

political thrust of both Habermas's and Derrida's work. Although Bernstein ultimately weighs in with the Habermasian position, this does not prevent him from presenting Derrida's work thoroughly and charitably. For readers interested in approaching Derrida through their familiarity with Habermas, there is no better starting place than these two essays.

Overall, Madison's collection of essays provides a valuable research tool for all those contending with Derrida's writings. After spending some time working through Derrida, one will appreciate having these essays at hand so that one's study can continue from a broader, more informed critical perspective. While not intended as a substitute for actually reading Derrida, the essays in this collection go a long way in rendering this often challenging task a great deal easier.

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Roman Ingarden's Ontology and Aesthetics

JEFF MITSCHERLING

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The Polish philosopher, Roman Ingarden, is best-known for his work in aesthetics found in *The Literary Work of Art*. However, as the title of Jeff Mitscherling's book indicates, we are meant to view Ingarden in a new light. According to Mitscherling, Ingarden should be considered as an ontologist *first* and an aesthetician *second*. In fact, it is Mitscherling's thesis that we cannot understand Ingarden's work in aesthetics without first grasping how it is meant to ground his realist ontology (1). Mitscherling devotes the first chapter of his book to a brief biography of this little-known philosopher, concentrating on Ingarden's career and those events which informed it. Ingarden was a student and life-long friend of Husserl who, early in his career, became convinced that Husserl's phenomenology was committed to a dangerous idealism. Mitscherling paints Ingarden's entire philosophical career as an attempt to lay bare Husserl's idealist position only to refute it.¹

Ingarden's interpretation of Husserl is the topic of chapter 2. Mitscherling takes a stand against Ingarden's critics who claim that Ingarden simply misunderstood Husserl in so far as he incorrectly took Husserl's transcendental idealism as implying a metaphysical idealism.² These critics generally believe that Husserl was an *epistemological* idealist while remaining a *metaphysical* realist (49). According to Mitscherling, these critics miss Ingarden's point. While Husserl believes that the world of physical objects exists independently of consciousness, he does not consider this world to be the *real* world: "For Husserl [...] there exists no autonomous in-itself that

remains inaccessible to consciousness. Rather, the in-itself is to be located precisely, and exclusively, in consciousness" (48). Ingarden claims, furthermore, that this conclusion is an inevitable consequence of Husserl's method. Husserl wanted to set aside a place for philosophy as a rigorous science (of phenomenology). This place was the realm of immanent perception - which, according to Husserl, cannot be doubted (52). Any move from immanent perception to the world of physical objects would introduce the possibility of error and is, therefore, forbidden (53). As a consequence, the "things themselves," to which Husserl called for a return, become defined as mere "correlates" of intentional consciousness. A thing becomes understood as "a particularly built noema-consciousness" (58). Or to put it another way, Husserl has elevated a *methodological* scruple (restricting phenomenology to the "certain" world of immanent consciousness) into a *metaphysical* principle (the real world is no more than a construct of consciousness).

According to Mitscherling, critical interpretations of Ingarden remain skewed because critics have not familiarized themselves with his main work, *Controversy over the Existence of the World*. Ingarden failed to complete this book, and it had never been translated into English. With this in mind, Mitscherling devotes his second chapter to a summary and analysis of this unique work. *Controversy* contains Ingarden's "realist rejoinder" to Husserl's idealism. His goal is to demonstrate the existential autonomy of both "real" and "ideal" objects (i.e., their autonomy with respect to consciousness, and he does so by attempting to prove three fundamental claims: 1) Existentially autonomous objects are formally distinct from purely intentional objects; 2) The object of perception is transcendent to the act of perception; 3) Not all purely intentional objects have their ontic basis in consciousness alone (84). Each of these claims is, of course, made in opposition to Husserl.

In this chapter, Mitscherling presents a dense and rigorous analysis of such ontological issues as existential autonomy and heteronomy, existential originality and derivation, modes of being versus moments of existence, and so on. I found this chapter to be the most difficult, mainly due to the sheer volume of material presented in a relatively small space.

As I said earlier, Ingarden is best-known for his work in aesthetics, primarily in the art of literature, but also in music, theatre, painting, and architecture. The purpose of his work is not primarily aesthetic, however, but ontological. Mitscherling explains Ingarden's method in detail with respect to the literary work (in chapter 4), and then briefly for other works of art, calling attention to the different ontological challenges they present (in chapter 5). Central to Ingarden's theory is the notion of the "aesthetic object" as an entity that is ontologically separate from the reader and the work, yet which has, at the same time, its ontic basis in both. The work, according to

Ingarden, is to be understood as a "schematic formation" containing innumerable "spots of indeterminacy" that the reader is required to fill or "concretize" as he or she reads the work. In other words, there are always aspects of the objects in a literary work which are not determined by the text. The colour of a character's eyes, for example, may never be mentioned at any point in the work and so remains indeterminate.

Ingarden's method is shown to be exceptionally clever. The literary work possesses a unique and peculiar kind of existence, one which enables him to demonstrate his points (regarding purely intentional objects) upon which the argument in *Controversy* depends. The objects within a literary work (characters, setting, and so forth) are purely intentional objects; that is, they do not possess an existence outside of the intentional acts (of consciousness) of the reader. However, they do have an *ontic basis* outside of the reader's consciousness. This includes the physical text and the "ideal intersubjective" word meanings of the language in which the work is written. This establishes that, *contra* Husserl, purely intentional objects do not necessarily have their ontic bases in consciousness alone. The schematic form of the literary work also allows Ingarden to demonstrate his claim that purely intentional objects are formally distinct from existentially autonomous objects. Objects within literary works are, by virtue of their form, not fully determined in all their aspects. By contrast, *real* or existentially autonomous objects *are* fully determined in all their aspects.

Ingarden's analysis of the literary work is revealed as acute and insightful. There is at least one point, however, that may trouble the modern reader. Ingarden clings to the (some might say archaic) notion of "ideal entities" such as concepts, essences, and meanings which possess autonomous existence not only outside of consciousness, but outside of space and time as well. This is a position that very few people today would agree with. However, I think it is possible to reject it and still salvage his argument. For word meanings to possess an existence independent of the reader's consciousness, it is sufficient for them to be *intersubjective*, rather than ideal. Mitscherling does not call our attention to this problem in Ingarden's theory, and his oversight is compounded by his conflation of the terms "ideal" and "intersubjective" as is evident when he refers to word meanings as somehow ideal and intersubjective at the same time (154).

It is a flaw of Ingarden's book (*The Literary Work of Art*) that he does not provide any concrete analyses of actual literary works to ground his claims. Mitscherling repairs this omission by offering analyses of two texts, "The Dead" by James Joyce (140-143), and "The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe (143-152). These analyses are extremely successful at clarifying Ingarden's theory through the use of concrete examples. However, Mitscherling offers them as a *verification* of Ingarden's theory and, as such, they are less successful. Considering the vast number and variety of literary works to choose from,

virtually any theory regarding the identity and/or structure of the literary work of art could find at least a few supporting exemplars.

Mitscherling devotes his final chapter to an exposition of Ingarden's influence on contemporary aesthetics. This chapter in fact details Ingarden's *lack* of influence upon contemporary aesthetics, and the extreme abstruseness of Ingarden's work is cited as the cause. One exception is Gadamer, whose notion of "play," according to Mitscherling, harkens back to Ingarden's claim that the work of art is to be understood as a schematic formation that reaches its completion only when it is concretized by a perceiving subject. Mitscherling describes the similarities and differences between Ingarden's and Gadamer's position, and proceeds to show why Ingarden's is the superior.

Roman Ingarden's Ontology and Aesthetics is a fine introduction to the work of a neglected philosopher and is, therefore, a valuable addition to the scholarship of both aesthetics and ontology. This is not to say that it is without its flaws, however. Mitscherling offers less criticism than the reader may like; the book is, in fact, more of a defense of Ingarden than an analysis. Certain parts of it (notably chapter 3) are rather more difficult than is strictly appropriate for what is ostensibly an *introduction* to Ingarden's work. I also feel that Mitscherling too flippantly dismisses existential phenomenology in the closing of his book. His claim, worth quoting here - that it only leads to "a clearing overgrown with anguish and despair, where all we can do is sit back powerlessly and wait for Being to reveal Itself, or for a God to save us" (208) - may be true of the brand peddled by Heidegger, but does not apply to the works of others such as Merleau-Ponty.

Notes

- 1 In fact, Mitscherling points out that Ingarden is concerned with the idealism/realism problem as a whole, and not only with the form it finds in Husserl. However, he considers Husserl's work to be the most profound statement of metaphysical idealism offered by any contemporary philosopher. (80)
- 2 Mitscherling cites the following works as examples of this trend: 1) Richard Holmes, "Is Transcendental Phenomenology Committed to Idealism?," *The Monist*, 59; 2) R. Sokolowski, "On the Motives which Led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism," *Journal of Philosophy*, 74; 3) I. M. Wallner, "In Defense of Husserl's Transcendental Idealism: Roman Ingarden's Critique Re-examined," *Husserl-Studies*, 4.