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**INGARDEN'S CONCEPT OF THE STRUCTURE  
OF A LITERARY WORK AS AN INSPIRATION  
FOR THE ANALYSIS OF ARTISTIC  
COMMUNICATION**

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A few introductory explanations are due before we turn to the reflections which constitute the proper subject of this article. The term "analysis of artistic communication," as employed here, does not encompass all study of art, in which the work of art — and especially the work of literature — is defined as a simple sign or a communication consisting of many signs. Analyses of artistic communication comprise only those semiotic analyses of art which pertain to the aesthetic intercourse with a work, whether it concerns an individual or a specific circle of recipients. The introduction of this term is, therefore, dictated by the conviction that the process of intercourse with a work, referred to in traditional aesthetics as an "aesthetic experience," can be described in the language of semiotics and that such a description may be useful in overcoming certain difficulties of this aesthetics. We cannot substantiate this assumption in more detail here.<sup>1</sup> Let us therefore content ourselves with the indication that, while traditional aesthetics perceives the aesthetic experience as a result of a direct intercourse of the recipient with the work of art, the semiotic approach (as understood here) conceives of the process of aesthetic intercourse with the work of art as a communication

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<sup>1</sup>I addressed the question in a paper produced for the 7<sup>th</sup> International Aesthetic Congress in Bucharest in 1972, entitled "The perspectives of the semiotic method in aesthetic research." Polish text in: *Studia estetyczne*, 1973.

process, adding a third element to the work and the recipient: the language in which the communication occurs. By assuming that a work of art is a sign (or a complex communication), we concurrently assert that it is a work of art only in a definite language of artistic communication.<sup>2</sup> Hence, when read in two different languages of artistic communication, the same artistic creation, e.g. *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, will not be the same communication according to our understanding.

To clarify this position, we need to define two notions: that of the artistic language and that of the artistic sign (or communication). This can only be done tentatively, provisionally. We shall also limit ourselves, as much as it is possible, to defining the artistic sign since this article is principally concerned with Ingarden's concept as a source of inspiration for the characterisation of the structure of an artistic sign. It is easy to notice that an exhaustive characterisation of both notions would be practically tantamount to constructing a semiotic theory of aesthetic experience, which is not my aim here. These reflections will concern only certain introductory provisions allowing for the construction of such a theory.

With regard to the term "language of artistic communication," the following explanation will suffice: by language of artistic communication we shall understand the language in which occur *all* processes of aesthetic intercourse with works of art in a given era and within a given community of participants in a given culture, or all processes of aesthetic intercourse with works of art in a given era undertaken by a certain sub-group distinguished from among the participants of a given culture. Hence, for example, our

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<sup>2</sup>I use the terms "artistic" and "aesthetic" more or less in accordance with the meaning given them by Ingarden, which was subsequently adopted by many aestheticians, especially in Poland. This distinction is a consequence of one put forward by Ingarden, namely that between a schematic work of art (an artistic object), which is the creation of an artist's act of consciousness, and its substantiation by the receiver in an aesthetic experience (an aesthetic object). However, our claim that the aesthetic experience always occurs in a definite language of artistic communication leads to a certain modification of the meaning of both terms. In our understanding, the artistic object is not an isolated work (an artist's creation), but a literary work in a definite language of artistic communication. The introduction of the term "language of artistic communication" into the analysis thus yields three concepts where Ingarden had used two. A work of art conceived in separation from the reception processes shall be designated an artistic creation. A work of art perceived as a sign or a complex communication in a definite language of artistic communication shall be designated an artistic object or a work of art, and its qualities — artistic qualities. A work of art substantiated in an individual aesthetic experience shall be designated an aesthetic object, and its qualities — aesthetic qualities.

contemporary language of artistic communication is the language in which we read contemporary works as well as, say, works of antiquity or medieval times. A more detailed description of this language — or, more strictly, various historical languages of artistic communication — is the main task faced by the semiotic theory of aesthetic experience. This issue is currently being addressed by many semioticians of art, such as Yuri Lotman, whose analyses of extra-textual connections in artistic structures suggest a relationship to broader structures that change in time. The usefulness of this term for the analysis of the aesthetic experience derives from the following observations. Firstly, when we establish an aesthetic intercourse with ancient works of art, our experiences are significantly and inevitably different in quality from those of the historical, contemporaneous recipients. We often discover new content and new qualities in them. It may also happen that ancient masterpieces are quite dead to us. This is explained by historical research; yet the frequent demands of historians of art that we pursue the same appreciation, and especially the same aesthetic experience of ancient works of art as occurred in their day seems entirely utopian for a variety of reasons. Secondly, we enter aesthetic intercourse with certain pre-existing attitudes of an axiological nature (systems of values, hierarchy of values), or a cognitive and emotional nature, with definite expectations regarding the functions of works of art derived from the role assigned to art in the entire system of culture. Those attitudes and expectations, which constitute a *shared property* of contemporaneous participants in the same culture or of a certain sub-group in the set of participants in that culture, bestow certain shared features on their aesthetic experience of various works of art, both ancient and contemporary. It seems that the fact that individual aesthetic experiences are determined by collective, social facts is an important feature of those experiences. Hence a general theory of aesthetic experience should not fail to note that the shape of an aesthetic experience is always a testimony to the fact that the person undergoing the experience belongs to a certain human community or treat this phenomenon as being of secondary importance.

Thus the proposal to introduce the term "language of artistic communication" signifies the intention to describe all social and historical factors that determine the course of aesthetic contacts between a work of art and the participants in a given culture — or a smaller cultural community — as a coherent system which stands in the same relation to the concrete experience of an individual representative of this culture or community as language does to the act of communication.

It is evident from what has already been said that the definition of an

artistic sign cannot be formulated outside of a definite, historical language of artistic communication. Beyond the processes of artistic intercourse, it exists neither as a sign, nor as a quality. However, a question might emerge as to the properties of the structure of artistic creations which enable them to function as signs or complex communications in many languages of artistic communication. This is precisely the issue we are going to address. Ingarden posed a similar question in his analysis of the structure of literary works and other artistic creations. Among other tasks, his analysis was supposed to explain which element in their structure allows them, in the course of the processes of aesthetic experience, to lead to the constitution of many non-identical aesthetic objects.

At this stage of our examination, we can only offer a very general definition of our understanding of the structure of an artistic communication. A literary work is a complex, multi-level semiotic structure. In a literary work, the natural language — the fabric of literature — is structured on various levels: from phonology to such macro-levels as a stanza in a poem or a chapter in a novel. This structuring leads to modifications of word meaning inside the literary structure, of the function of designation, and, consequently, of the assertive function of sentences. Literary sentences, particularly the so-called fictional sentences, do not assert anything about the extra-artistic reality (they are not judgements); instead, they constitute a fictional represented world structured as an iconic model, meaning that in a given language of artistic communication it may point to a certain extra-literary reality. The represented world is not the verbal, but the iconic semiotic level of the literary work; this means that it owes its sign character to the similarity to certain specific real objects and states of affairs. One should emphasise that an iconic sign is not necessarily non-conventional. The aforementioned relationship of similarity is also distinct from the semiotic function of designation: for instance, an iconic sign similar to a concrete real object may be a general sign, but it may also point to objects to which it does not stand in a relation of similarity. This is because the meaning of a sign is co-determined by internal relations between the elements of the represented world and by the selection of a definite language of artistic communication.<sup>3</sup>

It must be added here that, when speaking of the semiotic understanding of a literary work and an aesthetic experience, we mean only those characterisations which capture the *entire* literary work as a sign structure and

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<sup>3</sup>The views presented in this passage are developed and substantiated in my book *O funkcji poznawczej dzieła literackiego* [On the Cognitive Function of a Literary Work of Art] (Rosner 1970).

the *entire* aesthetic experience as an act of communication. Conceptions that ascribe sign character only to some levels or strata of a literary work, or descriptions of an aesthetic experience that assign the character of acts of communication only to some of its phases or elements, are therefore not semiotic.

These findings enable us to conclude that the semiotic understanding of a literary work and an aesthetic experience postulated here differs significantly from Ingarden's proposal. For Ingarden, neither was an entire literary work a sign or a complex sign structure, nor was the aesthetic experience, taken as a whole, a communication act. Ingarden was not interested in the literary work as a means of communication. He studied its mode of existence or, more precisely, used the example of a literary work to analyse a certain variation of the intentional mode of existence and the structure of derived purely intentional objects.

This analysis of Ingarden's concept of a literary work is not designed to negate or even downplay those differences. We embark on it with the conviction that, regardless of the differences, Ingarden's aesthetics, particularly certain key conceptual distinctions arrived at in the process of an ontological analysis of a literary work and later generalised to other areas of art, can be translated into the language of semiotic aesthetics, and enable the formulation of many problems related to the definition of the artistic sign with a hitherto unimaginable precision.

We shall thus consider, in turn, (I) the fundamental differences between the perception of a literary work in Ingarden's thought and in semiotics (as understood here); (II) the kinship between Ingarden's definition of a literary work and a certain type of definition of a literary work as a sign structure; (III) Ingarden's description of the structure of represented objects and the stratum of signification as a source of inspiration for the semiotic theory of a literary work; (IV) Ingarden's non-psychologist and non-physicalist understanding of a literary work as a source of inspiration for the semiotic theory of a literary work; (V) and Ingarden's theory of derived purely intentional objects as an ontological description of cultural signs (including artistic signs). Finally, (VI) we shall attempt to answer the question why Ingarden, whose philosophical and aesthetic analyses, in my opinion, pave the way for the analysis of a literary work as a sign structure and of the aesthetic experience as an act of communication, himself rejected such understandings of a literary work, and in particular rejected the sign-interpretation of the represented stratum in the aesthetic experience.

This article is a shortened fragment of a larger work; hence the afore-

mentioned issues shall be discussed only in outline. It should be stressed that many of the findings are only of a preliminary nature, since I discuss only a part of Ingarden's aesthetic output, namely the concept of the structure and the mode of existence of a literary work, bypassing other aspects, especially his analysis of the cognition of and aesthetic intercourse with a literary work, which is of particular interest for us. This, however, is a set of issues that require a separate analysis.

## I.

Before we proceed to the analysis of more detailed issues, it is necessary to discuss the fundamental difference between the semiotic and the ontological concept of a literary work, and the source of certain similarities between them. If we contented ourselves with the belief that, while from the ontological perspective the work is a kind of entity, the semiotic approach perceives it as a linguistic statement or, in the most general manner, as a means of communication, we would assume that the difference between them largely derives from the types of questions posed in the face of the same object — intersubjective and identical in many communication acts or, as Ingarden would say, in many acts of cognitive or aesthetic intercourse with a literary work. It seems, however, that the differences between these two approaches mainly result from a difference in the very object of study. An "artistic communication" is not the same object as an "artistic creation," whose mode of existence is examined by Ingarden.

The semiotic approach to the literary work as we understand it is an approach that proscribes the analysis of the work in separation from the very communication acts for which the work in question serves as a means. The analysis of artistic communication sets out from a certain act of communication, or rather a multiplicity of acts of communication performed by various persons at varying times and places; acts which differ in many ways as to their progress and content. The object or, to use a more cautious formulation, impulse causing all those acts is the same artistic creation — for instance, *Don Quixote* by Cervantes. The far-reaching differences, not only between the acts, but above all between the sets of acts of communication performed in distant eras and cultural milieus prompt the question whether all those recipients were indeed dealing with the same artistic object (artistic communication), or whether, perhaps, it should be assumed that the same artistic creation was, in the course of history, read as a sign (or rather as a complex communication) in various languages of artistic communication.

This assumption will not explain all discrepancies between the acts of communication for which the same artistic creation serves as a means. The acts of reception and their creations differ from one another even when they are performed in the same historical era and by members of the same cultural community (in the same language of artistic communication). To define a literary work as means of artistic communication is to resolve the problem of the intersubjectivity of an artistic sign within a given language of artistic communication and to answer the question of its identity in various distinct acts of communication. Finally, it must be explained how the structure of an artistic creation allows it to survive its own era, to remain a sign or a complex communication in many successive languages of artistic communication across history.

It is plain to see that the aforementioned major problems of the semiotic approach were formulated and partially solved in Ingarden's analyses, if in a different language. For Ingarden — in contrast to the semiotic approach as understood here — the primary object of investigation is an isolated work (artistic creation), and the fundamental issue is not the question of the way in which it fulfils various communicative functions, but rather that of its structure and essential properties independent of those functions. Of course, this does not mean that Ingarden failed to notice the problems connected with the multiplicity of manners of establishing an intercourse with artistic creations, that he disputed the need to investigate those issues in both diachronic and synchronic perspectives; some of them he addressed in the analysis of the relationship between the work and the substantiation, others in his reflections regarding the life of a literary work. Nevertheless, in his approach, the question of cognition or aesthetic substantiation remains secondary to ontological analyses in two ways: firstly, it is derivative, in both the logical and the chronological sense; secondly, the concept of the structure of a work, pursued earlier, in the process of analysing an artistic creation in isolation, is the only source for the criteria of assessment of the correctness (adequateness) of various ways of establishing an intercourse with the artistic creation. This methodological stance was underscored by Ingarden himself in the final sections of *The Literary Work of Art*, where he discussed the problem — marginal for him, but central to the semiotic approach — of the so-called life of a literary work: "We have considered [the literary work] as something detached from the living intercourse of psychic individuals and hence also from the cultural atmosphere and the various spiritual currents that develop in the course of history" (Ingarden 1973b: 331).

Each of the methodological perspectives presented here is exposed to

different threats. Ingarden's method is threatened by the excessively rigorous evaluation of the various modes of intercourse with the work, if their correctness is evaluated only from the point of view of the assumptions about its structure developed in an analysis of the isolated work (artistic creation). The attitude which I have called semiotic, on the other hand, may lead to the elimination of all criteria of the correctness of reception if the artistic sign and the language of artistic communication are not clearly defined and the criteria developed from those definitions.

Interestingly, Ingarden's characteristic gesture of opening of the analysis with an examination of the object in isolation also typifies his considerations on language. For example, let us recall how he approaches the sentence in *The Literary Work of Art*. Ingarden considers, in turn, "(1) what a sentence is in itself, (2) what it performs, purely of itself, as an objectivity constructed in a particular manner, (3) what services it performs for psychic individuals in connection with their lives and experiences" (Ingarden 1973b: 107). The point of departure for an analysis of the process of linguistic communication is thus reached only in the last question.

The other fundamental difference between Ingarden's approach to the literary work and the semiotic one lies in the fact that, as I have already mentioned, a literary work as a whole is not a sign or a complex sign structure in Ingarden's view. Ingarden simply does not conceive of language other than the language of words and sentences. At the same time, since he perceives a literary work as a multi-layered creation comprising, apart from two language strata, also the stratum of appearances and the stratum of represented objects, it cannot be treated as a sign or communication, even if the stratum of meaning undoubtedly plays a constitutive role in this approach.

## II.

Apparently, there are two types of definitions of a literary work as a sign structure. The first type, comprised of definitions which we shall describe as narrower, describes a literary work as a purely linguistic (verbal) creation. Narrower definitions may distinguish many levels of artistic structuring of the language. They may also consider that this structuring leads to a modification of the meanings of particular words or larger linguistic structures. However, they do not distinguish signs that are not words, especially iconic signs, in an artistic literary communication.

The second, broader type of definitions, encompassing, among others, our understanding of the structure of a literary communication, are developed,

like Ingarden's definition, in the belief that the reduction of a literary work to two linguistic strata — i.e. sounds and meanings — or to the structure of the verbal artistic text, makes it impossible to explain the wealth of its features and functions. Like their narrower counterparts, broader definitions characterise the literary work as a multi-layered and multi-functional semiotic structure, but apart from the verbal semiotic levels, they also distinguish extra-verbal, especially iconic levels. Signs at those levels, e.g. represented objects and events, differ from verbal signs because their meaning is not purely conventional, but is co-defined by the relationship of similarity between them and certain objects outside of the work, such as actual persons or events. For the broader definition to be accepted, however, it must be tied to such an understanding of the term "represented world in a literary work" — and particularly with such a characterisation of its mode of existence and structure — which would justify its intersubjectivity for numerous recipients. Only a world thus defined can be ascribed sign functions, in particular the function of a communication composed of iconic (presentational) signs. This requirement is not fulfilled by the definition of a represented world as a world imagined by the creator or the recipient.

Although Ingarden does not accept the semiotic interpretation of the represented world in an aesthetic experience which, he says, gives justice to the literary work, his definition of a literary work is doubtless more akin to a broader than a narrower definition. This is caused chiefly by his belief in the multi-layered structure of the literary work, his conviction that it cannot be reduced to two linguistic strata if its features are to be fully apprehended, and that all strata of a literary work are intersubjective. In his polemics, Ingarden also frequently opposed the identification of represented objects as meaningful (verbal) creations of a higher level, proposed by Henryk Markiewicz (1966, chap. III), among others; here, he pointed to the difference in function and structure of the object stratum. At the same time, he ascribed a decisive role in fulfilling the artistic functions of a literary work to this stratum. At times, this role causes the stratum of represented objects to overshadow all the remaining strata.

Since Ingarden did not treat the stratum of appearances or the stratum of represented objects as signs, he spoke not of understanding, but of cognition of a literary work, not about interpretation, but substantiation. Yet it is precisely this approach that brings his analysis of the process of establishing an intercourse with a work closer to ours since Ingarden's "cognition" approaches the literary work as an integral whole without contrasting its linguistic strata with its object strata. For Ingarden, the uniform character

of the processes of intercourse with the work, comprehensive in spite of their complexity, derives from the coherence of the mode of existence of the apprehended object. A literary work as a whole, along with all elements of its linguistic and object strata, exist in a derived purely intentional manner. The process of cognition of and of the aesthetic intercourse with a literary work should be adjusted to the specificity of the object, to its intentionality in accordance with Ingarden's epistemological stance.

In the analysis of various methods involved in cognition, reconstruction, or aesthetic substantiation of a derived purely intentional object such as a literary work — or indeed, any other work of art — Ingarden points out that although intercourse with a work begins from certain sensual processes, it must nevertheless constantly exceed them; this is because a work of art is not a physical object, even as it is founded in a certain physical object. These considerations lead him, for instance, to question the distinction between the aesthetic experience (an experience of a work of visual art) and a literary experience, proposed by Władysław Tatarkiewicz (1935) who believed that in the former case the object is open to sensual experience. As Ingarden rightly observes, "In order to apprehend the work of art, we must always go beyond the sense perception which serves as point of departure, and beyond the real things given in sense perception" (Ingarden 1973a: 221), and the distinction perceived by Tatarkiewicz is only one of degree. This perception, exceeding that which is given sensually, is characteristic already of the preliminary operations, those most closely linked to the existential foundation of a literary work; we do not, for instance, perceive written signs in their individual features, but rather capture their typical graphic or sound forms; we also reach beyond our perception by adding meanings. Establishing an intercourse with other (non-phonetic) strata of a literary work, we also constantly reach toward that which is not given — not via perception, but in an intersubjective manner. This phenomenon, visible in the process of actualisation of meanings, is particularly typical of processes directed towards the object strata; in an intercourse with appearances we actualise them, reaching beyond what is explicitly stated in their schematic form which constitutes an element of the work. The process of reconstruction and substantiation of the represented world follows a similar course. The process of intercourse with a literary work is, therefore, at every stage and in reference to every stratum, a constant transcendence of what is in one way or another intersubjectively given — and yet, this transcendence is never entirely unconstrained, being regulated by the intersubjective skeleton of the literary work itself. It should be noted that this account of the manner of

apprehension of derived purely intentional objects and aesthetic intercourse with them is similar to the processes described in semiotic analyses as the passage from a statement with a complex, multi-layered structure to its understanding or interpretation.

### III.

Finally, Ingarden's concept is brought closer to our semiotic approach by his description of the structure of the represented objects themselves, which in many aspects practically paves the way for their semiotic interpretation. Let us point out a few elements of this description.

Thus, for instance, if an object is to be a representative (iconic) sign of some other object, and thus not a fully conventional sign, it must be (at least in the case when it constitutes a finished statement, and not an element of a complex statement) similar to its referent, but at the same time different from it. Ingarden's represented objects fulfil this requirement due to their conventional nature, which radically distinguishes them from the relevant real objects. Semiotic analysis also raises the following question: whether the style of a work depends on the signs it consists of and their arrangement. What is at stake here is thus no longer the sign — referent relationship, but inter-sign relations, without which one could not speak of any stratum of the work as a statement in a definite sign system. Ingarden's thought includes observations which inspire a solution to these problems. For instance, in his *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* he writes: "The choice of places of indeterminacy varies from work to work and can constitute the characteristic feature of any given work as well as that of a literary style or of an artistic style in general. The so-called literary genres can also differ greatly in this respect" (Ingarden 1973a: 51-52).

One could make the general observation that the concrete features of represented objects identified by Ingarden include none that would rule out the possibility of their semiotic interpretation. Moreover, Ingarden's definition of a literary work fulfils the fundamental condition of a semiotic interpretation of the object strata: it ascribes intersubjective character to those strata along with the entire work. It also ascribes the same mode of existence to the represented strata as to the linguistic (verbal) signs: derived purely intentional existence.

A semiotic description of the represented world can be inspired not only through the characterisation of the structure of the object strata, but also by the analysis of the meaning stratum. The original theory of meaning outlined by Ingarden reveals analogies between the meanings of conventional

and representational language more forcefully than any other theory; it shows that the structures of meanings of verbal terms also depend on the category structure of that which those terms refer to. Ingarden distinguishes a number of elements in the meaning of a word, allowing for subtle distinctions between the structures of meaning of particular linguistic categories. Thus, for instance, the meaning of a term consists of the material content of the term, which defines the qualitative endowment of the referents. Within the material content, Ingarden observes both constant and variable factors; the material content of a term is therefore as schematic as the content of derived purely intentional objects (such as represented objects). The concept of variables is crucial for the definition of the meaning of a given term; their presence in the material content "allows us to resolve various important logical problems, e.g., the problem of ordering various 'concepts' [...] according to the degree of their generality" (Ingarden 1973b: 68). Hence the assumption that the degree and type of systematisation of representative (iconic) signs fulfils an analogous role to that of variables in the material content of the term — it defines the degree of generality of particular signs.

The meaning of a term, and also of linguistic terms — distinct categories — also includes the definite formal content which "performs a *forming* function" (Ingarden 1973b: 70) with respect to the intentional equivalent of a given word. Thus the expressions of a language, like representative signs, not only define the material endowment of their referents, but also place them in certain formal structures: structures of the object, action etc. Ingarden demonstrates that the same material content will constitute a new meaning if bound to a new formal content; he also points out that the formal element of meaning is usually obscured by the material element, though it may shift to the foreground in certain uses of the word.

The concept of the formal element of meaning (formal content), like that of the moment of existential characterisation and the moment of existential position, seems particularly inspiring for a semiotic analysis of the literary representative signs. When, for instance, we follow Ingarden in saying that the represented world is made up of objects, people, and processes, when we point to any represented object, it is precisely its formal structure that is brought to the foreground. To indicate that verbal meanings are endowed with an analogous factor is to point to another similarity between seemingly very distant signs, confirming that the quest of the proponents of a broad understating of the term "language" to create a general theory of meaning (encompassing various types of signs) is realistic.

#### IV.

Considering Ingarden's analysis of the represented stratum and the meaning stratum as a source of inspiration for the semiotic approach to the represented world, we now face detailed problems. However, a more general question arises: how, in spite of the significant differences between Ingarden's approach and the semiotic approach to object of study emphasised above, concrete analyses by Ingarden may, and indeed do, inspire the semiotic study of literature.

In my opinion, this is caused by Ingarden's non-psychologist and non-physicalist understanding of a literary work. We will not address Ingarden's anti-psychologist attitude here; it is undoubtedly a common feature of the school of phenomenology and does not determine the originality of Ingarden's philosophy. Yet the anti-psychologist attitude was fully developed and justified in philosophy of literature and in the extensive concept of the structure of a literary work only in Ingarden's reflections.

Thus, the kinship between Ingarden's analysis and semiotic analysis lies in the fact that both the question of the mode of existence of a work and that of the meaning of the literary artistic sign from any stratum require for the work to be distinguished from the creative experiences and conceptualisations which bring the work into being as well as the creator's intentions and also the experiences of reception and conceptualisations emerging in the process of aesthetic intercourse with the work. The significance of this problem for Ingarden is obvious: it is the problem of the impossibility of reducing derived purely intentional objects to mental objects. In our understanding of the semiotic approach, the question is equally vital: a literary work, if it is to be defined as a sign (a complex communication), must have an intersubjective meaning, identical for all the recipients reading this work in a given language of artistic communication. But it is beyond doubt that neither creative nor receptive experiences and images are endowed with intersubjectivity.

We shall not discuss here in any detail the criticism of various psychological definitions of a literary work presented by Ingarden in his *Literary Work of Art*: the definition identifying the work with the experiences of its author or with the cognitive object which is the result of those experiences, or with the receptive experiences or their result — the aesthetic substantiation. Ingarden's arguments for rejecting those definitions are identical in each case: none of those objects can be ascribed with all the features we identify in a literary work, and above all none of those definitions explains the literary work's persistence through time and its identity for many psychical objects — hence none presents a literary work as an intersubjectively accessible object. As has already been mentioned, Ingarden's analysis is concerned with the

literary work; however, it is distinct from the psychological processes that create it both in its mode of existence and its features. The intentionality of the work has nothing to do with its identification with the artist's purpose or intention. The finished work resembles the vision of its creator insofar as he managed to present and materialise it intersubjectively in the literary substance.

The significance of the non-psychologist understanding of the artistic sign for semiotic analysis is borne out by the fact that the Anglo-Saxon semiotic school has reached the same conclusions independently from Ingarden and in a different language. The distinction between the meaning of the work and the intention of its creator and particular interpretations is upheld by almost all representatives of this school who engage in theoretical considerations. This tendency is best represented by the well-known articles by Monroe Beardsley and W. K. Wimsatt discussing the two errors of psychologism in literary studies: the intentional fallacy (consisting in the identification of the work with the intention of its creator) and the affective fallacy (consisting in the identification of the meaning of the work with the experiences of its reader). For Ingarden, who opposed the biographic fixation of literary studies in Poland, the former was of paramount significance. For Anglo-Saxon criticisms, greatly indebted to the affective approach of I.A. Richards, it was fundamental to separate the work from its influence on the reader. Yet, though the points of departure were different, the entire scope of the problem was understood in both cases.

In his considerations, Ingarden made short work not only of psychologism, but also of the physicalist understanding of a literary work. In this dispute, too, the criteria that lead to the rejection of the physicalist definition are the same criteria that must arise when the possibility of artistic communication is considered. While the psychologist definitions oppose the notion of the intersubjective artistic sign, the physicalist definition rules out the treatment of numerous acts of reception — concerning various physical objects often endowed with different physical features (e.g. various copies of the same book) — as acts relating to the same literary work. The same intentional object may therefore have various physical foundations, just like the same sign can be recorded in numerous ways.

## V.

Another feature which brings together the two approaches under consideration is the aspiration to present the entire sphere of artistic objects in an integrated manner. Both provide findings that can easily be extended to a

broadly conceived sphere of human culture, even if each defines the latter differently. In both cases we are thus dealing with a tendency toward creating a system of concepts broad enough for the same fundamental scheme to apply at least to all works of art. Analysing a set of objects perceived by semiotics as a set of artistic signs from different strata, Ingarden ascribes the same mode of existence to all of them. Works of art and all their strata and elements exist in the derived purely intentional manner.

For Ingarden, works of art — like all intentional objects — are creations of acts of consciousness to which they owe their existence and essence. However, while primary purely intentional objects (e.g. cognitive objects) are created directly by someone's act of consciousness or a conjunction of such acts, derived purely intentional objects "owe their existence and essence to formations, in particular to units of meaning of different orders, which contain a 'borrowed' intentionality" (Ingarden 1973b: 118). Besides, derived purely intentional objects are not being autonomous from acts of consciousness; however, "this ontic relativity of theirs refers directly to the intentionality immanent in the units of meaning and only indirectly to the intentionality of the acts of consciousness" (Ingarden 1973b: 126). Since, as Ingarden shows elsewhere, the acts ascribing meaning to linguistic expressions are social and intersubjective, objects whose being is founded in those acts differ considerably from primary purely intentional objects. If the equivalents of the simple acts of assumption (primary purely intentional objects) are immediately accessible to only one subject of consciousness — namely the one that produces them — then the derived purely intentional objects have an intersubjective character, i.e. "they can be intended or apprehended by various conscious subjects as identically the same" (Ingarden 1973b: 126).

Intentional objects are characterised by a double structure; apart from the structure of the intentional object, defined in the act of intention calling that object to life and by the manner in which this act is fulfilled, they are also possess the attribute of content that has its own subject of attributes. This content "is defined by an imperceptible content of the relevant act of assumption (or the content of a multiplicity of such acts), and the variety of the moment of capture of being present in the given act" (Ingarden 1961: 45). Thus, any object represented in a literary work, for instance the title character of Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, has the structure of an intentional object, and only its content defines it as an individual and real object: a young nobleman endowed with features ascribed by the content of those sentences of Mickiewicz's poem which refer to him. The duality of structure — the presence of both the content and the subject of content

within the intentional structure — is characteristic for all intentional objects. However, as a result of their detachment from concrete acts of consciousness, derived purely intentional objects are subject to certain modifications of their content, "of which one in particular is important for the structure of the literary work. It inheres in a certain *schematization* of their content" (Ingarden 1973b: 126). In a manner of speaking, objects represented in a literary work inherit their schema from other derived purely intentional objects, with regard to which they are ontologically heteronomous — from the meanings of words and senses of sentences. If, therefore, a primary purely intentional object "achieves a vividness and richness in its content and in time is provided with diverse feeling and value characters which surpass what is projected by the mere meaning content of the simple intentional act" (Ingarden 1973b: 127), the derived purely intentional object "loses both its imaginational intuitiveness and its manifold feeling and value characters, since the full word meaning, too, can contain only what corresponds exactly to the content of a simple intentional act" (Ingarden 1973b: 127). In the process of creating a derived purely intentional object — that is, the work of art in Ingarden's understanding — from the primary object of imagination (e.g. the vision of the creator) only a skeleton, a scheme, remains, which may regain the primary completeness and vividness only in a substantiation by the recipient. Thus, the schematic character of a derived purely intentional object is the price paid for the intersubjectivity unattainable to direct equivalents of acts of consciousness.

One possible reading of the theory of derived purely intentional objects identifies it as a possible definition for the mode of existence and structure of products of culture — also when culture is treated as a complex and multi-level system of signs. We should not forget, however, that this theory contains a phenomenological concept of ontic foundations of those products (founded in consciousness, physicality, and idea). Ontic foundations guarantee the persistence of products of culture through time, their intersubjective identity to many recipients, and explain the process of their emergence. It is worth noting that the concept of ontic foundations of intentional objects is burdened with many theoretical difficulties, which Ingarden himself realised in later years — a fact borne out in the introduction and footnotes to the 1960 Polish edition of *The Literary Work of Art*. These difficulties, however, do not undermine the significance of his critique of psychologism in literary studies in the same book.

Where ontological analysis is mostly interested in the intentional structure of products of culture, the semiotic approach focuses on the structure

of the content of those products, as well as various functions which derived purely intentional objects may fulfill precisely because of their intersubjective, though schematic, content. Ingarden does not apply the concept of ontic heteronomy (non-autonomy) only to the relationship between intentional objects and the acts of consciousness in which they are founded. In the case of derived purely intentional objects, their direct ontic foundation is found in other ontologically heteronomous objects; thus, objects represented in a literary work are purely intentional objects, but their direct ontic foundation is contained in the senses of the relevant sentences of the work. The concept of ontic heteronomy may therefore prove useful for a semiotic analysis of the connections between various strata of a literary communication.

Both the ontological and the semiotic approach question the distinction — emphasised by many aestheticians — between the aesthetic experience of works of visual arts and the aesthetic experience of literary works. Both approaches reject the claim that the object of the receptive experience in visual arts is given directly to the senses. Since the semiotic approach treats the work of art as a sign, the key question continues to be the intersubjectivity of the sign, not the manner in which it is given. Moreover, if the work of art is a sign, its understanding in every case extends beyond what is given. Similarly in the ontological approach: in the case of both literature and visual arts the artistic creation is an intentional object, and the process of reconstruction of that object unavoidably leads us beyond the endowment of the physical ontic foundation of that object.

## VI.

The question can be rightly asked: if Ingarden's concept is so close to the semiotic approach in details and so inspiring in solving its problems, why was he so strenuously opposed to the sign interpretation of object strata in the aesthetic experience, which led him to reject the understanding of a literary work taken as a whole as a complex sign structure. A careful perusal of various passages from his works devoted to this issue leaves no doubt that this was precisely his position. For instance, when considering two possible meanings of the "representation" of extra-artistic objects by represented objects, he writes: "In both cases — as befits the art of literature — our attention is focused on represented objects *alone*" (Ingarden 1966b: 376-377). Elsewhere, when analysing the role of represented objects in a literary work of art, Ingarden states that it limited only to their pure presence in the work and to the revelation of metaphysical values. Discussing the ascription of the function of representing extra-literary objects (such as real objects),

he writes: "but all those instances are conditioned by an incorrect way of reading and have little in common with the structure of the work itself" (Ingarden 1960: 316). To interpret a literary work as a statement carrying a certain cognitive and ideological content means, in Ingarden's opinion, to "overlook the actual function of literary works of art" (Ingarden 1960: 367).

In my opinion, in spite of Ingarden's intention evident in all his considerations pertaining to this issue, he failed to prove that the semiotic interpretation of object strata is irreconcilable with what Ingarden names doing justice to the work and its particular structure in an aesthetic experience. This is because, firstly, Ingarden's rejection of various semiotic functions as irrelevant to the work (not essentially connected with its particular structure) is equally legitimate to a rejection of the aesthetic function in his understanding of this term, since the particular structure that he describes pertains to works that are both valuable and worthless (incapable of initiating an aesthetic experience). After all, in his *Literary Work of Art* he writes: "It is not at all obvious [...] why there should be no 'bad', no worthless literary works. It is our intent to demonstrate a basic structure that is common to all literary works, regardless of what value they may have" (Ingarden 1973b: 7-8). Thus the aesthetic values, like cognitive or ideological values, do not belong to the essential features of a work. Furthermore, valuable works are also endowed with those values only in a potential sense. This is because Ingarden's "essential structure" is the structure of a work apprehended in isolation from the processes of cognition or experience of which it may be the object. On the other hand, aesthetic values emerge only in a concrete subjective approach, namely in the aesthetic experience.

Ingarden was aware of this difficulty. In his *Literary Work of Art*, he described the premise of his analysis: "[It] follows from the conviction that both [valuable and worthless literary works of art] are endowed with a certain basic common structure which has to be analysed in the first place [...] In the process of future research, we will find if that basic common structure cannot by itself offer a basis for an analysis of the value of a literary work of art; then a new essential structure will have to be uncovered, a structure peculiar to valuable works, distinguishing them radically from their worthless counterparts" (Ingarden 1960: 28). This, however, Ingarden did not achieve.

Secondly, it may be demonstrated that Ingarden, who considered the treatment of represented objects in an aesthetic experience as signs representing — i.e. pointing to something outside the work — to be an unjustified overstepping of the intentional object, himself ascribes representative functions to them when he spoke of metaphysical qualities. In his *Literary Work*

*of Art* he writes: "The most important function that represented objective situations can perform is in exhibiting and manifesting determinate metaphysical qualities" (Ingarden 1973b: 293). And yet, he realises himself that manifesting metaphysical qualities does not belong among the features of a literary work. Above all, however, the fact that the contemplation of metaphysical qualities in an aesthetic experience influences our actual life in specific ways, which Ingarden notes, seems to confirm that we are dealing with a peculiar form of representation here, as well. Regarding metaphysical values, Ingarden writes: "But when the moment that they become real arrives, their realization, or better, they themselves in their countenance, become too powerful for us, they grip and overpower us. We do not have the strength, and we do not have the time, as it were, to lose ourselves in contemplation; yet there lives in us, for whatever reasons, an inextinguishable longing for precisely this losing ourselves in contemplation" (Ingarden 1973b: 293). This longing is assuaged by art. But aesthetic contemplation of metaphysical qualities is so crucial precisely because those are the same values we encountered in real life.

Careful analysis of passages that focus on this issue leads to the conclusion that, although Ingarden does not introduce the term himself, metaphysical qualities are nevertheless *represented* or indicated by the fictional object situations because they exist outside of the literary work. As Ingarden states: "Metaphysical qualities are not simply moments of the represented world [...]. If this were really so, it would of course be impossible to speak of the special function of the object stratum" (Ingarden 1973b: 296). If so, the intercourse with metaphysical qualities in an aesthetic experience presupposes a certain semiotic interpretation of the represented world, and let us add — an interpretation in a definite language of artistic communication. As an element of the work, object situations make it possible to apprehend something that belongs neither to the object stratum nor to the work taken as a whole.

Thus we arrive at the question why Ingarden accepts the aesthetic function in his understanding and the function of revealing metaphysical qualities, but rejects the function of represented objects consisting in representing real objects if all those functions are equally unessential in an ontological analysis, dependent on transgressing the artistic creation (fulfilled in substantiations), and, finally, since both the metaphysical function which he accepts and the representative function which he rejects require a semiotic interpretation of the elements of the represented world (both owe their fulfilment to the fact that the contents of the work point to something that does not belong to

the work).

Admittedly, on the grounds of ontological analysis all those postulates are equally arbitrary. Attempts to describe a literary work "taken out from the historical process" have led to the absolutisation of certain ways of apprehending literature which are as historical as all the others — namely, an absolutisation of the language of artistic communication of the period of Modernism.

Ingarden's claim that the represented objects and situations reveal metaphysical qualities does not belong to the description of artistic creation itself. This is because artistic creation, until it becomes a means of communication, does not point to and does not reveal anything that does not belong to the work. In reality, Ingarden's position on metaphysical qualities, like, for instance, Miriam's understanding of the symbol, is really a certain postulate directed at the creators and recipients of art; it is a declaration of support for a certain poetics and a certain language of artistic communication. Expressing this postulate in the manner of a description, Ingarden creates the false impression that it is the only truly artistic poetics and the only language of artistic communication. Similar views were formulated by Miriam, who wrote: "Great art, meaningful art, immortal art was and always is symbolic" (Przesmycki 1967: 106).

Ingarden ascribed the same mode of existence to a literary work that he ascribed to linguistic meanings, but at the same time he rejected the perception of a work as a sign structure. Indeed, so long as a literary work is treated as an extra-historical entity, all features and functions with which it is endowed as an object of historically conditioned human experience are of a non-essential, "accidental" character from the point of view of ontological analyses. Derived purely intentional objects are endowed with functions and qualities as cultural objects; this means that those functions can be specified only when such an object is defined as a sign in a historically specific cultural system.

It seems that Ingarden denied object strata semiotic functions in theory because he shared the Modernist assumption that the perception of literature with which they are bound up draws the recipient away from the work itself and turns that work into a means to extra-aesthetic ends. He developed his aesthetic with the intention of providing a theoretical justification for this assumption, to deploy an analysis of the essential structure of the work considered in isolation, discarding semiotic interpretations as not justified by the structure of the work and demonstrating that the perception based on the understanding of that structure is only an aesthetic perception in the

narrow meaning of the term, that is, directed toward the search for receptive satisfaction rooted in the harmonious consonance of qualities produced in the process of aesthetic experience.

This understanding of the aesthetic, and particularly literary experience may be put to question by the claim that in reality, recipients of literature almost never look to it only for immanent qualities. This argument, however, does not affect Ingarden's concept; Ingarden did not derive his criteria of adequacy of aesthetic experiences from analyses of actual ways of experiencing art, but from an ontological analysis of their objects, the artistic creations. Hence I attempted to demonstrate that, firstly, Ingarden's norms pertaining to aesthetic experiences do not arise from his ontological analyses, because the experience he postulates is no more determined by the structure of the work than the reception based on the semiotic analysis of the object stratum; and secondly, that Ingarden himself does not follow his own postulates consistently, as demonstrated by his analysis of the revelation of metaphysical values.

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Our considerations pertained to the differences and similarities between Ingarden's approach to the literary work and that of semiotics. They have led us to the conclusion that, while the differences derive mostly from the treatment of the analysed object (in isolation or within the abundance of its variable cultural functions) and the divergent characterisation of the represented stratum (because Ingarden maintains that, in the aesthetic experience, the represented objects do not point to anything from outside the work), similarities result from the analogous definition of the analysed object (unencumbered by the criteria of value) and the attempts to present the analysed object as intersubjective and identical in the many acts of aesthetic experience (artistic communication). A further kinship derives from the resulting non-psychologist and non-physicalist understanding of the work of art. Finally, both approaches define the sphere of artistic objects in an integral manner. For Ingarden, this integrality grows out from the common mode of existence of all artistic creations and all their strata and elements, whereas in the semiotic approach, this source lies in their sign character.

The kinship between Ingarden's analysis of a literary work and the semiotic analysis makes ontological theory of the literary work a valuable source of inspiration for the semiotic characterisation of an artistic sign (artistic communication). It must be emphasised, however, that these considerations and the conclusions they lead to are only tentative, because — in keeping

with Ingarden's intention and quite against my own postulates — I have treated the literary work as an isolated object (artistic creation), and not as a sign in a definite language of artistic communication. This is a consequence of the fact that our considerations pertained to only a fragment of Ingarden's analyses — namely, that which concerns the mode of existence and the structure of the literary work itself. Meanwhile, we have disregarded the reflections on cognition that constituted their continuation, and particularly the so-called "life" of literary works, that is, issues linked directly with the aesthetic experience. It must therefore be assumed that many of the issues considered here will have to be re-examined in view of the entire body of Ingarden's writings on aesthetics; such a confrontation would have to make greater use of the notion of the language of artistic communication. It would also probably demonstrate that the differences between Ingarden's approach to the aesthetic experience and the semiotic approach are more fundamental than in the case of the structure of the literary artistic creation. These are, however, issues which require separate consideration.

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