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ROMAN INGARDEN'S PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACY
AND MY DEPARTURE FROM IT: THE
CREATIVE FREEDOM OF THE POSSIBLE WORLDS*

PART I: THE LEGACY OF ROMAN INGARDEN

Roman Ingarden, the great scholar and master of some among us, who has laid down for his disciples a work-foundation, and who has not only inspired us by the absolute faithfulness to the demands of reality but who has also maintained for decades our faithful allegiance to this task, is no longer among us. This volume is to commemorate the 20th anniversary of his death. The scrupulous and indefatigable work, which he has accomplished and left behind, has a specific significance for us and contains some irreducible factors relevant to all tendencies and trends of philosophy. This becomes more evident if we review the various stages in which the knowledge of his work has been spreading. The path which it took leads from the early book reviews, through the period of his total absence from the scene of Western Europe, which was dominated since 1945 by an environment uncongenial to his own eidetic interpretation of phenomenology, up to his later breakthrough, emphasized by an homage paid to him in the For Roman Ingarden, Festschrift of 1959,¹ which brought attention to his then still linguistically inaccessible work and which culminated in his later international successes, manifested by the German edition of his main works and his lecturing throughout Europe and the United States.

Strangely enough, Ingarden's vast range of questions to which he devoted his attention despite the grandeur of the very framework he outlined for himself as a program appears not to be so difficult to encompass in its essential philosophical significance. His extensive and minute analyses have elucidated or even answered many of these questions. If one decided to delve into the richness of his detailed work and attempt to reinterpret it with respect to all the directly treated and associated problems presented by the history of philosophy at each of its turns, — Ingarden invoked and alluded to so many minute aspects in his postulated philosophical reconstruction — it would require a lifetime.

First of all, two things are clear: one, that Ingarden unlike most of the great thinkers and scholars such as Leibniz and Husserl, did not leave a posthumous work of any major significance which could be expected to reveal the development of his thought beyond his published work. It may seem as if he had carried out with programmatic precision most of the detailed plans reaching as far as his inspiration would carry him. In this respect, we are left with a legacy of an accomplished philosophical corpus, with nothing still to come that would reveal any new elements, except those already known. This does not mean that he has accomplished his great program. On the contrary, the great expected metaphysics which was meant to bring his other philosophical investigations together remains a fragment.

Secondly, in his conception of phenomenology, taken chiefly from the Husserlian period of *Logical Investigations*, his emphasis on minute analysis of structural elements, carried out at a level that I have termed elsewhere “fundamental rationality” — introducing other levels of experience for the sake of exemplification only, e.g., “to make the phenomenon seen,” — accounts for the fact that the enormous amount of analytic work we are left with is distributed among several realms of inquiry, namely aesthetics, formal and material ontology, phenomenology of language, and value-inquiry. Although Ingarden remains faithful to his method — each question indicates and necessitates its proper methodological treatment by circumscribing its own field of interconnections which define its domain — his inquiries are scattered in voluminous, only partly correlated fragments of analysis within a common framework (like, for instance, the analysis of the structure of works of art, the modalities of their cognition, or the conception of action within the formal structure of some domains of being, and the causal network of the empirical world). The crucial parts and links in his programmed edifice are missing. Indeed, at this point I cannot refrain from applying Valéry’s statement on Leonardo da Vinci to Ingarden (which I referred to in my letter to Ingarden of September 1953), by saying that his genius allowed him only “to accomplish some fragments of a gigantic Game,” to which Ingarden agreed. Let us now turn to his “Game.”

There is no doubt about the great issue at stake for Ingarden’s philosophical reconstruction. Already at the time of his disagreement with Husserl, as is seen in his poignant letter to his master on the status of reality and its reformulation, Ingarden was pursuing the same