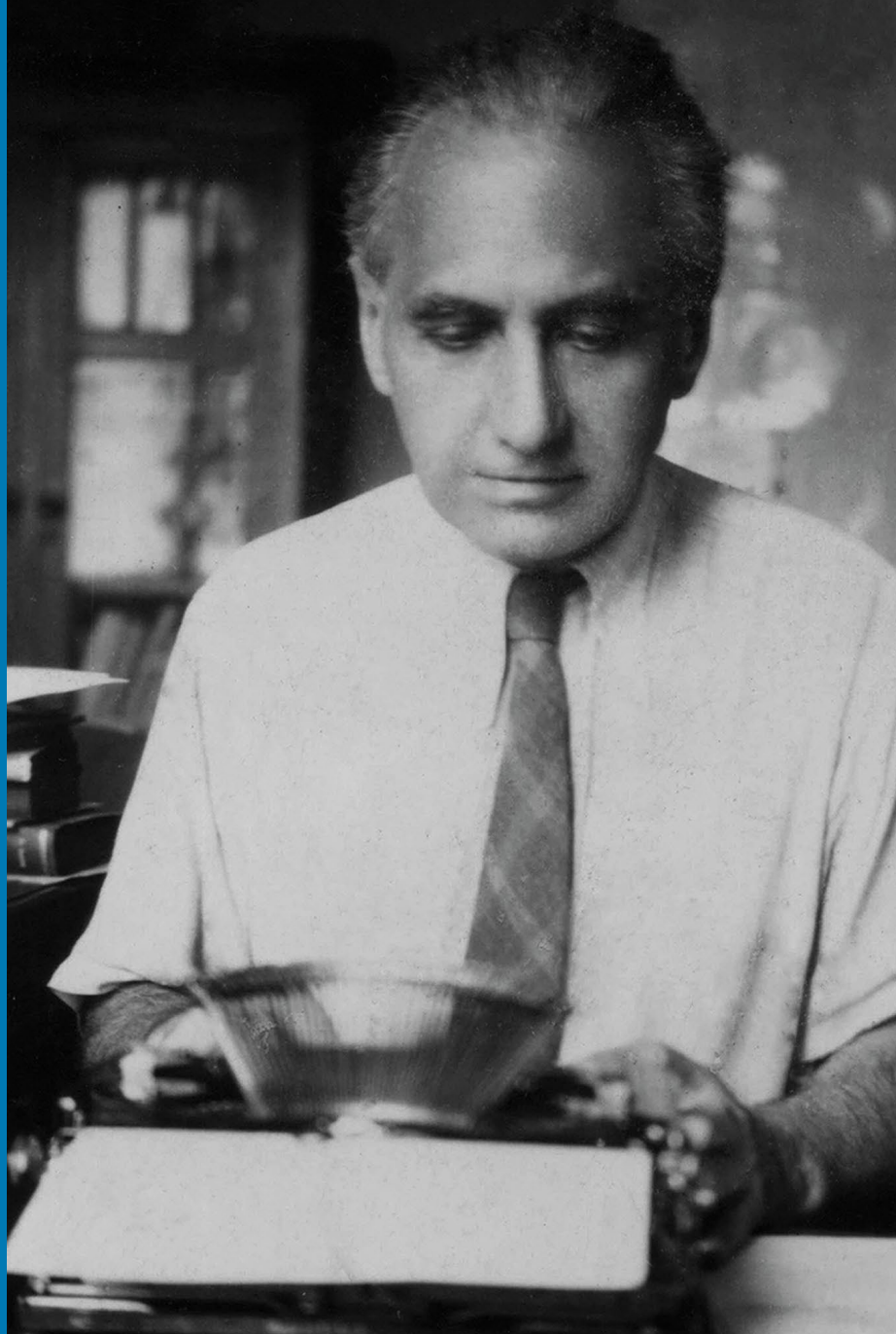


# ROMAN INGARDEN

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AND HIS TIMES





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edited by

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## Ingarden and the “Layered” Anthropologies of His Times

### Abstract

Several authors belonging to the phenomenological tradition have in common a “layered” anthropological view, according to which the spiritual side of man bears on psychophysical and material layers. Philosophers such as Husserl, Stein, Scheler and Hartmann describe man as a being that is eidetically different from other – inorganic, organic and animal – beings due to specifically human properties, *admitting at the same time that man is also a material thing, an organic being and an animal. Without this complex stratification, human spirituality would not have any ontological roots.*

The paper aims at presenting Ingarden’s theses on man as a peculiar version of “layered” anthropology. The Polish author explicitly states that man swings between two different spheres of reality (nature and spirit), differing from beasts in that he creates for himself a sort of new reality, for which the realm of nature is a necessary substratum. Furthermore, in the last years of his life, he ontologically integrates this conception of the human world by describing an articulated structure of man’s individuality, defined as a “relatively isolated system” containing in itself relatively isolated systems of lower level: body, consciousness and soul (i.e. the spiritual and individual core of each person). Also in this case it may be affirmed that man is spirit, but *not only* spirit.

**Key words:** philosophical anthropology, phenomenological tradition, human nature, systems, Nicolai Hartmann

## Two Different Conceptions of Man within the Phenomenological Tradition

To investigate phenomenological tradition through the lens of anthropological issues and, more specifically, through the question of “human animality” leads to the discerning of two basic anthropological models:

a) First of all, a layered model can be delineated, according to which man, although essentially differing from animals, is at the same time also an animal, inasmuch as his specifically human components (free will, self-consciousness, sense of value, etc.) are based on a necessary substratum of nature and animality, without which human personality, spirituality and culture would be “hanging in the air” and therefore impossible. According to this conception, man consists of at least two layers: a natural stratum that he has in common (no matter if partially) with other animals, and a specifically human-personal-spiritual stratum which originates in the first, while conditioning it at the same time. Among the phenomenologists who uphold this model, we can cite: Edmund Husserl (within his transcendental studies in the constitution of the person<sup>1</sup>); Edith Stein (whose in-depth analysis of person’s spirituality does not forbid her from adding that man is a material thing, a living being and an animal as well<sup>2</sup>); Max Scheler (who contributed to founding phenomenological anthropology by describing man as constituted by both nature and spirit<sup>3</sup>);<sup>4</sup> and Nicolai Hartmann,

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution* (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1952).

<sup>2</sup> Edith Stein, “Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person. Vorlesung zur philosophischen Anthropologie,” in Edith Stein, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 14: *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person*, ed. Michael Linssen (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 30-40, 45, 74.

<sup>3</sup> Max Scheler, “Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos,” in Max Scheler, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 9: *Späte Schriften* (Bern-München: Francke, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> This – eidetically achieved – centrality of the concept of spirit is one of the traits differentiating Scheler from the other “fathers” of contemporary philosophical anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century: Helmuth Plessner and Arnold Gehlen, whose research on the human focuses on the organic and biological field (see Arnold Gehlen, “Der Mensch: seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt,” in Arnold Gehlen, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 3: *Der Mensch seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt*, eds. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg

whose realist ontology – to which we will return – can be considered, for all intents and purposes, as a peculiar version of phenomenology.<sup>5</sup> Although these authors carry out phenomenological description in different ways, their investigations lead to a common layered structure of the human being, able to ontologically “translate” the internal complexity and the unity of human identity, as well as its spiritual specificity and its undeniable natural-animal roots. Being faithful to the “thing itself” with regard to the human sphere implies for all of them the description of what characterizes this phenomenal region, together with the consideration of the traits which root man’s specificity in the natural world.

b) As opposed to this conception it is possible to circumscribe the anthropological model expressed by authors such as Martin Heidegger and Eugen Fink, who stress the profound ontological difference between man and animal lying in their radically distinct manners of relating to the world, provided that the kind of openness to Being determines and differentiates each kind of being *in its wholeness*. As is well known, in the text of the course on *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, held at the University of Freiburg in 1929/1930, Heidegger states that animals, unlike men, are “poor in world”, describing an ontological and relational structure that cannot represent the basic layer of man’s “openness to the world”.<sup>6</sup> Since, for the author, the criterion for determining the essence of something is the way in which a being is open to world-wholeness, it cannot be affirmed that the essence of a type of being “includes” in itself (or bears on) the essence

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et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1993); and Helmuth Plessner, “Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch. Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie,” in Helmuth Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4: *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch: Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie*, eds. Günter Dux, Odo Marquard, and Elisabeth Stroker (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981)).

<sup>5</sup> See Nicolai Hartmann, *Neue Wege der Ontologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1949).

<sup>6</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983). Heidegger’s course was also attended by Eugen Fink (Husserl’s young assistant at that time), who, in turn, applied himself to the human-animal difference in light of the openness to the world in the second phase of his thought, stressing that the natural component in man does not correspond to a form of animality (Eugen Fink, *Natur, Freiheit, Welt: Philosophie der Erziehung*, ed. Franz-A. Schwarz (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1992)).

of other beings. Human body, considered as a physical object, is not closed to the world like a stone,<sup>7</sup> just as human “instincts” are not “poor in world”, i.e. referred to a limited environment, like those of animals: as a matter of fact the *whole* of the human individual, interpreted as *Dasein*, is characterized by world-openness, which implies that no single moment can be abstractly isolated from it and conceived as a substratum which man has in common with other natural beings. Hence Heidegger would never be able to affirm that the essence of man bears on those of animals and inorganic things: indeed these beings have three radically different essences, which are ontologically independent.

In accord with the objectives of the phenomenological approach, neither of the mentioned perspectives embraces a reductionist-naturalistic view, inasmuch as both aim to clarify the foundations of the anthropological difference (i.e. man’s qualitative specificity) that is presupposed on the basis of phenomenal evidence. Otherwise put, none of the authors we have cited would simply reduce man’s uniqueness to being the development of a “very complex animal” in natural evolution. However, the way in which such a difference is ontologically translated leads to distinct anthropological structures: in the first case human peculiarity rests upon a biological and animal basis, which is depicted as its *conditio sine qua non*; in the second case no animal basis is admitted, as what distinguishes man from other beings invades human totality and does not allow, from a philosophical-essential point of view, delimiting a natural and animal component in human openness to the world. The phenomenal starting point of the two conceptions is thus the same, but it is explained through radically diverse ontologies of man, which interpret differently the foundations of the whole of the human being and the impossibility to dualistically understand its intrinsic complexity.

In this respect, we now pose the question: which theoretical model does Roman Ingarden, one of the main exponents of the phenomenological movement, belong to? Are there any clues, in Ingarden’s works, which point to his position regarding the silent anthropological debate that takes shape through the texts of other phenomenologists of his time? Does

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<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, 391.

the Polish author’s eidetic description of reality, systematically conducted in the volumes of *Controversy over the Existence of the World*, leave room for reflections on the structure of man and its relation to other world regions?

In the next paragraph I am going to support the thesis that the anthropological observations Ingarden develops over the years, gathered and published in 1983 in the volume titled *Man and Value*,<sup>8</sup> suggest an original version of a “layered” anthropological model. While Ingarden, by dealing with human nature in the context of material ontology, explicitly speaks of a natural and animal *substratum* of man, the same assumption is formally confirmed in his treatise *On Responsibility* (based on a paper read in 1968), where he combines material examination of the human sphere (filtered through the concepts of responsibility and freedom) with some formal theses also expressed in the third volume of *Controversy*.<sup>9</sup> Though the author here does not use words such as “layer” or “level”, he describes a structure of man and world that shows, between the lines, a layered combination of ontological moments, due to the fact that the development of specifically human potentialities (deciding freely, assuming responsibilities etc.) depends on the existence of bodily and biological conditions. A comparison with Nicolai Hartmann’s “theory of levels of reality”, in the last paragraph, intends to corroborate the validity of this reading.

### **Ingarden’s Layered Anthropology, in the Context of Material and Formal Ontology**

Let us consider first of all Ingarden’s essays dedicated to the description of human essence: *Man and his reality* (1939), *Man and nature* (1958), and *On human nature* (1961). Here the author expressly affirms that man, although differing from beasts through culture, values and morality, has a “true, original, purely animal nature”<sup>10</sup> that he tends to deny, to the extent

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<sup>8</sup> Roman Ingarden, *Man and Value*, trans. Arthur Szylewicz (München: Philosophia Verlag, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> Idem, *Über die kausale Struktur der realen Welt* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1974).

<sup>10</sup> Idem, *Man and Value*, 23.

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The papers collected in this volume vividly reflect the strikingly wide range of interests characterizing current research in phenomenology inspired by Roman Ingarden. One of Husserl's closest and most devoted students, and at the same time one of his earliest and sharpest critics, Ingarden himself explored numerous fields of philosophy in considerable depth. While he remains best known for his groundbreaking work in aesthetics, ontology, and metaphysics, he also dealt extensively in ethics, epistemology, philosophical anthropology, and cognitive science, and his work was characterized throughout by a deep and abiding interest in the sciences and an unwavering respect for painstakingly thorough logical investigation. Issues from all of these areas of study provide the topics dealt with by the authors contributing to this volume. Several authors focus explicitly on historical matters, often casting surprising new light on the development of early phenomenology in general and of Ingarden's own 'realist' phenomenology in particular. Other authors have concentrated instead on specific areas or particular topics of long-standing interest, such as the aesthetic experience, the philosophy of music, and artistic creation, while others have explored the relevance of Ingarden's ontological and anthropological analyses to current research into everything from the interpretation of texts to the study of technological posthumanization. With contributions from both established experts and young scholars, this collection brings together three generations of researchers who share the same basic philosophical goals and methodology, yet exhibit noticeably distinct styles, making this collection not only accessible and topical but also unusually lively.

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