object. More precisely, an entity may enjoy (or, perhaps more appropriately, suffer):

- **Inseparateness (Seinsunselbständigkeit):** the mereological dependence of an entity on another entity (e.g. color and extension, property and object) (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §14).
- **Derivation (Seinsableitung):** the dependence of an entity on another entity in order to come into existence (e.g. a child with respect to its parents) (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §13). A non-derived entity is also called original (Seinsursprünglich).
- **Contingency (Seinsabhängigkeit):** the dependence of a separate entity on another entity in order to remain in existence (e.g. the living human body and oxygen) (Seinsunabhängigkeit), (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §15).
- **Heteronomy (Heteronomie):** the dependence of an entity on another entity for its determinations (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §12). The opposite of heteronomy is autonomy (Autonomie).

These four notions provide the existential moments of an entity. One should notice that, to the contrary of the modes of being, the existential moments may be combined. There are some constraints on the possible combinations, though. First, as it already follows from the above-given definition, an entity may be contingent or self-dependent if and only if it is a separate entity. From this perspective, it would thus seem more natural to consider contingency and self-dependence as a sub-species of separate entities. Secondly, also, the opposite notions of heteronomy and autonomy cannot be freely combined with the other existential moments. More precisely, heteronomous objects seem to be a special kind of objects that are derived: If an entity is heteronomous, then it is derived (cf. Chrudzimski 2015, 215). Moreover, if an entity is derived and separate, then it is contingent. Understanding the reasons behind these last conceptual relations requires some further details about the notion of heteronomy.

### 47.3. The pure intentional object

In order to elucidate the notion of heteronomy, we have to consider Ingarden’s theory of thought or intentionality. According to Ingarden, if we think of something, we think of something existing (this follows from the view that existence is a universal property). But what is then the difference between, say, thinking about Hamlet and thinking about the Eiffel Tower? Ingarden’s answers are as follows: Hamlet (the character, not the play) has all its determination in virtue of another entity; in the first place, Shakespeare. That Hamlet is for instance from the formal point of view an object and not a relation (i.e. something belonging to its formal side), that he is a rather fat man (i.e. something belonging to its qualitative side) and that he is con-
cretely existent (i.e. something belonging to its existential side) is entirely a result of the creation of Shakespeare. In other words, those determinations are not “immanent” to Hamlet, and in this sense, Hamlet is a heteronomous object. On the other hand, the Eiffel Tower is a 300-meter high iron lattice tower that exists concretely independently from the fact that someone is thinking about it or not. True, the Eiffel Tower, too, was created, but in an entirely different fashion than Hamlet: the Eiffel Tower was built and therefore it immanently has all its determinations. In this sense, the Eiffel Tower is an autonomous object. Another way of characterizing autonomous objects would be by saying that it is only by chance that they are thought upon by someone. Heteronomous objects, on the other hand, are essentially so: they are “pure intentional objects” (reine intentionale Gegenstände).6

Once these considerations are taken into account, we may understand the limits of the diagonalizations of heteronomous objects addressed above. Heteronomous objects – or, more generally, entities – have to be created by a given consciousness. For instance, Hamlet has to be created by an author. And it is only because of this creation that Hamlet has its determinations. The question whether the pure intentional object is separate or not is open to discussion, so to speak: it may be a mereological part of a given consciousness (Shakespeare or the reader of the play in the case of Hamlet) or it may be separated. If, however, it turns out that the pure intentional object is separated, then it has to be considered contingent: it stands in need of someone thinking about it as the human body is in need of oxygen.

One last remark is required to provide an adequate characterization of the notion of heteronomous or pure intentional object. As already addressed, heteronomous objects are defined as those entities whose determinations are not immanent to them. This, however, does not mean that such entities have no inner determinations at all. Clearly, they require at least the immanent determinations of being created and being thought about. The pure intentional object of Hamlet, for instance, is really created by its author and it is really thought upon by him and the readers of the play. At the same time, these determinations cannot really be attributed to the character in the play Hamlet: it is not true of Hamlet that he was created by Shakespeare, and it is not literally true of Hamlet that readers are thinking about him.

To explain this further aspect, Ingarden develops a theory of the pure intentional object as having a “remarkable double-sidedness” (merkwürdige Doppelseitigkeit) (Ingarden 1947–48, II/1, §47): It is an object with a “content” (Gehalt). Only the object has immanent determinations, whereas the content has only non-immanent determinations. For instance, Hamlet as the character of the play is the content of a pure intentional object, which, as such, has only non-immanent determinations. On the other hand, the pure intentional object of which Hamlet is the content has the immanent determinations listed above: it is created by someone and thought upon by different individuals.

Besides the ones listed above, the pure intentional object has also other immanent determinations that are more logical in character: it is identical with itself and fulfills the Law of Excluded Middle (LEM). The content of the pure intentional object, on the other hand, does not comply with LEM. For some properties, it will always be the case that the content of the pure intentional object is underdetermined. For instance, it is neither true that Hamlet is left-handed, nor that Hamlet is right-handed (at least as long as we only read the text and do not see the play) (Ingarden 1947–48, II/1, 219–24). Things are somewhat different with the Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC) and self-identity: to Ingarden, a content of an intentional object does not have to violate LNC or self-identity. But it may, namely if it is described as such by the author (Ingarden 1947–48, II/2, 91–5). This violation of logical or, as Ingarden prefers to label them, formal-ontological laws are not all too troubling, though. The reason for this is that the content of the pure intentional object is—as Ingarden often repeats—a mere illusion or a nothing.
A final remark may address the temporal character of the pure intentional object. It may seem that the pure intentional object has immanent time-determinations. For instance, it seems that the pure intentional object that has Hamlet as a content really came into existence when it was created by Shakespeare. In his *The Literary Work of Art*, it seems that Ingarden did follow such an approach. However, in the *Controversy*, he retracts this view. True, the pure intentional object is still created. But we should only think of the creating mental events as temporally located; not the pure intentional object (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §32). In other words, the pure intentional object has a time location only indirectly, i.e. by means of the temporality of the creative mental events.

47.4. Being and relative being

We are now in the position to assess how these existential-ontological distinctions bear upon the problem of the existence of the world. The crucial claim of idealism is that consciousness is in a certain sense dependent or relative to consciousness. With his conceptual apparatus, Ingarden is now in a position to provide a very sophisticated analysis of this claim. To him, there is only one sense in which we may speak of a truly absolute being, but seven different senses in which we may speak of a relative being (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §16):

**Absolute being:**
- I) Autonomous, original, separate, non-contingent

**Relative being:**
- II) Autonomous, derived, separate, non-contingent
- III) Autonomous, original, inseparate
- IV) Autonomous, original, separate, contingent
- V) Autonomous, derived, separate, contingent
- VI) Autonomous, derived, inseparate
- VII) Heteronomous, derived, separate, contingent
- VIII) Heteronomous, derived, inseparate

Accordingly, Ingarden may distinguish between different kinds of idealism. For instance, Berkeley may be interpreted as endorsing the following declination of idealism: the alleged external world is in fact heteronomous, derived and inseparate (i.e. VIII) with respect to consciousness (of course, things would get considerably more complicated if one were to take the role of God into consideration). On the other hand, Ingarden attributes to Husserl the view that the external world is heteronomous, derived, separate and contingent (i.e. VII) with respect to consciousness (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §19). The difference between these two versions of idealism is that Berkley’s alleged external world is reduced to a bundle of ideas, which are mereological parts of consciousness; Husserl, on the other hand, considers the external world to be something over and above the mere sum of our ideas: it is something “constituted” by ideas but different from them. This difference is, of course, strictly linked to opposite accounts of the pure intentional object as a separate or inseparate entity.

Independently from the distinction between two kinds of idealism, the task for every kind of realism is to demonstrate that the external world (together perhaps with other ideal, i.e. non-temporal entities) is an autonomous being. This is the ambitious task that was undertaken but never fulfilled by Ingarden. In order to do this, however, he has to move from the level of ontology to the level of metaphysics. From this perspective, it is not enough anymore to simply consider the different possible ideas of the world. Rather, it is necessary to prove what kind of entity the external world really is. This is a task for the metaphysician.
In this respect, it is important to notice that, according to Ingarden, we should distinguish between metaphysics and what he calls the individual sciences. One may in fact be tempted to say that the question as to whether a specific kind of object—in this case the external world—exists or not should be assessed by the individual sciences and, more precisely, by physics. However, to Ingarden, physics as a science presupposes the existence of the external world, and thus it is not in a position to address this question (Ingarden 1947–48, I, §5). But what is then the method of metaphysics—one is tempted to ask—if it has to be distinguished from both ontology and the individual sciences? How should we understand such an enterprise? Be that as it may, Ingarden never completed his work and, more precisely, never accomplished the metaphysical inquiries that should lead to a solution of the controversy.7 As many commentators have noted, however, the preparatory work contained in the first two volumes of the Controversy is of great interest in and by itself because its meticulous study of ontological issues (see Haefliger and Küng 2005, 9; Thomasson 2012; Chrudzimski 2015, 210).

47.5. The mode of being and essence of the literary work of art

Ingarden’s most well-known book, The Literary Work of Art, is not primarily interested in developing a theory about aesthetic values in literature. Rather, what Ingarden addresses is, in the first place, the question as to what is the essence of the literary work (of art). In other words, he does not develop a theory that allows us to draw a clear line between Goethe’s Faust and the poem of a schoolboy as having different aesthetic values. To the contrary, Ingarden is really interested in what Goethe’s Faust and the schoolboy’s poem have in common, i.e. a given essence.

Not surprisingly, to Ingarden the question about the essence of the literary work is strictly linked to the question about its kind of being. The problem is, to him, an ontological one or, more precisely, an existential-ontological one. This is a rather unusual undertaking in the field of literary studies or theory of literature. One may think, for instance, of the Russian Formalists, who attempted a scientific definition of literature at the beginning of the last century. Nothing could be further away from their interests than ontological problems.

From the ontological perspective, the literary work presents us with a fascinating puzzle, to which Ingarden draws attention at the beginning of his study. Traditionally, philosophers like to distinguish between real (or concrete) and ideal existence. The literary work, however, seems to take a hybrid middle position: it shares with real objects the property of coming into existence, undergoing changes and possibly even being destroyed. We do not want to say that Goethe’s Faust existed before Goethe wrote it. We also do not want to say that it did not undergo some changes while Goethe was working on it. We also would refrain from claiming that Faust may not be destroyed, namely, if all copies were lost. (One may want to add that also all the memories of it would have to be lost: Ray Bradbury’s novel Fahrenheit 451 presents us with a suggestive scenario where works of literature are, so to speak, kept alive by memorizing them). At the same time, it is difficult to reduce the existence of the literary work to any of the two possible kinds of concrete objects, namely mental events or physical objects (or properties thereof). The reduction to a physical object may be easily ruled out. Nobody would consider seriously the option that the ink marks on paper should be considered Goethe’s Faust. At the same time, we cannot reduce the literary work to the mental events of its creator. It is rather implausible to claim that, for instance, the readers of Faust have access to them. Similarly, the literary work cannot be reduced to the mental events of all the readers. The reason for this is that it would lead to the loss of the identity of the literary work. The literary work would become, as our mental events, something essentially private and thus not sharable (Ingarden 1946, §§3–5). But what is then the mode of being of the literary work? Ingarden has a straightforward answer: it is a pure
intentional object. Notice, moreover, that it has to be a pure intentional object in the sense of (VII) and not in the sense of (VIII): it has to be heteronomous, derived, but separate. Indeed, only if this interpretation of the pure intentional object is granted may we avoid the reduction of the literary work to mental events.8

As we have seen, the interpretation of the literary work as a pure intentional object in the sense of (VII) is a necessary condition to vindicate its identity across readers. It is not a sufficient condition, though. The problem may be formulated as follows: how is it possible that, for instance, Goethe created a pure intentional object Faust and that we are in a position to have access to the very same object? Clearly, some very general considerations about language may be invoked here. The story that Ingarden tells us is a fairly orthodox one. By convention, we associate with the same (type of) linguistic signs the same ideal meanings, which are again understood by Ingarden as Platonic entities broadly construed. However, these ideal meanings do not enter directly into the literary work. Instead, the author relies on the ideal meanings to build sentences (Säte). This is what constitutes the literary work. And since the literary work is a pure intentional object, so are the sentences which constitute it. Notice, moreover, that, according to this picture, sentences are a very peculiar kind of pure intentional object. They present, so to speak, a double heteronomy. Sentences are heteronomous with respect to their creator as well as with respect to the ideal meanings (see Ingarden 1946, §18).

At least at this stage of the analysis a problem arises: how can we distinguish between sentences we consider to be literary works of art and those which are not? Ingarden’s answer runs as follows. He individuates the specificity of what we may label as literary sentences in what is meant by the author through them. The ordinary communication, and, more precisely, ordinary written communication, refers to autonomous entities (i.e. I–VI). In the literary work, on the other hand, what is meant is a pure intentional objectivity in the sense of (VII). As Ingarden phrases it, in a literary work we do not have judgments but quasi-judgments, i.e. judgments which do not intend to say things as they really are. Analogously, in a literary work we do not have questions, but quasi-questions, not imperatives but quasi-imperatives, and so on (Ingarden 1946, §25). More generally, even though Ingarden does not use this term, in a literary work we do not have sentences but quasi-sentences. These secondary pure intentional entities—i.e. what is meant by quasi-sentences—may be regarded as the very heart of the literary work. They are secondary because they are only indirectly dependent upon a thinking subject, namely via sentences. At the same time, like the sentences themselves, they also depend upon ideal meanings (Ingarden 1946, §22).

One last important distinction within Ingarden’s analysis of the literary work has to be addressed. The secondary pure intentional object that constitutes the heart of every literary work may either be intended, to borrow a Husserlian term, blindly, i.e. merely linguistically (think, for instance, of Descartes’ chiliagon). At the same time, the linguistic meanings prescribe a class of imaginations that would, so to speak, correspond to them (at least in the case of judgments about real, i.e. non-ideal entities). Now, Ingarden calls the property that determines the class of imaginations that correspond to a given meaning the “schematic aspects.” For instance, every time someone reads the incipit of the Divine Comedy, he may imagine a man in his thirties who finds himself in a dark forest. Of course, there will be infinite variations among these imaginations. The man may be in his early thirties or late thirties, the forest may be more dark or less dark, etc. However, all the imaginations will be the imaginations of a man in his thirties in a dark forest. This common element is the schematic aspect that is prescribed by the sentence. The infinite variations thereof, on the other hand, are labeled by Ingarden as concretizations—a concept which is in the vicinity of the Husserlian notion of fulfillment. Accordingly, on the level of the derived pure intentional entities which constitute the literary work, we should distinguish between the schematic aspects and the concretization of an object (Ingarden 1946, Chapter 8).
It is worth noticing that Ingarden’s ontology of the literary work does not provide us with any objective characterization, such as, for instance, the one sought by the Russian Formalists. To them, we may objectively characterize a literary work because of its deviation from ordinary communication (it is thus an objective, but relative characterization). To Ingarden, on the other hand, what is decisive is the intention of the author, namely that he did not intend to describe autonomous entities. This may be puzzling if one considers that Ingarden saw the originality of his approach to literature in its overcoming of psychologism – an overcoming that he considered on a par with the one achieved by Frege and Husserl in the understanding of logic (Ingarden 1947–48, I, 84, footnote). However, one should note how this critique of psychologism is strictly related to the interpretation of the literary work as separate from consciousness (i.e. VII). From this it does not follow that the intentions of the author have to become irrelevant in assessing whether something is a literary work. According to the theory endorsed by Ingarden, if a Martian would one day land on a deserted earth and find a copy of Goethe’s Faust—without cover page, one should perhaps add—he would have no way of saying that this was a literary work. The Russian Formalists, on the other hand, were looking for such an objective characterization and they assumed to have found it in the deviating literary style.

### 47.6. The different strata and the aesthetic value of the literary work of art

The ontological analysis just sketched provides us with a very complex structure. Four different strata may be distinguished in every work of art. We have (a) words, sounds and phonetic formations. Then we have (b) the sentences expressed by (a). Then we have (c) the schematized aspects as abstractions from the infinitely possible concretizations. Finally, we arrive to (d) the represented entities. As already addressed above, (d) is the very heart of the literary work. Nevertheless, (d) requires all the other strata.

Once this sophisticated picture is put into place, Ingarden may rely on it to advance a fine-grained theory of the aesthetic value of the literary work: to every stratum corresponds its own kind of aesthetic value. For instance, the value of the phonetic formations lies in their musicality (Ingarden 1946, §13); at the level of the represented entities, on the other hand, the aesthetic value lies in what Ingarden labels as the metaphysical qualities, such as, for instance, the tragic (Ingarden 1946, §§48–49). In addition, the different strata present an aesthetic value not only in themselves but also in relation to one another, i.e. to the extent that they are suited for one another. In this sense, Ingarden can speak of the polyphony of the literary work.

Incidentally, it is worth noticing that this notion of polyphony is very different from the one developed by the Russian scholar Michail Bachtin, which has been very influential in literary studies. To Bachtin, the polyphony results from the clash of the different ideological points of view represented in a literary work and, more precisely, in novels (Bachtin 1929). As it happens, this is what characterizes (good) novels with respect to other forms of literary works, namely that there is no dominant ideological point of view. To Ingarden, the polyphony is related to a notion of teleology of the different strata of the literary work and may be found in every kind of literary work.

It may also be interesting to briefly compare Ingarden’s theory of the literary work to Aristotle’s Poetics. One may say that Ingarden’s analysis stops where the Aristotelian one begins. True, Aristotle was, for instance, well aware of the role of language in a literary work of art, so that we find a chapter dedicated to it in his Poetics. But he was mainly interested in studying how one specific metaphysical quality may be produced, namely the tragic; which are the concatenations of events that are most tragic. Ingarden, on the other hand, simply provides us with a very general notion of metaphysical qualities, and no detailed analysis as to how these qualities may be produced. This may be seen as a result of the strong ontological focus of Ingarden’s approach.
One crucial advantage of the ontological perspective, however, is that it provides a good background to compare the literary work to other kinds of works of art. In separate studies, Ingarden (1946; 1946a; 1955) does in fact proceed to provide similarly detailed analysis of music, painting, architecture and movies. We may thus find here an implicit overall ontology of art. As noted by Thomasson (2012, section 2.2), Ingarden is in fact even moving beyond this to provide us a general theory of social reality, which may thus be considered a forerunner of recent works in social ontology.

47.7. Ingarden’s legacy and the artifactual theory of literary fictions

Within literary studies, Ingarden’s theory of the literary work has been developed in the direction of the Reader-Response Theory (Iser 1972) and the New Criticism (Wellek 1982). However, it is difficult to see both traditions as really taking over the heritance of the core issues addressed by Ingarden, which, as we have seen, are ontological in character. On the other hand, one may see a stronger continuity between Ingarden’s analysis and the position within ontology that is now labeled as fictional realism, namely the view according to which fictional objects have their own kind of existence. In other words, to say that \( x \) is a fiction is not to say that \( x \) does not exist, but rather that \( x \) has a certain kind of being different from the being of concrete objects.

Historically, the view of fictional realism may at least be traced back to Kripke (1973[2013]) and van Inwagen (1977; 1983). The most developed version of this approach, however, may be found in Thomasson’s Artifactual Theory. This theory, moreover, has been developed by Thomasson with explicit reference to Ingarden’s approach. It may thus be worth highlighting some similarities as well as differences.

Thomasson (1999) is led to attribute a kind of being to fictional objects because we can make true intentional statements about them. For instance, it is true that Sherlock Holmes was thought upon by Conan Doyle, as it is true that I am thinking about Holmes while reading A Study in Scarlet. Moreover, we also would grant that there is a sense in which Sherlock Holmes is self-identical, so that for instance the Sherlock Holmes I am thinking about is the same as the one that was created by Doyle. Thus, since we have at least two kinds of statements that are true of fictional objects, namely intentional and identity ones, we should assume that fictional objects have a kind of being. These are in fact the same reasons that lead Ingarden to the postulation of pure intentional objects in the sense of VII.

At the same time, Thomasson notices that statements that attribute properties to fictional objects that are neither intentional nor identity ones should be deemed false. For instance, it is not literally true that Sherlock Holmes lives on Baker Street. As we have seen, Ingarden was capturing this very intuition while saying that we should distinguish between the two sides of the pure intentional object. Relying on the modern notion of a modal operator, Thomasson suggests that we should distinguish between the properties a fictional object really instantiates and those properties that it instantiates only within the scope of a modal operator.

Finally, since fictional objects actually (i.e. non-modally) instantiate only intentional property and logical ones such as self-identity, Thomasson interprets fictional objects as abstract entities. Since, moreover, these abstract entities are created at a certain moment in time (i.e. they are not discovered), it is helpful to introduce a new name for them in order to distinguish them from idealities such as numbers: they are artifacts. If we remember that the pure intentional objects, too, are interpreted by Ingarden as non-spatial but intentionally linked to time, it is easy to see how close the two theories really are.

The introduction of modal properties to explain fictional objects, however, does lead to a crucial difference between Ingarden’s and Thomasson’s approach. According to the Artifact
Theory, we have to give up the intuition that negative existentials about fictions – e.g. that Holmes does not exist – are literally true. The reason is that Holmes does really exist, albeit as a non-spatial object. Ingarden, on the other hand, may avoid this consequence by means of his distinction between the pure intentional object and its content. In his framework, what exists is merely the pure intentional object of which Holmes would be the content. Yet Holmes does not exist, since the content is—as noted above—a mere illusion. To be fair, however, the distinction between a pure intentional object and its content raises its own set of problems. In the first place, the notion of content remains rather opaque and metaphorical. How can it be something, i.e. a content, while at the same time being an illusion or a mere nothing? May two intentional objects have the same content, as for instance Holmes seems to be the same character depicted in different novels by Conan Doyle? These questions do not seem to find a clear answer in Ingarden’s theoretical framework.

There is a final difference between Ingarden and Thomasson’s approach that deserves to be stressed. Relying on Kripkean insights, Thomasson (at least in 1999) interprets fictional objects as something to which we may rigidly refer by means of proper names. With the introduction of this new relation, she is then in a position to develop a study of existential-dependence even more fine-grained than Ingarden’s.9

To conclude, Thomasson’s interest in the work of Ingarden should be read in the broader context of a reevaluation of metaphysics and/or ontology. This is a field that has witnessed a flourishing in the last decades, at least within analytic philosophy. During his lifetime, however, one should remember how Ingarden was working on a very unfashionable topic (he was well aware of the bias against metaphysics from authors such as Carnap). Thus, we may say that the urgency of his philosophical project was vindicated by the new trends in contemporary philosophy.

Notes

1 As early as 1918, Ingarden wrote a letter to Husserl in which he not only criticized the idealist stances of his teacher but also set out a program as to how realism may be defended (see Ingarden 1998, 1–20).
2 The term “entity” is taken here as a rendition of the German Gegenständlichkeit; it is a notion which is broader than the notion of object, since it encompasses, for instance, properties, relations and events.
3 Ingarden explicitly links this existential moment to the analysis of the concept of part and wholes developed by Husserl in the third of his Logical Investigations.
4 I follow Thomasson’s (2012) rendition of the German term. This choice presents the advantage of sparing the term “dependence” for a general notion encompassing the different existential moments.
5 Since all the existential moments capture different notions of dependence between entities (for instance, the dependence of a property upon an object) one is tempted to see in this part of Ingarden’s existential ontology a “formal ontology under disguise” (Chrudzismki 2015, 220; see also Simons 2005 and Półtawski 2005, 195). This may also be seen from the fact that we do not seem to lose anything by omitting the Sein-component in the translation of the existential moments.
6 The notion of a pure intentional object should be contextualized within the Brentanian tradition, where questions about the nature of intentionality were widely discussed (see Chrudzimski 2002; 2005a). We should notice that Ingarden seems to consider also a second kind of heteronomous object besides purely intentional ones, namely future empirical possibilities (Chrudzimski 2015, 213, footnote). It is, however, not easy to see to what extent both the pure intentional object and future empirical possibilities may be subsumed under the same concept (see again Chrudzimski 2015, 222).
7 What Ingarden did offer, on the other hand, was a criticism of the reasons that allegedly led Husserl to an idealist stance. Without entering into the details, to Ingarden the mistake of Husserl was to move from epistemological premises to metaphysical conclusions (Ingarden 1998, 274–351).
8 This—one may notice—is an assumption Ingarden will not be able to make in his Controversy: As long as we do not even know whether the external world exists, we clearly cannot assume that different
individuals in this world think of an identical pure intentional object. But from a naive realist position—which is taken for granted in The Literary Work of Art—this assumption is difficult to reject.

A formal reconstruction and deepening of these dependence-relations may be found in Fontaine and Rahman (2010; 2012; 2014).

References

References