

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/kw.2021.32.165-185>

## The Aesthetic Value of Literary Works in Roman Ingarden's Philosophy

Hicham Jakha

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3126-4100>

In this paper, I attempt to formulate an Ingardenian conception of the literary work's aesthetic value. Following Mitscherling's lead, I attempt to place Ingarden's aesthetics within his overall phenomenological-ontological project. That is, I argue that Ingarden's aesthetics can only be properly fathomed in the context of his ontological deliberations, since, as he himself often enunciated, all his philosophical investigations constitute a realist rejoinder to Husserl's turn toward transcendental idealism. To this end, I bring together insights from his aesthetics and ontology to establish a coherent account of values, where artistic and aesthetic values are analyzed as they manifest themselves in the literary work of art. By attending to the ontology of its aesthetic (and artistic) values, I argue, the literary work's stratified formation becomes more explicit.

Keywords: Roman Ingarden, aesthetic value, artistic value, the literary work of art, ontology, aesthetics

### Introduction

Outside of Poland, Roman Ingarden is well-known as an aesthetician and theoretician of literature. His purely philosophical significance is either overlooked or overshadowed by his aesthetic and literary investigations.

---

HICHAM JAKHA, MA, PhD candidate, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin; address for correspondence: The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin; e-mail: [hicham.jakha@kul.pl](mailto:hicham.jakha@kul.pl)

A comprehensive reading of Ingarden, I believe, requires taking into consideration his overall philosophical project. Therefore, to properly read and understand Ingarden's aesthetics, one needs to place it within his general philosophical investigations. This is precisely my approach in the present paper.

Ingarden's overarching philosophical project is centered around the *idealism–realism* controversy. In particular, Ingarden's philosophical project is inspired by Husserl's alleged turn toward transcendental idealism, following his *Ideas*.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, all of Ingarden's works, including those with an aesthetic nature, constitute his realist rejoinder to Husserl's transcendental idealism, which depicts the world and its objects as being *metaphysically* dependent on acts of consciousness. Ingarden's aesthetic investigations in *The Literary Work of Art*

---

<sup>1</sup> It is debatable whether Husserl did in fact make the turn to a metaphysical view of transcendental idealism. Husserl denied the accusation and maintained that Ingarden could not see the depth of his newly proposed position. Many commentators argue that Ingarden misunderstood Husserl's position to entail a metaphysical turn toward transcendental idealism, hence his arguments are invalid (see, for example, Richard H. Holmes, "Is Transcendental Phenomenology Committed to Idealism?" *The Monist* 59, no. 1 (1975): 98–114, DOI: 10.5840/monist19755912; Robert Sokolowski, "On the Motives Which Led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 74, no. 3 (1977): 176–180, DOI: 10.2307/2025608; Ingrid M. Wallner, "In Defense of Husserl's Transcendental Idealism: Roman Ingarden's Critique Re-Examined," *Husserl Studies* 4, no. 1 (1987): 3–43, DOI: 10.1007/BF00375881; Harrison Hall, "Was Husserl a Realist or an Idealist?," in *Husserl, Intentionality and Cognitive Science*, eds. Hubert L. Dreyfus, Harrison Hall (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 169–190; Karl Ameriks, "Husserl's Realism," *The Philosophical Review* 86, no. 4 (1977): 498–519, DOI: 10.2307/2184565. Others uphold Ingarden's reading of Husserl as accurately representing a turn toward transcendental idealism (Gregor Haefliger, "Ingarden Und Husserls Transzendentaler Idealismus," *Husserl Studies* 7, no. 2 (1990): 103–121, DOI: 10.1007/BF00157156; Guido K ung, "Welterkennen und Textinterpretation bei Roman Ingarden und Nelson Goodman," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 44, no. 1 (1993): 69–90, DOI: 10.1163/18756735-90000520; Guido K ung, "Zum Lebenswerk von Roman Ingarden. Ontologie, Erkenntnistheorie Und Metaphysik," in *Die M unchener Ph anomenologie*, eds. Helmut Kuhn, Eberhard Av -Lallemant, and Reinhold Gladiatori (Den Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), 158–173; Guido K ung, "Husserl on Pictures and Intentional Objects," *The Review of Metaphysics* 26, no. 4 (1973): 670–680; Guido K ung, "The World as Noema and as Referent," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 3, no. 1 (1972): 15–26, DOI: 10.1080/00071773.1972.11006220; Janina Makota, "Roman Ingarden's Controversy with Edmund Husserl," in *Roman Ingarden a filozofia naszego czasu*, ed. Adam W egrzecki (Krak w: Polskie Towarzystwo Filozoficzne, 1995), 283–295).

(*LWA*), whose findings are going to be analyzed here, as he himself writes in the preface to the first volume of *Controversy*,

represented the first step toward differentiating real and purely intentional entities – and this on the basis of a fundamental distinctness in their form. Both the literary work itself and the entities represented in it are examples of purely intentional objects, whereas the objects depicted in some works (say, scientific or historical works, in particular), objects to which these works ultimately refer, are instances of real entities.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, as Ingarden writes in the preface to the first German edition of the *LWA*, the findings presented and discussed in his book are to be integrated with his ontological and epistemological investigations that attempt to advance a metaphysical realism of the world and its objects. He writes:

Although the main subject of my investigation is the literary work, or the literary work of art, the ultimate motives for my work on this subject are of a general philosophical nature, and they far transcend this particular subject. They are closely connected to the problem of idealism–realism, with which I have been concerning myself for many years.<sup>3</sup>

Now that I have briefly presented the general approach that I will be adopting in my analysis, it is time to delve deeper into the matter at hand. In addition to being an intentional object, the *LWA* is essentially a “potential aesthetic object.” The latter is of much importance to Ingarden's investigations, for it distinguishes the *LWA* from its material substrate, as it is often construed. According to Ingarden, the aesthetic value of the *LWA* can only be fulfilled by a reader who apprehends it. A competent reader, borrowing Amie Thomasson's terminology, is precisely essential to the fulfillment of the *LWA*'s “schematized aspects,” considering them one among four heterogenous strata of the *LWA*. That is, all works of art, Ingarden contends, contain “spots of indeterminacy.” No one can say for sure whether Sherlock Holmes has one heart or two hearts, since no such

---

<sup>2</sup> Roman Ingarden, *Controversy over the Existence of the World*, ed. Jan Hartman, trans. Arthur Szylewicz, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2013), 20–21.

<sup>3</sup> Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art*, trans. George G. Grabowicz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), IXXII.

descriptions are exhausted by Arthur C. Doyle. Assigning a truth-value to such propositions, then, is problematic. Ingarden suggests that these gray areas can be filled out by readers, who competently apprehend its value. In the literary work's strata, therefore, we find an exquisite outline of the aspects that constitute the literary work. Not only do they fill out the "spots of indeterminacy," they also lay the ground for a distinction between the literary work, endowed with an artistic value in itself, and its concretization, mediated by an aesthetic experience. In this paper, I shall attempt to present Ingarden's account of the literary work and its values. Taking into account his ontological investigations, I shall argue for the literary work's artistic and aesthetic values as forming a stratified whole that is contained in the heterogenous strata of the LWA.

### Are All Objects Aesthetic Objects?

Drawing a clear borderline separating aesthetic objects and non-aesthetic objects is not an easy task. Can we say that natural objects are objects of aesthetic experiences? "Nature affords us boundless opportunity to engage in the aesthetic experience of its beauty, and it seems at first not at all unreasonable to ask, since it is possible to have an aesthetic experience of, say, a sunset, whether the sunset itself is not indeed a work of art."<sup>4</sup> The same goes for artifacts. Can we say that artifacts are aesthetic objects? To answer these questions, we would have to make a distinction between *essential* and *accidental* features of objects. Ingarden posits that natural objects and artifacts do not possess their aesthetic values essentially. They are rather accidental to their constitution. "While a natural object (e.g., a seashell) or a produced artifact (e.g., Duchamp's *Fountain*) may indeed become the object of an aesthetic experience, it will always do so after the fact of origination or production and through an agency that is accidental, not essential, to its being."<sup>5</sup> To illustrate Ingarden's elaborate view of aesthetic experience and its objects, a comparison to Immanuel Kant's conception of aesthetic experience will prove helpful in the course of my analysis.

---

<sup>4</sup> Jeff Mitscherling, "Roman Ingarden's Aesthetics," *Philosophy Compass* 7, no. 7 (2012): 436, DOI: 10.1111/j.1747-9991.2012.00493.x.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, 437.

Kant's *Critique of Judgement* tackles the problem of "taste," and how we can arrive at judgements concerning the beauty of things or their mere pleasantness. Regarding an object *beautiful*, Kant maintains, means that the object in question is beautiful to everyone who sees it, provided that they share the same sensory capacities and observe the object under the same light. Designating an object merely *pleasant*, on the other hand, conveys that it is not seen as beautiful by all observers (i.e., it lacks the universality of "delight").<sup>6</sup> An aesthetic sensation occurs when the observer finds a certain object pleasant, hence aesthetic experiences, in Kant's doctrine, can be reduced to mere sensations of pleasantness. In Ingarden's doctrine, aesthetic experiences are more complex than mere sensations of pleasantness. His view goes along Husserlian lines, *vis-à-vis* the complex constitution of objects via an ongoing process of perception and apprehension. We can conceive of Ingarden's position as advocating a complex process of constituting the aesthetic value of objects in terms of „successive encounters” with them. Therefore, the aesthetic object emerges following complex acts of „analysis” and „intellectual effort.” Kant's pleasure sensations, springing out of an „encounter” between an observer and a certain object, are only the starting point of a more complex operation that gives rise to the aesthetic value of works of art, namely *concretization*.<sup>7</sup>

As laid out above, Ingarden's acts of concretization, which bring about aesthetic experiences if fully developed, reach beyond Kant's sensations following an encounter between subject and object.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, this should not be understood as entailing that Ingarden did not give „encounter” much importance in his investigations. In her „Roman Ingarden's Theory of Aesthetic Experience. From Idea to Experience and Back,” Małgorzata Szyszkowska stresses the importance of „encounter” in Ingarden's aesthetics. She explains that the concept

---

<sup>6</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, ed. Nicholas Walker, trans. James C. Meredith (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 42–43.

<sup>7</sup> Victor Kocay, “Roman Ingarden's Unique Conception of Aesthetic Objects,” in *Phenomenology World-Wide: Foundations, Expanding Dynamics, Life Engagements: A Guide for Research and Study*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 2002), 202.

<sup>8</sup> According to Ingarden, aesthetic experience is „a process extended in time”. It often involves various acts of consciousness (Roman Ingarden, “Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Object,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 21, no. 3 (1961): 291, DOI: 10.2307/2105148).

of encounter has been devised by Ingarden to avert the one-sidedness of aesthetic studies. Prior to Ingarden, the aesthetic object was either approached as a material substrate or a projection of the observer's feelings.<sup>9</sup> As we learn from Ingarden's ontological investigations in *Controversy*, supplemented by the *LWA*'s findings, the literary work is neither a psychologistic entity, nor a solely material entity. To be more explicit, referring to Ingarden's purely ontological deliberations, before we can analyze the epistemological and metaphysical aspects of an entity, we need to analyze its *essence*, which can be carried out with the use of „eidetic intuition” and ontological analysis.<sup>10</sup> The significance of ontological analysis is especially manifest in establishing the exact mode of being that literary works of art enjoy. The one-sidedness that Ingarden notes in the approach of aesthetic studies can be extended to include all purely intentional entities, and even a subset of existentially autonomous entities, as some logical positivists hold. That is why it is crucial to, first and foremost, ontologically analyze the essence of aesthetic objects, before drawing any misguided conclusions, as regards their ontological status or mode of being.

To elaborate, under the influence of Logical Positivism, literary works of art and other purely intentional entities were seen through psychologistic lenses. „The psychologization of an entity,” Ingarden writes, „consists in falsely attributing to it the general essence of a mental state, or of a psychologically interpreted conscious experience, no matter how strenuously its own concrete and individual properties protest against it”. Adopting such an approach, Ingarden proceeds, leads to existential Monism, which renders all heteronomous entities nonexistent. Purely intentional entities (such as literary works of art) *do*

---

<sup>9</sup> Małgorzata A. Szyszkowska, “Roman Ingarden's Theory of Aesthetic Experience. From Idea to Experience and Back,” in *Roman Ingarden and His Times*, eds. Dominika Czakon, Natalia Anna Michna, and Leszek Sosnowski (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2020), 227.

<sup>10</sup> This is one of the major points over which Ingarden and Husserl disagreed. Husserl maintained that a proper phenomenology of the world and its „stuff” should start with epistemological investigations, then proceed to matters of ontology and metaphysics. Ingarden strongly disagreed and maintained that ontological investigations should precede epistemological and metaphysical ones, and that this is precisely the reason behind his teacher's turn toward transcendental idealism; namely, starting with epistemological investigations of the world and its objects can only lead to a metaphysical idealism [for more on this, see Jeff Mitscherling, *Roman Ingarden's Ontology and Aesthetics* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997)].

exist. They simply lack an essence of their own. The main difference between purely intentional entities and autonomous entities, whose essence is not contained in something other than themselves, lies in the way their properties and qualities are possessed. The properties and existential moments of autonomous entities are immanent to them, whereas those of purely intentional entities can only be *allotted* or *intended*.<sup>11</sup> Two further problems arise, following the interpretation of literary works of art along psychologistic lines. First, taking the printed characters (or „colored spots”) that constitute the literary work to be nothing but means by which the work is communicated- and contending that the work itself is what its creator experienced in its writing- makes literary works comprehensible only through the mediation of printed characters and sounds. Second, „one could answer by saying that, while the characters are in fact meaningless, in the sense that ‘ideal meaning’ is a scientific fiction, they are not simply colored spots. Thanks to habit or convention, they always ‘tie in’ with our corresponding ideas, in which we imagine what the characters denote, i.e., in our case, the experiences of the author.” Embracing the latter does not solve the aforementioned issues either, for it makes the experiences of the reader of a certain work identical with the experiences of its author.<sup>12</sup>

Reducing the literary work to its material substrate, similarly, problematizes its mode of being and existential moments. If literary works are reduced to their material aspects (e.g., covers, pages, ink on paper, etc.), their essence would have to comprise the total number of copies there is for each book.<sup>13</sup> Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, for instance, would not be read as one and the same literary work by different readers. It would rather be read as different physical copies containing the story of six characters tormented by the death of their friend. This implies yet another psychologistic element in the reading experience of literary works. As Ingarden accurately notes, identifying the literary work with the „manifold of experiences felt by the reader during the reading”<sup>14</sup> would mean that my reading of *The Waves* represents different characters and settings than the ones represented in the reading of someone else. A character that is generated following my reading of Woolf's book (say „Percival”) would not be the same character

---

<sup>11</sup> Ingarden, *Controversy*, 114–115.

<sup>12</sup> Ingarden, *Literary Work of Art*, 12–14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 15.

generated following the reading of the same book by a different reader. But this is obviously absurd. *The Waves* is one and the same literary work created by Virginia Woolf, regardless of the material or psychological elements involved in its reading.

It is, therefore, important to distinguish the literary work from its material substrate and the psychology of the reader or author, for they are foreign to its essence.<sup>15</sup> In short, to answer the question posed at the onset of this section, not all objects are aesthetic. Natural objects and artifacts do not possess their aesthetic values essentially, as Mitscherling remarks.<sup>16</sup> What Kant regards as beautiful (mainly natural objects) cannot be admitted to Ingarden's class of aesthetic objects, for the latter have to meet a complex set of criteria that involves a competent encounter between an observer and an essentially aesthetic object. In the following section, I shall turn my attention to these criteria, which Ingarden formulated within a stratified whole that gives rise to the literary work of art. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus primarily on the „schematized aspects” of the literary work, where Ingarden both solves the „spots of indeterminacy” problem apparent in the ontology of ficta (fictional objects), and provides a tenable account of what makes the literary work an essentially (albeit merely potentially) aesthetic work.

---

<sup>15</sup> As has been posited earlier, this can only be adequately executed by resorting to Ingarden's ontological deliberations. Reducing the literary work's essence to its material substrate makes it (solely) existentially dependent on the material aspects containing its story, which can also affect its reading. As a result, it would be difficult to single out the authentic book that a certain author intended to be read as such-and-such. Even if we succeed in doing that, we would be prompted to identify the copy we read with the psychological experiences of the author. Either way, we end up with a flawed picture of the literary work, which can be amended by ontologically analyzing its essence. It is true that the literary work is existentially dependent on its author, but this dependence is not „constant,” to borrow a variant from Thomasson's system of dependencies [Amie L. Thomasson, *Fiction and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)]. The author's intentional acts are only needed in the creation of a literary work. They are not needed for its *subsistence*. The material substrate of a literary work only constitutes a part within the unity of the literary work. This is not to say, however, that the material substrate is a „property” or „aspect” of the literary work. The two entities are separated in Ingarden's ontology.

<sup>16</sup> Mitscherling, “Roman Ingarden's Aesthetics”, 436.

## Artistic Values and Aesthetic Values

The values established in Kant's aesthetics can be said to be influenced by *subjectivism*. That is to say, objects of aesthetics are judged by virtue of their reception by a subject, according to their own taste. Even Kant's „universal delight,” I argue, cannot be admitted as part of an *objective* theory of values. Criteria of „beauty” are subjective, and stating that the aesthetic is what everyone sees as beautiful or pleasant neglects the distinct subjective experiences that can be evoked while encountering one and the same object. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to reach a consensus among all men and women of the world that this or that object is pleasant and hence aesthetic. The issues raised by Kant's theory of aesthetics have their answers in Ingarden's investigations.

Values, Ingarden posits, are not subjective. They are not objective either. The values of literary works, for example, are not ontologically independent, for they are heteronomous with regards to the work. Values are also not attributable to a certain object or subject in particular. As such, they cannot be described as a sort of relation binding an object endowed with such-and-such qualities and a perceiving subject. Values are not mere qualities of an object. They are rather imposed on the object's qualities. Values should also be distinguished from the experiences of authors and readers, for they cannot be identified with their subjective experiences. The aesthetic experiences of a literary work cannot be reduced to the so-called „aesthetic pleasure” or „enjoyment” of the work [as Kant would probably argue]. Rather, the aesthetic experience of a work of art in general can only be attributed to the work itself.<sup>17</sup> Ingarden sums up his conception of values as follows:

---

<sup>17</sup> Bohdan Dziemidok, „Ingarden's Theory of Values and the Evaluation of the Work of Art,” in *On the Aesthetics of Roman Ingarden: Interpretations and Assessments*, eds. Bohdan Dziemidok, Peter J. McCormick (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 73.

In his „The Question of a System of Aesthetically Significant Qualities”, Ingarden laid out three meanings of objectivity and three meanings of subjectivity, as they apply to values, although not exclusively. The objectivity of values can be understood in the following terms:

(1) Aesthetic value does not appear in the subject but in the object (as “effectively contained” or “appearing in an object”).

(2) In its existence and endowment, the aesthetic value is independent of the cognitive acts which can eventually lead to its discovery.

It still happens, especially in Poland, that the value and its quality are *identified* with the attitude in which we discover them or with the experiences, in particular with so-called 'enjoyment' [*Gefallen*], that occur in us in that attitude. This view is quite outmoded, and it is impossible to set forth once again all the arguments against it. It will perhaps suffice to point out, as has often been done, that 'enjoyment' (or pleasure of one sort or another) is a certain state or behavior of a person who is contemplating, for example, some painting or work of architecture, a behavior which runs through its characteristic course and passes rather quickly. And we have as many instances of 'enjoyment' as the number of times we comport with a particular work of art, and the same holds for as many people who do likewise. The gentle beauty of Vermeer's painting, on the other hand, is one and the same, and always attached to this painting irrespective of how many people view it, or when and how many times they do so. So no matter how difficult it may be to give an account of the quality of this beauty, it is at any rate something different from the experiences or mental attitudes of the observer. And we need to make an effort to come to grips with the nature of that peculiarly qualitative stamp of the given painting and its dissimilarity from, say, the serene beauty of Raphael's portraits.<sup>18</sup>

Although he maintained that we do not know much about values,<sup>19</sup> Ingarden believed that there are values. Striving to establish a precise spectrum of values

---

(3) Finally, aesthetic value can be regarded as objective when it is sufficiently conditioned by the object and its properties.

On the other hand, the subjectivity of values can be understood as follows:

(1) Aesthetic value is not ontically autonomous, since the object to which it belongs exists heteronomously as an intentional entity.

(2) The existence of aesthetic value depends indirectly "on the creative acts of the maker of the work and on the co-creative acts of the recipient in the aesthetic experience." The dependence is indirect since neither the creator nor the recipient generates straightforwardly the value itself. Nevertheless, the creator produces the physical base of the work which constitutes an artistically effective (valuable) ground for the valuable foundation of the work. If aesthetic values "are sufficiently conditioned by the valuable foundation of the work of art, then they are only indirectly and partially dependent on the co-creative aesthetic experience of the recipient."

The third sense has been left open by Ingarden, for he did not determine whether values are subjective or objective in it (*ibidem*, 76–77).

<sup>18</sup> Roman Ingarden, "What We Do Not Know about Values," in *Man and Value*, trans. Arthur Szylewicz (München: Philosophia Verlag, 1983), 135–136.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 131–163.

and their objects, while keeping the ontological issues they raise in mind, Ingarden divided values of the work of art into two categories: „artistic” and „aesthetic.” In his „Artistic and Aesthetic Values,” Ingarden assigns artistic values to the work of art itself and aesthetic values to its concretization. He makes once again the distinction between works of art and aesthetic works, which he takes to be realized only following a competent reading that concretizes its aesthetic potential.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, confounding the value of the work of art with the observer's subjective states (pleasure, displeasure, etc.) captures neither its artistic nor aesthetic value. In fact, when an observer values a work of art by stating the degree of his pleasure, he is actually valuing his pleasure, and not the value of the art work.<sup>21</sup> With that said, a work of art's instrumental values (such as arousing sensations of delight or pleasure) can be attributed, but only *derivatively*. To put it more precisely, the sensations aroused by encountering a work of art are themselves valuable for the observer. They, however, should not be confounded with the work of art itself.<sup>22</sup> According to Ingarden, the artistic value of a work of art must meet the following criteria:

1. It is neither a part nor an aspect of any of our empirical experiences or mental states during commerce with a work of art and therefore does not belong to the category of pleasure or enjoyment.
2. It is not something attributed to the work in virtue of being regarded as an instrument for arousing this or that form of pleasure.
3. It reveals itself as a specific characteristic of the work itself.
4. It exists if and only if the necessary conditions for its existence are present in the qualities of the work itself.
5. It is such a thing that its presence causes the work of art to partake of an entirely special form of being distinct from all other cultural products.<sup>23</sup>

Before proceeding any further, another distinction has to be made among values themselves. Ingarden points out that values should be distinguished from

---

<sup>20</sup> Roman Ingarden, “Artistic and Aesthetic Values,” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 4, no. 3 (1964): 200, DOI: 10.1093/bjaesthetics/4.3.198.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, 202.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 203.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 204.

their „qualities” or „determinants.”<sup>24</sup> Qualities are necessary for any object possessing a value, be it artistic or aesthetic. We can only speak of a value springing out of an „aggregate of qualities,” which are dependent on a given object. We can, therefore, differentiate among values by virtue of their qualities. There are qualities that determine the general type of value (aesthetic, artistic, economic, etc.), and there are qualities that specify the variety of value within a general type (beauty, ugliness etc.).<sup>25</sup> Revisiting Kant's doctrine of judgement, it appears that he confounded values with their determinants. Equating beauty or pleasantness with the aesthetic value of an object overlooks the structural complexity of the latter. An aesthetic value, or any value for that matter, is an aggregate of qualities that shares a dependence relation with an object, as Ingarden postulates. Beauty is merely one specific variety within a general value type. It should not be taken as the sole quality within a general value type, or, even worse, as a value in its own right.

The aesthetic values of a LWA are qualitative. The same cannot be said about their artistic counterparts. Artistic values are not qualitative. They cannot be directly detected in the aesthetic experience, nor are they discoverable via a sensuous encounter with them. Artistic values, Ingarden maintains, are „skills” of an art work. These skills can be singled out through an aesthetic concretization of the work of art. Although they are non-qualitative, artistic values, Ingarden posits, are *relational*. They are reducible to two skills of the work of art: a- evoking an aesthetic experience and b- establishing a basis for the constitution of an aesthetic object and its values.<sup>26</sup> By and large, artistic and aesthetic values, although put in contradistinction, influence each other. Artistic values need aesthetic values to fulfill their relational skills within a work of art. Aesthetic values, likewise, need artistic values to fully and comprehensively fulfill their concretization within a work of art. To clearly see how this relation manifests itself, an analysis of the LWA, which is both an artistic work in its own right and a potentially aesthetic object if competently apprehended and concretized, will suffice. In particular, special attention will be paid to the „schematized aspects,” which, I believe, can pinpoint the complex yet harmonious character of artistic and aesthetic values, with regards to the LWA.

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, 205.

<sup>26</sup> Dziemidok, “Ingarden's Theory”, 74–75.

## From an Artistic Object to an Aesthetic Object

The LWA, as Ingarden conceives of it, is an ontologically complex and polyphonically cohesive stratified whole. As has been repeatedly emphasized in this paper, the aesthetic dimension of Ingarden's investigations should not be separated from his phenomenological-ontological deliberations. A strong case can be made for the latter when analyzing the heterogenous strata of the literary work and their interdependencies. This is the main objective of the present section. Moreover, I will, in connection with the previous section's analysis, underline the ontological-aesthetic changes that accompany the transition of the literary work from an artistic object into an aesthetic object.

According to Ingarden, there are four strata that distinguish the literary work from other works of art:

- (1) The stratum of linguistic sound formations;
- (2) The stratum of meaning units;
- (3) The stratum of represented objects;
- (4) The stratum of schematized aspects;<sup>27</sup>

(1) and (2) play on the borderlines of each other and complement each other's functions within the literary work. (1), also called the „language stratum,” concerns precisely language; treated as the instrument via which the literary work's „artistic features” are unlocked. It is directly connected with (2), for each word sound corresponds to a meaning, which in turn is structured into more complex sentence meanings. These sentence meanings are „purely intentional” (i.e., they are directed at something other than themselves; they represent certain „intended objectivities” within the literary work). (3) constitutes the realm of „intended objectivities”. That is to say, everything that is intended in the fictional work (as opposed to how objects are represented in the real world) falls within the scope of represented objects. The latter are also purely intentional, and the world which they occupy, considering it a unified ontic sphere, is intended to

---

<sup>27</sup> As declared throughout this paper, the fourth stratum is of special importance to my analysis, and not so much the first three, for which only a brief sketch of their content will suffice.

represent the actual world. This is what Ingarden describes as „the world of the work”. (4) is also closely connected with (3). The stratum of schematized aspects is Ingarden's attempt at cementing the gaps left wide open in the representation of intended objectivities. „Whenever a particular object is represented in a literary work, it is never fully represented all at once.”<sup>28</sup>

A literary work's schematized aspects, as stated above, are meant to complete the represented objectivities. Ingarden was well-aware that, no matter what the author does, *ficta* can never be fully described. In fact, this is not unique to *ficta*. Surrounding us in the real world are objects that only, as Husserl claims, present themselves *inadequately*, with respect to our perception of them. Reaching an object *as it is meant* (presenting its complete properties and features), Husserl argues, is an „unachievable ideal.” My perception of an object cannot capture all its properties, and for that it is inadequate.<sup>29</sup> Fictional properties are no different. When assigned to characters in a literary work, properties lack an all-inclusive application to *ficta*. They can only be applied to *ficta* in an incomplete manner.

We can make a distinction among the presented strata of the literary work, as it figures in our discussion of values. On the one hand, the stratum of language and the stratum of meaning units together manifest the artistic value of the literary work. They give rise to the artistic qualities of the literary work, which distinguish it from, say, scientific works. Through language and meaning units, the literary work's „mood” and other artistic features become explicit for readers. On the other hand, the stratum of represented objects and the stratum of schematized aspects together constitute the aesthetic value of the literary work. So, in this view, the artistic value of the literary work, manifesting itself in the first two strata, and the aesthetic value of the literary work, fulfilled mainly in the last two strata, emphasize the unity of the literary work as comprising of both artistic and aesthetic values. The structure of the literary work as a stratified whole is made possible thanks to the inherent artistic values embedded in it, and the aesthetic values added to it essentially by acts of concretization.

---

<sup>28</sup> Mitscherling, “Roman Ingarden's Aesthetics”, 438–439.

<sup>29</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book*, trans. Fred Kersten, vol. 2 (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1983), 331–333.

Building on what has been established thus far, the literary work's structure as a stratified formation is essential to its possessing artistic and aesthetic values. As Ingarden posits, the aesthetic value of the literary work is in a state of potency until concretized by a competent reader (i.e., as he argues again elsewhere,<sup>30</sup> the literary work should be distinguished from its concretization). By apprehending the literary work, not only does the reader alter the work's aesthetic status, they also alter its ontological status. The literary work of art is a *created* entity. It only comes into existence following the creative acts of poets and novelists. It is not an ever-existent Platonic entity, nor is it an imaginary entity, constantly dependent on an apprehending mind for its *subsistence*. The literary work, following Ingarden, is a purely intentional entity. That is, it is heteronomous with respect to its creator's autonomous mental acts. Ficta, as denizens of literary works, are also purely intentional. They share the same ontological status as literary works. Further, ficta are characterized by a moment of *derivation*. To elaborate, fictional characters have their *immediate* foundation in the sense of the words describing them. These descriptions are in turn existentially dependent on the author's mental acts. Before introducing them to anyone outside the author's room, literary works are existentially dependent on the author's mental acts only for their *origination*. Once put out there for readership, the literary work's ontological status changes. Its existential heteronomy becomes linked to readers as well, who maintain its *subsistence*. Competent readers, who can read and apprehend the work's worth, enter into an ontological commitment, so to speak, with the literary work and its author. Consequently, the literary work's ontological dependencies change. This ontological change leads to the birth of the literary work's aesthetic value.

As Ingarden consistently argues, the potential aesthetic value of literary works can only be realized by a reader. This cannot be any reader. It has to be a reader who apprehends the literary work's value. This does not make the literary work subjectively dependent on the reader. „It can appear in different corporeal embodiments and places at any given time as identically the same one, and not merely similar, e.g., the same poem in many printings, or the same sonata in many

---

<sup>30</sup> Roman Ingarden, *Ontology of the Work of Art: The Musical Work, the Picture, the Architectural Work, the Film*, trans. Raymond Meyer, John T. Goldthwait (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989).

performances.”<sup>31</sup> The literary work as an artistic work exists regardless of the reader's acts of concretization. We can say that the literary work's artistic value is autonomous with respect to the reader's apprehension. By contrast, the literary work's aesthetic value is heteronomous with regards to the reader's concretization.

It is in the stratum of schematized aspects that readers' concretization acts are strongly manifest. By filling out „spots of indeterminacy,” readers become cocreators of the literary work. As has been brought into light earlier, a full description of ficta's aspects cannot be exhausted. It is in ficta's nature that they cannot be fully determined. A reader „fills up” (somehow involuntarily) these spots of indeterminacy, and, in so doing, realizes the aesthetic potential of literary works.<sup>32</sup> Acts of concretization are carried out by readers, and readers are different. They differ with regards to their educational level, cultural status, and other important factors that make the reading experience of one and the same work vary. As a result, Ingarden notes, we may have different aesthetic experiences of the same work. Nonetheless, not all readings are true to the created literary work. Some concretizations (also called *concretions*) are faithful to the work, while others are far from being a correct concretization of its potential:

The effective emergence of the ‘possible’ concretions of a work of art [...] obviously depends not only on the work itself but also on the presence of competent observers and on us being apprehended by them in one way rather than another. This in turn depends on various historical conditions. Hence any work of art (and this operates differently for the different arts) passes through various periods of brilliance, that is periods in which it attracts frequent and correct aesthetic concretions, and other periods when its attractiveness is weakened or even disappears if it is no longer ‘legible’ to its public. Or again it may meet with observers who have a completely different manner of emotional reaction, who have become insensitive to certain values of the work or frankly hostile to them, and who therefore are unqualified to produce the sort of concretion in which these values shine forth and act upon the observer. When this happens a work of art is not only unreadable but as it were dumb.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Wojciech Chojna, “Ontology of the Work of Art: The Musical Work; The Picture; The Architectural Work; The Film by Roman Ingarden, Raymond Meyer, John T. Goldthwait,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 1 (1990): 85, DOI: 10.2307/431204

<sup>32</sup> Ingarden, *Ontology of the Work*, 225–227.

<sup>33</sup> Ingarden, “Artistic and Aesthetic Values”, 201.

Nonetheless, the above characterization of aesthetic experience does not change anything in the literary work itself. Irrespective of the distinct aesthetic experiences that may be evoked while reading the same literary work, the latter always remains the same. Moreover, acts of concretization do not impose themselves on the literary work. It is rather the other way round. The literary work imposes itself on the reader's concretization acts. In other words, as Ingarden posits, the schematized aspects of a literary work, which the reader determines by filling out their gray areas, are „held in readiness.”<sup>34</sup> The incomplete determinations of ficta are ready to be actualized whenever they undergo a proper reading that adds to their artistic structure an aesthetic dimension. Put briefly, a genuine literary work forces us into an „aesthetic attitude by the very thematic apprehension of the work's object stratum.” To do otherwise is unnatural and compromises the literary work's essentially aesthetic value.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to formulate an Ingardenian conception of the literary work's aesthetic value. Following Mitscherling's lead, I have attempted to place Ingarden's aesthetics within his overall philosophical project. That is, I have argued that Ingarden's aesthetics can only be properly fathomed by comprehending his ontological deliberations, since, as he himself often enunciated, all his philosophical investigations constitute his realist rejoinder to Husserl's alleged turn toward transcendental idealism. To execute the latter, I have brought together insights from his aesthetics and ontology to establish a coherent account of values, where artistic and aesthetic values are analyzed as they manifest themselves in the LWA. To recapitulate, two ontologically essential values can be distinguished in the literary work of art: artistic and aesthetic. The former are inherent in all works of art. They are, so to speak, independent of the reader's or author's influence. Aesthetic values, by contrast, are dependent on the reader's concretization acts. A competent reader is needed to apprehend the literary work's

---

<sup>34</sup> Ingarden, *Literary Work of Art*, 265.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, 371.

value and actualize its aesthetic potential. The two values should not be held in contradistinction. As I have argued, artistic values can be „touched” in the first two strata of the literary work, and the aesthetic values in the last two.<sup>36</sup> The literary work of art is a stratified formation. It is the „whole” that results from the four heterogenous strata. Adhering to the literary work's stratified formation, the artistic and aesthetic values of the literary work, although separable, are both necessary for a full realization of its experience.

### Bibliography

- Ameriks, Karl. „Husserl's Realism.” *The Philosophical Review* 86, no. 4 (1977): 498–519. DOI: 10.2307/2184565
- Chojna, Wojciech. „Ontology of the Work of Art: The Musical Work; The Picture; The Architectural Work; The Film by Roman Ingarden, Raymond Meyer, John T. Goldthwait.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 1 (1990): 85–87. DOI: 10.2307/431204
- Dziemidok, Bohdan. „Ingarden's Theory of Values and the Evaluation of the Work of Art.” In *On the Aesthetics of Roman Ingarden: Interpretations and Assessments*. Edited by Bohdan Dziemidok, Peter J. McCormick, 71–100. Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989.
- Haefliger, Gregor. „Ingarden und Husserls Transzendentaler Idealismus.” *Husserl Studies* 7, no. 2 (1990): 103–121. DOI: 10.1007/BF00157156
- Hall, Harrison. „Was Husserl a Realist or an Idealist?” In *Husserl, Intentionality and Cognitive Science*. Edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus, Harrison Hall, 169–190. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982.
- Holmes, Richard H. „Is Transcendental Phenomenology Committed to Idealism?” *The Monist* 59, no. 1 (1975): 98–114. DOI: 10.5840/monist19755912
- Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book*. Translated by Fred Kersten, vol. 2. Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1983.
- Ingarden, Roman. „Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Object.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 21, no. 3 (1961): 289–313. DOI: 10.2307/2105148

---

<sup>36</sup> This is merely a way of „appearing”, not a way of „being”.

- Ingarden, Roman. "Artistic and Aesthetic Values." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 4, no. 3 (1964): 198–213. DOI: 10.1093/bjaesthetics/4.3.198
- Ingarden, Roman. *Controversy over the Existence of the World*. Edited by Jan Hartman. Translated by Arthur Szylewicz, vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2013.
- Ingarden, Roman. *Ontology of the Work of Art: The Musical Work, the Picture, the Architectural Work, the Film*. Translated by Raymond Meyer, John T. Goldthwait. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989.
- Ingarden, Roman. *The Literary Work of Art*. Translated by George G. Grabowicz. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
- Ingarden, Roman. "What We Do Not Know about Values." In *Man and Value*. Translated by Arthur Szylewicz, 131–163. München: Philosophia Verlag, 1983.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. Edited by Nicholas Walker. Translated by James C. Meredith. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Kocay, Victor. "Roman Ingarden's Unique Conception of Aesthetic Objects." In *Phenomenology World-Wide: Foundations, Expanding Dynamics, Life Engagements: A Guide for Research and Study*. Edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, 202–210. Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 2002.
- Küng, Guido. "Husserl on Pictures and Intentional Objects." *The Review of Metaphysics* 26, no. 4 (1973): 670–680.
- Küng, Guido. "The World as Noema and as Referent." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 3, no. 1 (1972): 15–26. DOI: 10.1080/00071773.1972.11006220
- Küng, Guido. "Welterkennen und Textinterpretation Bei Roman Ingarden und Nelson Goodman." *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 44, no. 1 (1993): 69–90. DOI: 10.1163/18756735-90000520
- Küng, Guido. "Zum Lebenswerk von Roman Ingarden. Ontologie, Erkenntnistheorie und Metaphysik." In *Die Münchener Phänomenologie*. Edited by Helmut Kuhn, Eberhard Avé-Lallemant, and Reinhold Gladiator, 158–173. Den Hague: Nijhoff, 1975.
- Makota, Janina. "Roman Ingarden's Controversy with Edmund Husserl." In *Roman Ingarden a Filozofia Naszego Czasu*. Edited by Adam Węgrzecki, 283–295. Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Filozoficzne, 1995.
- Mitscherling, Jeff. "Roman Ingarden's Aesthetics." *Philosophy Compass* 7, no. 7 (2012): 436–47. DOI: 10.1111/j.1747-9991.2012.00493.x.
- Mitscherling, Jeff. *Roman Ingarden's Ontology and Aesthetics*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997.
- Sokolowski, Robert. "On the Motives Which Led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism." *The Journal of Philosophy* 74, no. 3 (1977): 176–180. DOI: 10.2307/2025608
- Szyszkowska, Małgorzata A. "Roman Ingarden's Theory of Aesthetic Experience. From Idea to Experience and Back." In *Roman Ingarden and His Times*. Edited by Dominika Czakon,

Natalia Anna Michna, and Leszek Sosnowski, 223–238. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2020.

Thomasson, Amie L. *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.  
Wallner, Ingrid M. "In Defense of Husserl's Transcendental Idealism: Roman Ingarden's Critique Re-Examined." *Husserl Studies* 4, no. 1 (1987): 3–43. DOI: 10.1007/BF00375881

## Streszczenie

### **Wartość estetyczna dzieł literackich w filozofii Romana Ingardena**

W artykule analizuję Ingardenowską koncepcję wartości estetycznej dzieła literackiego. Idąc tropem Mitscherlinga, próbuję umieścić estetykę Ingardena w ramach jego całościowego projektu fenomenologiczno-ontologicznego. Twierdzę, że estetykę Ingardena można właściwie poznać jedynie poprzez zrozumienie jego rozważań ontologicznych, ponieważ – jak często podkreślał sam Ingarden – wszystkie jego dociekania filozoficzne stanowią realistyczną odpowiedź na rzekomy zwrot Husserla w stronę idealizmu transcendentalnego. W tym celu zestawiam ze sobą poglądy z jego estetyki i ontologii, tworząc tym sposobem spójne ujęcie wartości, w którym same wartości artystyczne i estetyczne są analizowane w taki sposób, jak przejawiają się w dziele literackim. Twierdzę, że dzięki ontologicznej analizie wartości estetycznych (i artystycznych) dzieło literackie staje się bardziej przejrzyste w swej strukturze warstwowej.

Słowa kluczowe: Roman Ingarden, wartość estetyczna, wartość artystyczna, dzieło literackie, ontologia, estetyka

## Zusammenfassung

### **Der ästhetische Wert literarischer Werke in der Philosophie von Roman Ingarden**

In dem Artikel analysiere ich Ingardens Konzept des ästhetischen Wertes eines literarischen Werkes. Im Anschluss an Mitscherling versuche ich, Ingardens Ästhetik in sein phänomenologisch-ontologisches Gesamtprojekt einzuordnen. Ich behaupte, dass Ingardens Ästhetik nur dann richtig erkannt werden kann, wenn man seine ontologischen Überlegungen versteht, denn wie Ingarden selbst oft betont hat, sind alle seine philosophischen Untersuchungen eine realistische Antwort auf Husserls angebliche Hinwendung zum transzendentalen Idealismus. Zu diesem Zweck stelle ich Ansichten aus seiner Ästhetik und Ontologie nebeneinander und schaffe so einen kohärenten Werteanatz, in dem künstlerische

und ästhetische Werte selbst auf die gleiche Weise analysiert werden, wie sie sich in einem literarischen Werk manifestieren. Ich behaupte, dass dank der ontologischen Analyse ästhetischer (und künstlerischer) Werte ein literarisches Werk in seiner Schichtstruktur transparenter wird.

Schlüsselworte: Roman Ingarden, ästhetischer Wert, künstlerischer Wert, literarisches Werk, Ontologie, Ästhetik

Informacje o autorze:

HICHAM JAKHA, magister, doktorant, Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II; adres do korespondencji: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin; e-mail: [hicham.jakha@kul.pl](mailto:hicham.jakha@kul.pl)

