Roman Ingarden – Life and Work from a Subjective Perspective

In the era of the crisis of traditional ideals of the humanist academic and the institution of the Master-Teacher, young researchers are faced with the problem of finding the right direction in the modern world of science and academia. This crisis is also accompanied by the loss of the multiplicity and diversity of theories, trends and issues that can be dealt with and developed. As a result, young people are forced to venture on solitary searches while struggling to meet institutional requirements and being pushed into narrowly specialized subfields.

As young researchers just setting first steps on our academic paths, we too are facing these challenges. After seeking inspiration from various philosophizing traditions, among various thinkers and philosophical schools of thought, we have set to start cooperation with Professor Leszek Sosnowski, who for many

1 Dr. Dominika Czakon is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. She is a co-creator of The Roman Ingarden Digital Archive.

2 Dr. Natalia Anna Michna is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. She is a co-creator of The Roman Ingarden Digital Archive.
years has been dealing with the academic legacy of Roman Witold Ingarden. Together, we have prepared an academic project involving broadly understood research, digitalization and translation (into English) of the previously unpublished correspondence and academic works of the Polish philosopher. This project, however, quickly turned out to be more than just another research task. A two-year study of Ingarden’s achievements has taught us a lot and aroused our enthusiasm for individual academic work. The intense intermediate contact with an authority of as immense a stature as Ingarden had, could not have left our attitudes, ambitions and even our personalities unchanged. We have found that in the age of the universal crisis of humanistic and moral values, finding a model worth following and making an attempt to follow in those footsteps is still important. We are aware that such declarations may sound high-spirited and naive today, but in this short text we can hopefully show that they are by no means unfounded.

In their recollections, Ingarden’s students present him to the contemporary reader as an outstanding Teacher from the Past. We, in our humble contribution, want to show that Ingarden also deserves to be called the Teacher of the Future, a figure that constantly inspires and is a signpost for future generations of (not just Polish) academics.

Born in the late 19th century, he grew up in the early 20th century, and his entire adult life developed in the turbulent pre-war times, World War I, the interwar period, World War II and in the difficult years of communism in Poland. He belonged to a generation educated according to traditional European models, and, at the same time – despite obvious difficulties – he shaped his adult academic career in the spirit of modernity, maintaining numerous international contacts, traveling, keeping up to date with current philosophical trends and academic literature. Ingarden graduated from the Jan Kanty Public Elementary School in Krakow, Francis Joseph Secondary School in Lviv and the violin class at the Conservatory of the Polish Music Society in Lviv. In 1910, at the age of 17, he traveled to Europe with his father, visiting, among others: Budapest, Vienna, Ebensee, Salzburg, Munich, Neuheim, Nuremberg, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden. Then, in 1911, he began studying at the University of Lviv, where his teachers were such prominent figures as: Kazimierz Twardowski, Mscislaw Wartenberg and Jan Łukasiewicz.
After a year in Lviv, he moved to the Georg-August University in Göttingen, where he studied under other prominent scholars, such as: Edmund Husserl, Georg E. Müller, and Adolf Reinach until the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. In 1918 he defended his doctoral dissertation, written under Husserl, at the Albert Ludwig University in Freiburg, where he and his supervisor had stayed (with breaks) since 1916. The time of his studies, spent in the best European universities, among international students and lecturers, meant obtaining a classical, comprehensive education at the highest level, gaining a cosmopolitan outlook, and assimilating traditional humanistic values. This extremely intense time, abundant in scientific experience came to an end with his return to Poland, when Ingarden started a family and took up the job of a teacher in junior high schools, among others in Warsaw and Toruń. He returned to the university permanently only after the Second World War, initially as a foreign professor, and then as a contract professor at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

However, before this was the case, he continued his academic activity with great persistence and commitment, combining it with the necessary, often tedious and uncertain gainful employment (as a junior high school teacher, private teacher or private associate professor). In 1925, the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education approved Ingarden’s habilitation based on a dissertation written under the supervision of Twardowski O pytaniach esencjalnych [On Essential Questions]; until 1930 he worked on the book Das Literarische Kunstwerk; until 1945 he worked on Controversy over the Existence of the World (written simultaneously in two languages: Polish and German). The years from 1945 until Ingarden’s death (excluding the period of his forced leave at the University and break in conducting classes from 1951 to 1956) was a time of intense focus on his academic work, which combined further independent research activity, cooperation with other researchers, as well as didactic activity. In their recollections, Ingarden’s students stress that in this period of over 20 years, Ingarden’s presence in Polish post-war reality gave birth to a center of free philosophical thought based on traditional, humanistic and cosmopolitan ideals, nurtured persistently despite the prevailing communist hopelessness.

Ingarden’s extensive epistolary legacy is a rich, and so far only fragmentarily known, source of knowledge about the philosopher’s academic work and private life. Both these domains deserve equal attention and interest. There is no doubt
about the importance and value of Ingarden’s professional success for the world of academia, whereas becoming acquainted with his letters has allowed us to recognize that his work was also inspired by various events in his private life. Indeed, it was the steadfast attitude, the effort put in to manage the duties of everyday life, often despite many adversities and during difficult post-war times, that paved the way to scientific achievements now discussed all over the world. Let us first take a look at Ingarden’s academic attitude and activities.

Renaissance humanist and contemporary academic

Ingarden’s correspondence is a unique research material, the study of which has enabled us to get to know the philosopher from a completely new perspective. For we all know Ingarden from his scientific works crucial to twentieth-century philosophy. Meanwhile, the letters he exchanged throughout his life with Polish and foreign researchers paint a surprising and highly fascinating picture of a man of great class, steadfast spirit and witty intellect. Thus, Ingarden’s character grows less abstract and more specific and multidimensional. And, in our opinion, in terms of character he is also a role model worth following by modern academics.

Throughout his life Ingarden has been active in many fields of academic activity: he worked in secondary schools and universities, private tutoring, was a speaker at numerous conferences and congresses, where he presented papers in German, French and English, was an active member of many Polish and foreign scientific societies, he was also often involved in editorial work. As a secondary school teacher, he was extremely committed to the subject matter and took efforts to meticulously prepare for every lesson. In addition, the private fate of his students was also important to him. In the letters he often showed concern for the well-being of young people whom he met every day at school.

The students interviewed in this book remember him the same way. The letters contain frequent mentions about diploma theses written by young philosophy students, their examinations and the reviews of their works by experienced researchers. All such remarks are delivered in a demanding but fair tone of a teacher who had always been able to appreciate the students’ efforts and take their future fate and career into account. Therefore, we have no doubts, and
the memories contained in this publication also confirm the fact that Ingarden was a great educator. At the same time he conducted his own research, which he developed in constant contact and through polemics with other researchers. At this point, it is worth noting that Ingarden’s collection of several thousand letters was written, to a large extent, to recipients from abroad, including the most prominent representatives of his contemporary world of science and art.

This fact deserves special attention due to the political situation of Poland of that time. The communist system was far from conducive to the free exchange of ideas, and yet Ingarden managed to stay in constant and creative contact with the international academic community for years, through active participation in foreign conferences, congresses and lectures, publishing abroad, entering into academic polemics with foreign researchers, and obtaining opinions and academic reviews from them, keeping up to date with the latest publications and subscribing to important periodicals. Such an attitude is an undeniable testimony to Ingarden’s broad and modern horizons, constantly developed by him despite the closed state borders. The contents of Ingarden’s archival materials also confirm that most of the translations of his works were created by him, with only few corrections that may have been added upon a request for review by his colleagues or acquaintances.

Ingarden also used his innate abilities and acquired language skills to co-create the Library of Classics of Philosophy (LCP), a publication series created in 1952 under the auspices of the PWN [Polish Scientific Publishers]. The translation and editorial work of considerable importance for the development of philosophy in Poland, spanning over a multitude of years, involved the most eminent representatives of national humanities, such as: Tadeusz Kotarbiński (President of the LCP), Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, Izydora Dąmbska, Daniela Gromska, Henryk Elzenberg, Stanisław Ossowski, or Tadeusz Kroński. A large part of Ingarden’s correspondence refers to matters related to LCP’s activities; Ingarden shows a lot of concern for the subject matter and translation issues and devoted attention to linguistic nuances. Ingarden also took on the responsibility of selecting translators for particular works and prepared reviews for the finished translations. Such a broad scope of duties once again proves the extensive competences of this philosopher, including his organizational skills, manifested in the effective coordination of the multi-range work.
Another institution of no less importance for Polish science and culture was (and still remains) the Polish Philosophical Society. Ingarden was deeply involved in this organization’s activity almost from the very beginning, which is also reflected in his epistolary legacy. After the Second World War, Ingarden actively participated in the reorganization of the Society, and then for many years he worked for its development, efficient functioning and popularization, and thus in a broader perspective, for the enrichment and dissemination of philosophy in Poland. He was a regular and active participant in the organization’s meetings, primarily in Krakow, but also in other Polish cities. He appeared both as a frequent speaker, presenting speeches about his current research, as well as an involved, attentive and critical commentator. The archival materials left by Ingarden include protocols of PPS meetings which document them in detail. In the philosopher’s commitment to the Society’s activity, we see a modern awareness of the value of creating and maintaining specialized research teams and the creative intellectual potential of working in a group. Today, in the era of grants and international projects, the attitude presented by Ingarden is exemplary, valuable, and seems increasingly necessary.

Ingarden’s name is also associated with some of the most important Polish philosophical journals published in the country before and after the Second World War. We mean, above all, Studia Philosophica. Commentarii Societatis Philosophicae Polonorum, Ruch Filozoficzny [Philosophical Movement] and Kwartalnik Filozoficzny [Philosophical Quarterly]. Studia Philosophica is the first national philosophical magazine published in foreign languages to disseminate Polish philosophical thought abroad. It was founded on the initiative of Kazimierz Twardowski, and the first issue edited by Twardowski, Ajdukiewicz and Ingarden was published in Lviv in 1935. Before the war, another issue of Studia was published in 1937 under the same editorial team. The post-war fate of the journal is documented extensively in Ingarden’s correspondence, including

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3 Both pre-war issues of the magazine have been digitized and are available on the website of the Silesian Digital Library at: “Studia Philosophica. Commentarii Societatis Philosophicae Polonorum,” Śląska Biblioteka Cyfrowa, accessed January 4, 2019, https://www.sbc.org.pl/dlibra/publication/23053?language=pl#structure.
the efforts he made to ensure its functioning and development. Unfortunately, in 1951, the communist authorities finally blocked the operation of the periodical. The history of the second of the aforementioned journals, the *Philosophical Movement*, dates back to pre-war times. The first volume of this periodical, edited by Twardowski, came out in Lviv on January 15, 1911. In the pre-war period, the magazine was published with varying frequency and under various editorial offices. During World War II the publishing of *Movement* was suspended. It resumed its activity for a short period of time in 1948 in Toruń as a publication of the Polish Philosophical Society, with Tadeusz Czeżowski as its editor.

The genuine activity of the magazine after the war only resumed in 1958. At that time, *Movement* had its field representatives, including Ingarden in Krakow. The cooperation of Ingarden with Czeżowski and the *Philosophical Movement* is also reflected in many letters exchanged by the two researchers. As for *Philosophical Quarterly*, Ingarden was mainly associated with it as one of its published authors. The journal published by the Polish Academy of Learning in Krakow operated in the years 1922-1950, until it was shut down by the communist authorities of the Polish People’s Republic. The activity of the *Quarterly* only resumed in 1992, when an outstanding student of Ingarden and Izydora Dąmbska, Władysław Stróżewski became its editor-in-chief. Ingarden’s editorial commitment, cooperation and presence on the pages of the most important Polish philosophical journals leave no doubt that he was aware of the importance of popularizing and disseminating the intellectual achievements of the academic community both in the country and abroad. We believe that this

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4 Radosław Kuliniak et al., comp., *Korespondencja Romana Witolda Ingardena. Z dziejów “Studia Philosophica. Commentarii Societatis Philosophicae Polonorum”* (Kęty: Wydawnictwo Marek Derewiecki, 2018).

5 For more on the history of *Philosophical Movement* see: “Początki i stuletnia obecność Ruchu Filozoficznego w polskiej filozofii. Analiza formalno-organizacyjna i merytoryczna,” Ruch Filozoficzny – UMK, accessed January 4, 2019, http://www.rf.umk.pl/historia-ruchu-filozoficznego/.

6 For more on the activity of *Philosophical Quarterly* see: “Kwartalnik Filozoficzny,” Polska Akademia Umiejętności, accessed January 4, 2019, http://pau.krakow.pl/index.php/pl/wydawnictwo/strony-czasopism/kwartalnik-filozoficzny.
was also accompanied by the belief in the value of Polish philosophical thought of that time and the high competences of Polish researchers, which were also appreciated on the international level.

Considering the broad range of Ingarden’s academic and para-academic activities described above, we can state without hesitation that he was one of the main organizers of the philosophical academic life in post-war Poland. This domain was then co-created by such eminent scholars as: Tatarkiewicz, Władysław Witwicki, Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Czeżowski, and Ajdukiewicz, with whom Ingarden was in constant, often very close contact, and even personal and friendly contact for many years. The letters they exchanged are a testimony to the creation of networks of the free exchange of ideas, mutual cooperation and help, and often support in the face of difficult life choices in what was – which we want to reiterate – difficult and unfavorable times. Ingarden’s scientific horizons, however, were not limited to philosophy, but were interdisciplinary, as evidenced by the extensive collection of correspondence with representatives of other scientific disciplines. The recipients of Ingarden’s letters include prominent personalities of various branches of Polish humanities, such as: Stefan Szuman, Witold Lutosławski, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Zofia Lissa, Jan Parandowski, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Kazimierz Irzykowski, Henryk Skolimowski, Juliusz Kleiner and Kazimierz Wyka.

Ingarden’s academic contacts were not limited to the Polish academic community, but were of an international nature. The philosopher maintained constant and deep relations with researchers from all over the world, which is currently an important element of building and developing a position and a career in the academic domain. Here we can mention such names as: Edmund Husserl, Hans-Georg Gadamer, George Edward Moore, Helmuth Plessner, Jan Patočka, Hermann van Breda, Edith Stein, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Guido Calogero, Hans Cornelius, Alexandre Koyré, Ludwig Landgrebe, Oscar Becker, Felix Kaufmann, Gerda Walther.

Ingarden privately: artist, traveler and friend

Ingarden’s attitude to his personal life, his private side, observed primarily by family and friends is what we found to be equally as inspirational as his profes-
sional persona, though it might not have yet been discovered and appreciated by the general public. The private notes and letters of the philosopher as well as the rich photographic material made available to us were an invaluable source of knowledge on the subject. What emerges from them is an image of Ingarden as a man with numerous non-scientific passions, a caring friend, passionate about travel and nature. Furthermore, these materials show that Ingarden was an extremely righteous, just, persistent and demanding man, who was at the same time full of empathy, heart and trust in people.

Ingarden’s passion for photography and his artistic flair are at the forefront of the picture. This area of Ingarden’s activity has been subject to thorough research and analysis for a few years now. Intensive studies are being carried out and numerous initiatives regarding Ingarden as an artist-photographer are currently being undertaken at the MOCAK Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow, under the supervision of director Maria Anna Potocka7. The philosopher left behind several dozen undeveloped photographic films that were created over the years on which he immortalized his everyday life, family and friends, Dżok the dog, foreign trips and numerous trips to the Polish mountains. Although only recently developed, the photographs are not only abundant documentary material, but also interesting artistic attempts8. They include shots of abstract forms, still life, landscapes and interiors. However, our attention was drawn to the photos of the philosopher with his beloved dog Dżok, who – as we know from the recollections included in this volume – was Ingarden’s inseparable companion, a frequent guest at the Institute of Philosophy, and even a “co-interviewer” of

7 More on the events and publications in MOCAK and in “MOCAK Forum”, see: “Wyszukiwarka,” MOCAK, accessed January 7, 2019, https://mocak.pl/search_pages/117938.
8 Dr. Maria Anna Potocka held a lecture on Ingarden’s photography entitled Aesthetics, Theory and Praxis during the Roman Ingarden and His Times. An International Phenomenological Conference at the Jagiellonian University between 25 and 27 October 2018. Potocka analized the philospher’s photographs and divided them into categories, subjecting them to her original and critical interpretation. She emphasized that what is of value for Ingarden is the creative act itself, the taking of a photograph, rather than its effect. Hence all the undeveloped films left by him.
students during examinations. This incredible bond of a man and an animal can be seen in a number of photographs. Ingarden often took pictures of his family, especially grandchildren, and he was often photographed in their company.

Co-workers, who were oftentimes also friends were seemingly also quite special in Ingarden’s life. The enormous amount of correspondence illustrates long-term, close relationships based on mutual care and help, shown in the difficult times before and after the war. Ingarden often acted as an intermediary on behalf of his friends in professional matters, helping them out with their employment efforts (example of Dąmbska), but also in personal matters, as in the case of the purchase of medicines for the mother of one of his co-workers (Gierulanka). The letters overflow with sincere empathy and genuine commitment. The unique evidence of Ingarden’s true, deep and long-term friendship with Husserl is their correspondence maintained over the years and continuing even after Husserl’s death between Ingarden and the family of the German philosopher. Ingarden’s letters with Malvine Husserl, the wife of the phenomenologist, maintain a warm tone of mutual sympathy and respect. Even in the recollections of his students, Ingarden appears as a man with a sense of humor, one uncommonly hospitable, with his home always open to everyone.

When writing about Ingarden’s correspondence and friendships, it is worth noting that keeping up with it had to be an important element of the philosopher’s everyday life. Letters were written almost every day, and Ingarden was a very careful and meticulous correspondent who never neglected any of his recipients and wrote to them regularly and comprehensively.

He never neglected the letters even when traveling around the world and Poland. Travelling was an essential part of his professional and private life. He managed to do that despite the obvious political obstacles, which exemplifies the philosopher’s stern determination and persistence. From his correspondence and recollections of those around him, we have learned that he remained in touch with his relatives and friends during a number of foreign trips related to lectures, speeches and conferences in: the United States, Norway, Germany,

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9 More on Ingarden’s correspondence with Polish researchers, see: Dominika Czakon, Natalia Anna Michna, Leszek Sosnowski, “Polskie badaczki w korespondencji Romana Ingardena,” Kwartalnik Filozoficzny 46, no. 2 (2018): 113-31.
France, Italy, Belgium and Greece. His travels in Poland, apart from frequent visits in Warsaw, Poznan, Wroclaw or Lublin for lectures and other academic activities, also included trips to the Polish mountains. He would leave for the mountains whenever he could, whether alone or with his family, mostly to Zakopane and Rabka. Reports from his stays found in the letters show that he valued the opportunity to stay away from the noise of the city and be in close contact with nature.

Our experience in working on Ingarden’s correspondence and archival materials allows us to say that we are dealing with an outstanding man. Undoubtedly, the Polish philosopher was a Renaissance humanist with a modern research approach. Ingarden received a sound, classic education, possessed extensive knowledge and an unusually open mind. The last of the aforementioned features deserves particular attention in the context of the times in which he came to live, the long years of political, cultural and spiritual isolation. Ingarden was also relentless when he was convinced of the legitimacy of his position, which can be seen in numerous polemics he entered into in his letters. At the same time, he was always open to a dialogue and valued the opinions of others. He was focused on scientific values and determined to achieve individual and shared academic goals important for the development of humanities not only in Poland, but also worldwide. He was characterized by courage, strength and steadfastness. He was a man of principle, but also a man of great heart. People of his stature prove, through their life and work, that the notion of authority can still have meaning, and set an example for the coming generations of young Polish researchers.
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