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On Making Sense of Ingarden

Ingarden's theory of the literary work of art can be summarised as follows. The work is conceived as a two-dimensional formation. It has a length or linear extension, which is marked by the succession of its individual sentences. And it has a depth: it is not simply a linguistic structure, nor simply a structure of represented objects and events, nor is it a structure of metaphysical qualities somehow determinately crystallised, - but rather all of these at once. Thus where it would be possible to say of a musical work, for example, that it exists in only one plane - the plane of sound-Gestalten, Ingarden argues that it is necessary to conceive the literary work as constituted in such a way that it is possible to distinguish within it a number of strata which are, as it were, stacked on top of each other. He distinguishes the stratum of word-sounds and higher-order sound Gestalten; the stratum of word-meanings and higher-order meaningunits /meanings of sentences and sequences of sentences/; the stratum of represented objectivities, including the individual characters of the work, their personality traits and states of mind, their outward properties, the actions in which they engage, the events which befall them, and so on; the stratum of schematised aspects and sequences of aspects in which these objectivities become known to us; and finally the stratum of metaphysical qualities /if any/ which pervade the work.

Each of these strata corresponds to a specific more or less inde-

pendent plane of freedom of variation of the author in his original construction of the work. Yet it is clearly not as though an author could somehow construct the strata independently of each and then in some way glue them together. Nor, either, does the reader typically concern himself with the strata in isolation, but seeks rather to obtain what is for him an adequate grasp of the work as a whole. What, then, is the nature of the strata? It is sometimes suggested, not least by Ingarden himself, that they are to be conceived after the pattern of the separate voices in a polyphonic piece of music. This comparison certainly captures some elements of a correct account. The composer will typically begin his task of composition with certain individual themes and patterns in mind for the specific voices, but also with a conception of certain tonal and other effects which he associates with the totality of voices in combination, and the interplay of these two sets of considerations will contribute to determining the eventual structure of the completed work. Similarly the listener will at some points fix his attention upon individual voices in isolation; at other points he will seek to follow a number of voices simultaneously, in order to grasp specific contrapuntal effects; and finally he may withhold his attention from the individual voices altogether and concentrate instead upon the sound-totality.

The polyphonic model can however at best throw a certain meagre light upon the epistemology of the literary work, upon the characteristic modes of access to the work of author and reader. It can tell us nothing concerning the nature of its strata and of the relations between them, nor, *a fortiori*, can it tell us what kind of entity a literary work precisely is. For both the literary work and the musical work are creatures of the same quite peculiar type, classifiable neither as parts of the furniture of the material world, nor

as complex of mental acts on the parts of authors or readers or listeners. Yet they clearly form the subject-matter of a number of scientific disciplines, and we may suppose that the sentences of these disciplines express truths about them and designate certain properties of them, which it is the business of the philosopher, surely, to take into account.

The need to take seriously the ontological claims of entities of this and similar types is first of all an epistemological one. Theories of human knowledge which deny a place to such entities are unable to provide a coherent account of the nature of the relevant scientific disciplines and of the possibilities of advance within them. It is considerations such as this which had led Popper to conceive literary and musical works - and all other carriers of objective knowledge - as belonging /together with, for example, concepts, propositions, languages, scientific theories, hypotheses, arguments, and problems mathematical objects, etc./in a realm which he calls 'world 3' - which is separate from, though related to, the worlds of material and psychological entities. It is unfortunate that sober ontological investigations of these and other related meaning and object-categories which have been put forward by Ingarden in a number of works, beginning with his ground-breaking study of the category problem in his /1925/, were not taken into consideration by Popper in the development of this theory. For to rank together, indiscriminatingly, all such entities and purported entities, without any investigation of the various different ontological structures which they may possess, is to commit oneself to the employment of a device too nearly resembling an ontological dustbin. Popper's objectivism has almost certainly reinforced the generally held view of analytic philosophers, that all apparent reference to such entities is a mere façon de parler not to be taken ontologically seriously.

Even amongst those who do not suffer from the analytic philosopher's unexamined prejudice in favour of real material things, however, Popper's lack of principle in classification may consolidate the erroneous view that all intelligibilia are cast in the same Platonic mould, that they are all transcendent objects towards which the mind may be directed. This view is shared by the other members of the modern tradition of ontological Platonism /for example Bolzano, Frege, Meinong, the early Russell, Chisholm, etc./. It derives, I believe, from the attempt to produce a theory of the objective contents of thought after the pattern of scientific theories of the material and mathematical objects towards which our thoughts are ordinarily directed. Hence the characteristically Platonist conceptions of "Sätze an sich, Objektive, truth values, propositional functions, possible worlds, Wertverläufe, sets, classes, etc., as abstract entities divorced from ordinary reality.

When Ingarden's theory of literature is approached with expectations deriving from this tradition, then it may appear that he is putting forward a view of the literary work as just one more type of abstract entity - cast adrift in literary space - differing from the above in having a history and a complex two-dimensional 'stratified structure'. Along with Brentano and Husserl, however, Ingarden is a representative of the Aristotelian tradition in ontology. And where Platonists have continually returned to the ontological pattern set by mathematical objects such as numbers and geometrical figures, the Aristotelian tradition is one which draws its basic lessons from the relation between, say, a human being and a headache, or between a human being and his knowledge of Greek. Individual accidents of this sort are not to be confused with the Platonist's transcendent universals or general concepts. They are, rather, interwoven with the objects in which they inhere that is, they are parts of those objects, in a generalised sense of the term 'part' which comprehends both the

familiar sense /in which, say, arms and legs are independent or non-detachable parts or moments.

It would take too long to provide here a precise definition of the term 'moment' - though such a definition has been provided elsewhere /see Bibliography/. The definition rests on work of Husserl in the classic work of modern Aristotelian ontology, the third Logical Investigation. Husserl's ideas have also been refined by Ingarden in his Streit um die Existenz der Welt, and in his essay "Vom formalen Aufbau des individuellen Gegenstandes". Here we note merely that there are not only static but also dynamic moments - for example the reddening of a cheek, the conception of a desire, or the utterance of a sentence. We note also that moments may exhibit different degrees of complexity: the symptoms of a disease, for example, are of a lower order of complexity than the disease itself; and that complex moments may in certain cases be compounded out of relatively simpler moments: the recital of a poem, for example, is a compound of a number of constituent utterance-phases. And finally we note that moments may be possessed not only by individual objects, but also by multi-object wholes, as e.g. when a platoon of soldiers exhibits high morale, when a number of separate specks of pigment exhibit the complete static moment which is the image held in readiness within a Seurat painting, or when a group of string players exhibit the complex dynamic moment which is the performance of a polyphonic piece of music.

It would be correct to say that such a performance is, in a certain sense, simply the aggregate or sum of the individual moments /moments of the individual players/ which constitute it. Not every complex moment can be reduced to individual constituents in this way however. In particular, there are certain highly structured multi-personal moments - examples of which include languages, legal and

political systems, and critical traditions in both the sciences and the arts - which rest not on the simple aggregation of constituent moments, but rather on the existence of a complex of powers and abilities on the part of individual members of the society involved, correlated with an elaborate division of the relevant linguistic and epistemological labour. Our suggestion is, now, that the literary work is itself a merely abstractly isolable moment of /is interwoven within/ a complex order of this kind, namely the order which is maintained by the community of authors and readers, critics, publishers, librarians, linguists, lexicographers, translators, and so on, or, more specifically, by the relevant actions, habits, skills, and knowledges of the members of this community. It is only against the background of such an order that a reading of a text may constitute a faithful reading of a work of literature, just as it is only against a background in which a number of people possess relevant linguistic capabilities that a given enunciation of concrete sound material or of distributed ink may acquire the status of a word a sentence, and only against a background in which there exist certain legal institutions and associated habits and expectations that an appropriately constituted utterance /e.g. 'I pronounce thee man and wife'/ will have the status of a legal act.

Many of the skills and knowledges within a literary community are maintained in existence from/to ^{day} day and from reading to reading by the accessibility of texts. The task of the phenomenological ontologist of literature is to trace through the background order in order to determine which of its constituent features are correlated with or are directly determined by the individual text. It is, then, the abstractly delineable totality of such features which constitute the work, and further abstractly isolable moment-complexes within this totality which constitute its individual strata. It would take too long to show in detail how, given the characteristics of a linguis-

tic and literary order, the literary work must exhibit precisely the structure which Ingarden has described. Our purpose here was merely to show the place of the work of literature within the ontological orbit of those communities within which it is capable of being read.

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