

From “catharsis in the text” to “catharsis of the text”

“A Marginal Commentary on Aristotle’s Poetics”

by Roman Ingarden in the (critical) light of mimetic theory

Cezary Zalewski

ABSTRACT Roman Ingarden (1893–1970) was a prominent Polish philosopher, phenomenologist, and student of Edmund Husserl. A characteristic feature of his works was the almost complete absence of analyzes from the history of philosophy. That is why it is so surprising that right after the end of World War II, the first text analyzed when Ingarden started working at the Jagiellonian University was Aristotle’s “Poetics.” Ingarden published the results of his research in Polish in 1948 in “Kwartalnik Filozoficzny” and in the early 1960s his essay was translated and published in the renowned American magazine “The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism” as “A Marginal Commentary on Aristotle’s Poetics.”

As far as I know today, this text does not arouse much interest among the many commentators and followers of Ingarden’s philosophy. Perhaps this state of affairs is justified: Ingarden’s own ideas are only repeated here, and their usefulness in the meaning of “Poetics” remains far from obvious. However, I think that this relative obscurity is worth considering now, because it shows how modern reason tries to control ancient concepts. The main purpose of this article is therefore to reconstruct the strategy by which philosophy tames the text of “Poetics,” especially its concepts such as *catharsis* and *mimesis*. The discovery and presentation of these treatments would not have been possible were it not for the mimetic theory of René Girard, which provides anthropological foundations for a critique of philosophical discourse.

KEYWORDS Aristotle; Girard, René; Ingarden, Roman; *katharsis*; “Poetics”

INTRODUCTION

Ingarden begins his essay in an intriguing way: he first introduces the reader to the disputes about various concepts of the literary work, and then tries to prove that the “Poetics” already occupies a specific position in this debate. The conclusions of the preliminary analyses state that, by distinguishing six “components” of the tragedy, Aristotle implicitly adopts a multistratous theory of a literary work, which as it transpires coincides in many points with the four-strata concept developed by Ingarden himself. It is difficult to resist the impression that the main purpose of inquiry is to only show the existence of this similarity, not its development or any functionalization. Aristotle’s proposals are imprecise and have numerous limitations, which is why—as it should be assumed—they cannot influence or modify the findings made in *The Literary Work of Art* (see Ingarden 1973b, 1973a, 1985, 2013).

One of the footnotes of the essay—which, unfortunately, was not fully translated by the American publisher—suggests that Ingarden unexpectedly discovered in Aristotle his own predecessor and therefore decided to present his reflections on “Poetics.” There is no doubt that the search for “founding fathers” is in the philosophical discourse both common and equipped with specific tasks to fulfill, but even if that was the case, it is necessary to determine the consequences which this operation leads to.

Prima facie, this operation creates a neutral impression, i.e. it is devoid of any consequences. This is because it was carried out in a solid, yet careful manner without attempting to appropriate all of the categories of Aristotle, Ingarden declares that he will “only” indicate general assumptions that are implied by the specific theses of the ancient treatise:

Neither a multistratous nor a multiphase concept of the literary work is consciously developed in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. If he were to be questioned on these points, he would not have any reply already formulated. But in the text of the *Poetics* we find various statements whose acceptance would be understandable and warranted only if we take a definite position with respect to these conceptions, and if, at the same time, we take cognizance of the general problems relating to the basic structure of the literary work. (Ingarden 1961, 167)

As a result of this method, a set of mutual relations is created between what is general (a theory of a literary work) and what is specific (a definition of tragedy). Schematically, this assignment can be represented as follows:

Aristotle’s Definition of Tragedy				
A	A	B	C, D, E	E
what is said (<i>lexis</i>)	what is said (<i>lexis</i>)	what is visible (<i>opseos</i>)	plot (<i>mythos</i>) characters (<i>ethos</i>) thought (<i>dianoia</i>)	
Roman Ingarden’s Theory of a Literary Work				
1	2	3	4	
stratum of word sound	stratum of units of meaning	stratum of appearances	stratum of objects represented	

Table 1. Aristotle’s Theory of Definition and Ingarden’s Theory of a Literary Work

Ingarden assumes that any interference with this analogy is apparent and results only from the transition between two levels of analysis. Therefore, if there is also a sixth element within the detailed definition—(f) melody (*melopoiia*)—then it can be omitted, because it is too particular, belonging only to the tragedy (present when performing the choir part). The author solves the next difficulty in an identical fashion. He clearly indicates that “Poetics” introduces a close relationship between the plot, characters and their internal experiences, which—as a consequence—allows him to be placed in one strata, in which they have a similar, i.e. equivalent status. This operation is in contrast to Aristotle’s own decision, since he clearly favors a plot. However, Ingarden removes this problem by claiming that this privileged position belongs to the compositional principles of tragedy alone, and not to the general structures of the literary work.

Removing the discrepancy does more than merely confirming the compatibility of both proposals. It even seems that it is not the most important thing for Ingarden, since he constantly reminds us that, despite their numerous similarities, Aristotle’s approach still remains very imperfect, undeveloped. Ingarden’s argument inevitably tends to the conclusion that the indicated analogies above all testify to the common approach to the examined object. Aristotle:

devotes his study almost exclusively to the literary work of art as such; and, having partially oriented himself as to its general structure and varieties, he takes up its artistic function—its effect on the spectator—and analyzes the properties of the work on which that depends. (Ingarden 1961, 170)

Ingarden's approval for this procedure is complete. This fact is not accidental, because the basic assumption often expressed in philosophical discourse on the subject has been formulated explicitly here. This assumption can be described as the primacy of structure over function: the first is something independent, autonomous, therefore it is the basic object of analyses aimed at detecting its internal differentiation. On the other hand, the impact of a literary work on the recipient is a secondary phenomenon (i.e. directly dependent on construction quality) and accidental from the point of view of structure.

1. *CATHARSIS*

Up to this point, Ingarden's analysis is quite general, far from the specific issues of "Poetics." However, the situation changes radically when in the fifth part of the essay—the longest and most important—the problem of the specificity of a literary work in combination with other (especially scientific) discourses is considered. It is hard to resist the impression that Ingarden should not consider this issue in the context of Aristotle's "Poetics." To do this, he is forced to reflect on its key concepts—*mimesis* and *catharsis*—and the results of these investigations, as it turns out, lead to contradictions with the initial findings.

Ingarden was too good a philosopher to be unaware of this threat and that is why he makes every effort to discipline his discourse. It is already discernible at the level of the proportion of analyses: the *mimesis* category plays a key role here, while the *catharsis* issue is marginalized. Such a procedure is in coherence with the initial assumption regarding the primacy of structure (i.e. *mimesis*) over function (i.e. *catharsis*). However, philosophical reliability forces Ingarden to be accurate, which is why he cannot ignore a definition which was so important for Aristotle:

This ... experience, according to Aristotle, is the principal and ultimate purpose of the action in a tragedy, one of the varieties of poetry. He lays down a number of guiding principles in conformance with which tragedies should be composed in order to realize this purpose. (Ingarden 1962, 277)

We see that the various requirements governing the method of composing a literary work, which Aristotle sets up for the poet, are designed so that a certain special "impression" will be made by the work on its audience: which is that it should be pleasing, moving, and, above all, that it induce that peculiar delight which is the *katharsis* the spectator experiences, chiefly from the emotions of "fear and pity" which have been aroused in him. (Ingarden 1962, 282)

These observations are correct. The purpose of tragedy is to cause catharsis and, as Aristotle himself categorically states, "the end is the chief thing of all" (*Poetics*, 1450a, 23). However, one can indicate some of the assumptions of this statement: in tragedy it is the function that unambiguously determines the structure (and not vice versa), determining all its properties. And this means that at the level of general assumptions there is a contradiction between the proposals of both philosophers. So, if the catharsis category can reveal the hidden discrepancies present in the philosophical discourse, it cannot be ruled out that its outflow is greater here and extends to other issues. The first step in proving this hypothesis is to reconstruct Ingarden's view of the *catharsis* issue.

He approaches it extremely cautiously, even conservatively, as if he wanted to convince himself that this problem does not play a major role here. One need only cite one longer passage in which there is an attempt to capture this problem:

The aim, therefore, is that the play should be "pleasing," and that the spectator should feel "pleasure," or that from a tragedy he should experience *katharsis*: that is, a certain peculiarly agreeable experience growing out of concern for the fate of the hero, evoked by our feeling pity, fear, and a special kind of apprehension all at the same time, and culminating on a positive note in an emotional release. Whatever this singular experience Aristotle called *katharsis* may be—and, unfortunately, we shall never learn from Aristotle himself what it is—one thing seems certain: that it is an emotional experience belonging to the realm of aesthetic feeling. (Ingarden 1962, 277)

The whole process therefore takes place at the psychological level. The viewer identifies with the hero, which triggers both positive and negative experiences. And what is most difficult here is the simultaneous coexistence of these contradictory feelings, which is why the ultimate goal is to completely remove this "confusion." Catharsis is pleasant because it purifies and releases, that is it allows us to rid ourselves of something which creates a disorder in the normal functioning of the emotive sphere. And, as Ingarden states firmly, human contact with art is closely related to this particular field.

2. CATHARSIS AND EPISTEME

Ingarden's position regarding the cognitive function of literature has always been radical and negative at the same time. In the analysis of "Poetics" it is clearly repeated, taking the form of the thesis according to which:

the function of poetic creation is neither one of apprehending the real world, nor even a final phase of such apprehension, summarizing the poet's conclusions and presenting them in the form of judgments (in the definition of logic), but is something entirely different ... (Ingarden 1962, 284)

It is intriguing, however, that this time Ingarden does not evoke—at least not explicitly—his own concept (his theory of quasi-judgments) but tries to find sufficient and incontrovertible evidence from Aristotle himself. The main argument is taken from the ninth, while the auxiliary one is from the fourth chapter of “Poetics.”

In the first case, the argument is built on the distinction made by Aristotle between the historian and the poet. Ingarden pays the most attention to the initial thesis, according to which:

The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in ... prose The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. (*Poetics*, 1451a, 40; 1451b, 3–4)

Everything is determined here by the ontological status of the objects to which both types of discourses refer: history (and science as such) deals with what is real (i.e. existing *in actu*), and the domain of literature is existence *in potentia*, located between being and nothingness. Based on this difference, Ingarden creates more opposition pairs that capture the same problem from different perspectives. It assumes that ontological decisions determine or even enforce specific solutions in the other three domains. The first of these concerns the attitude of who uses sentences. With their help, the historian intends to determine a certain state of affairs, therefore his intentions should be attributed to the so-called assertion. The poet, on the other hand, creates only an imitation, which is why his sentences are devoid of this specific attitude. The consequence of this decision is the nature of sentences: there are logical judgments in history, while in poetry—despite formal similarity—there are sentences in which the statement function has been “neutralized” (Husserl's term).

Both of these issues have much in common with the views of Ingarden himself, but not Aristotle. Attempting to connect them with the text of “Poetics” is unconvincing, sometimes even risky, an issue which Ingarden realizes at least partly (Ingarden 1962, 275). That is why the third, functional domain plays a crucial role: the opposition between *episteme* and *catharsis*. Ingarden states that the latter term defines:

an emotional experience belonging to the realm of aesthetic feeling, not to that of intellectual experience (for example, it is not a conviction based on learning, such as we gain when we agree with the conclusions of a scientific treatise). This aesthetic experience, according to Aristotle, is the principal and ultimate purpose of the action in a tragedy, one of the varieties of poetry. He lays down a number of guiding principles in conformance with which tragedies should be composed in order to realize this purpose. There is no mention whatever of "truth" or "falsity" among these. (Ingarden 1962, 277)

The text of "Poetics" allows Ingarden to define catharsis in such a way that it can be placed in a perfectly symmetrical opposition to knowledge, *episteme*. The alternative is radical, because it assumes that *tertium not datur*: either science or aesthetics; either intellect or feelings; either knowledge or purification; either truth and falsehood, or pity and fear.

The problem is that even the ninth chapter of "Poetics" is not as clear-cut as Ingarden explains. Aristotle draws a completely different conclusion from the ontological difference:

The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal, I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is—for example—what Alcibiades did or suffered. (*Poetics*, 1451b, 4-11)

Ingarden draws attention to this reasoning because he is aware of how dangerous it is to his discourse. For if what is general is a property of poetry (and what brings it closer to philosophy), then it is obvious that some kind of cognition must be assumed here. A poet must know, for example, how probability works and how necessity works; otherwise he will not be able to use his freedom which is guaranteed by the ontological difference; the freedom to operate in the domain of what is possible.

At least so much can be assumed on the basis of this passage, although there is far from a consensus between commentators about its understanding (see Potts 1953, 56–68; Hussain 2001, 45–55). But how does Ingarden deal with the thesis concerning the generality of poetry? He attempts to show that it is wrong, and also uses other statements of "Poetics" for this purpose, thus suggesting that Aristotle contradicts himself here. First of all: Ingarden states that the general nature of poetry is incompatible with

proper names, which Aristotle recognizes as a necessary condition for obtaining probability. The conclusion is thus obvious: poetry

basically ... always concerns an individual incident (as, for example, the wrath of Achilles), which could occur in the world of the singular, and that only once. (Ingarden 1962, 275)

And secondly: the use of necessity does not require any knowledge, because it is a purely “technical” matter belonging to poetic art. Ingarden must make that assumption when he recalls extensive passages of “Poetics” regarding the principles of composition, proving on the basis that:

the ultimate purpose to be achieved through the realization of unity of action and other principles of composition is always the production of a greater effect on the spectator or reader—the kind of effect that today we should call aesthetic. (Ingarden 1962, 276)

What can be said about these two counterarguments? The first is based on an incorrect understanding of the text, which is (see *Poetics*, 1451b, 15-26) precisely against the excessive attachment of poets to proper names, especially traditional, mythological. Aristotle even reconstructs the reasoning that is responsible for this (see *Poetics*, 1451b, 15-18); however, this reasoning is erroneous (so-called paralogism), although Ingarden treats it in exactly the opposite way.¹

The second counterargument, however, fully demonstrates the power of the concept of catharsis: if the tragedy uses an action structure based on the principle of necessity, then the only explanation for this phenomenon is its cathartic functionalization. *Catharsis* therefore restores the plot to the role of the most important element, and at the same time gives it a specific meaning. Since catharsis is beyond cognitive experience, the “means” leading to such a defined aim cannot be of a different nature. The only cognition that can possibly be referred to relates to the operation of understanding

1. It is significant that, for the purposes of another argument, Ingarden analyzes the same passage later on in his paper in a different (and proper) way, without noticing his own inconsistency (Ingarden 1962, 281). From its existence one could draw such the following conclusion: demanding the presence of proper names (taken from mythology) also—only indirectly—testifies in Ingarden’s discourse about the dominance of catharsis, because only plots that do not change the mythical message are in this respect the most effective. Elsewhere, Aristotle himself makes this clear (*Poetics*, 1453b, 22-25), but Ingarden did not notice this contradiction in “Poetics.”

the literary work itself. This is how the final conclusion of the ancillary argument can be interpreted (from the fourth chapter):

Moreover, "pity and fear" in the face of a given tragedy, we also react with a singular pleasure which seems understandable ... only for the very reason that we do not perceive given real objects ... directly, but only certain imitations of them, and are aware, at least in some degree, that they are only "imitations" and not real. In consequence, if we do perform some act of cognition (and of this there seems to be no doubt), it is of some very special character, being directed toward the "imitation" and not toward a reality. Thus, it is only a particular means to an end quite different from learning. Actually, it hinges upon the evocation of an emotional experience, of a peculiar pleasure or delight; it is not the simple acquisition of certain knowledge. (Ingarden 1962, 278)

Ingarden gives the condition of catarrhal pleasure: purification of "pity and fear" could not be so efficient, were it not for the fact of communing with fiction itself, with something unreal. Thanks to this, the viewer gains a safe distance and even an advantage over what he/she is watching. This is how the intellect fulfills a double-menial role towards *catharsis*: it creates safe conditions for the perception of a literary work, constantly reminding us of its fictitiousness; and is responsible for the very course of perception, providing further information to which (only and exclusively) the emotional sphere responds.

3. CATHARSIS AND MIMESIS

Ingarden announces (Ingarden 1962, 278) that he will devote the last part of the essay to the concept of *mimesis*. However, the first conclusions that he comes to here (Ingarden 1962, 281) give the impression of being known. Accurate verification leads to the confirmation of this intuition. While investigating the cognitive function, Ingarden already assumed that the category of "what is possible" should be merged with "imitation," so as to obtain a literary representation, which will simulate reality itself (Ingarden 1962, 274, 6). Thanks to this, as we saw it, the reference of the literary work was broken, causing the cognitive function to be completely supplanted by *catharsis*.

The fact that Ingarden is now repeating previous ascertainments is not that surprising. The consequences are rather intriguing since he does not stop at mere repetition. As long as *mimesis* is based on the ontological difference between "what is" and "what could be," literature admittedly creates fiction, but probably, it resembles reality because it was somehow modeled on it. Now, however, Ingarden decides—according to Aristotle—to

include in the *mimesis* also the impossible and illogical. Thanks to this, the bond with non-artistic reality is finally broken, and literature has been granted the status of autonomous fiction, existing for itself in a completely independent manner (Ingarden 1962, 283).

This conceptual extension seems insignificant, but brings with it a fundamental consequence. By making conclusions about *mimesis*, Ingarden states that Aristotle:

is describing writing skill of such an order that everything constituting the stratum of objects represented, everything revealed to us within its compass during reading, *moves* us (explicitly: whose perception results in *katharsis*); and it is so because it is “convincing”: it has the mark of a particular, independent, authentic reality, even though nothing of the sort ever existed outside the work. (Ingarden 1962, 283)

The further *mimesis* moves away from reality, the closer the connection it shares with *catharsis*. Thus, fiction as such would be useless, so its only justification is the effect it exerts on the audience.

4. CATHARSIS AND MIMETIC THEORY—COMPARISON

Ingarden's essay on “Poetics” allows us to see how the philosophical intellect (in this case associated with the phenomenological method) tries to ignore any traces that could lead to reflection on the quasi-religious function of tragedy and—as a consequence—on the religious sources of culture as such. The strategy of bypassing these important issues is particularly, even blatantly, visible in the way the concept of *catharsis* works. The philosopher places them at the center of his own discourse, but he completely ignores the fact that it is very ambiguous and, as is known (see Copleston 1962, 432), has both religious and medical references.

It is not excluded that if these references were included, then this concept would not appear in the analysis of “Poetics.” Their first part clearly assumes the absolute primacy of the structure of a literary work over any of its functions (e.g. reference or influence on the recipient). The culmination of this anti-functional attitude is the argument (Ingarden 1961, 170–1), in which Ingarden approves of Aristotle's conduct, which assumes the removal of the relationship between the work and the author from the field of inquiry. All this means that Ingarden, referring to the authority of Aristotle, intends to treat the literary work in strictly ontological categories: as an object tightly isolated from others, having a diverse internal structure and its own way of existence.

The introduction of the concept of catharsis is inevitable, but at the same time makes such an analysis impossible. The proportions are reversed: Aristotle assumes that the function strictly (or even normatively) defines the structure of the tragedy.² Ingarden's discourse does not see this reversal, although at some point he must accept it, faithfully following the text of "Poetics." This silent approval is not only an attempt to mask the contradiction that breaks Ingarden's essay into two incompatible parts. To a greater extent, it proves that *catharsis* is needed—and even necessary—although its meaning should not become the subject of overly thorough investigation.

4.1. Catharsis in René Girard's mimetic theory

Ingarden's essay again indicates the basic paradox of philosophical discourse, which on the one hand introduced the concept of *catharsis* into the field of reflection, but—on the other—did not lead to its explanation. One example of overcoming this deadlock is the research on the genesis and functions of primitive religions initiated in the early 1970s by René Girard. In his fundamental work, *Violence and the Sacred*, he placed inspirational remarks on "Poetics." He immediately noticed a key problem:

As for the function of tragedy, Aristotle has already defined it for us. In describing the tragic effect in terms of *katharsis* he asserts that tragedy can and should assume at least some of the functions assigned to ritual in a world where ritual has almost disappeared. (Girard 2005, 306)³

2. This issue is important because—albeit indirectly—it points to the ritual genesis of the tragedy. Cesareo Bandera noticed this very well when analyzing the Aristotelian definition of this genre: "pity and fear and their purgation are not viewed as circumstantial to the tragic performance. Rather, they belong to the 'natural' form of tragedy. A tragedy that does not in fact excite precisely these two emotions of pity and fear in the audience, or does not bring about the purgation of such emotions, cannot be properly called a mature or fully developed tragedy; at best, I suppose, we would have to call it a frustrated one. This does not seem to me the kind of formal definition of a literary genre that we would be willing to accept today. It looks much more like the definition of a rite or ritual performance, in which everything is geared to produce a definite, well-defined, effect: in a ritual performance the effect on the participating audience is the most important thing' if the proper effect is not produced the entire performance is frustrated" (Bandera 1994, 111–2).

3. A few years later, Girard made this point more precisely, stating: "In certain types of travelling theatre, the principal hero, who is of course the one who play the role of scapegoat, is so 'polluted' by the end of performance that he has to leave the community without having contact with anyone or anything. In this sort of theatre we come upon an intermediary form between ritual expulsion and dramatic art, and if literary critics would pause for a moment to reflect they would find it has much to say about the meaning of our own theatre, about its relation to ritual, and about the well-known Aristotelian *catharsis*" (Girard 1987, 133; see also Doran and Girard 2008, 24).

It is only from this perspective that Aristotle leaves two traces: the first is the dominance of function, and the second is its definition as *catharsis*. When juxtaposed with each other and compared with the rules that govern the ritual, then it turns out that the tragedy and theater are another—later, and thus more secularized—institution created thanks to the culture-forming power of primitive religion.

This assumption allows Girard to make analogies between the operation of the ritual and the mechanism of *catharsis* (see Girard 1988, 1995, 2000). The main common element of ritual and theater is the fate of the main character—the victim or hero of the tragedy—consisting in their introduction, presentation and ultimately removal (killing, exile). It is, thanks to such a radical change, that the key metamorphosis takes place, which is also experienced by participants or theater viewers. Therefore, as Girard has repeatedly emphasized, the reactions of the latter are two-phase.

The first one identifies: viewers identify with the hero who is increasingly involved in disputes and conflicts. The second phase involves separation: seeing defeat, the recipients experience “pity and fear,” that is, they commiserate and are afraid of what the hero led his pride (*hybris*).

Girard points out that the *catharsis* understood as “purgation” refers to the transition between the first and second phase. Viewers get rid of the temptation that would lead them to similar, aggressive and violent behavior. However, this transition would have been impossible were it not for the subsequent experience of “pity and fear”—and therefore these two feelings should not only continue, but even achieve more and more effective (i.e. preventive) action, especially since they are accompanied by a positive experience of gratitude for regained security.

Girard has repeatedly emphasized that Aristotle’s definition only gets its proper meaning in the context of the theory of ritual and the definition of the founding murder. Aristotle himself does not direct attention to the religious genesis of the tragedy, nor does he even analyze the relationship between the hero’s story and the experience of viewers. The philosopher uses the religious term but does not examine its meaning; he chooses it because it belongs to a group of suggestive metaphors that furthermore

[are] used “innocently,” in the sense that the misapprehension that characterizes all sacrificial ceremonies is innocent. In discovering, as we believe we have done, that these metaphors and their respective objects conceal the same process, we have in effect discovered that the metaphoric displacement ultimately alters nothing. Behind the various metaphors a scapegoat effect can always be discerned. (Girard 2005, 312)

The humanistic tradition will henceforth repeat "innocent"—i.e. devoid of knowledge—displacement until it leads to the invention of a purely aesthetic *catharsis*, which has the autonomous status of cultural value, and which has no connection with violence and the sacred (Girard 1988, 123).

4.2. *Ingarden's catharsis in light of mimetic theory*

There is no doubt that *catharsis* has only an aesthetic sense for Ingarden; probably for this reason, the depiction of the mechanism itself is superficial, limited to the procedure for removing unspecified emotions. It seems that with this assumption one would expect that this concept would be placed on the margins of philosophical discourse. However, its greatest paradox is that this is not the case. Contrary to Ingarden himself, you can even integrate both parts of his essay with the help of the thesis: if *catharsis* is responsible for excluding the cognitive properties of a literary work, then it is also responsible for its general, multistratous structure.

However, I think it is necessary to go beyond the conclusion formulated and put forward an even more radical thesis: *catharsis* determines the most important cognitive operations that were included in Ingarden's philosophical discourse. In seeking arguments for this, I would like to use Girard's insightful remark that:

Philosophy, like tragedy, can at certain levels serve as an attempt at expulsion, an attempt perpetually renewed because never wholly successful. (Girard 2005, 311)

Thus, some conceptual operations performed by philosophy may resemble what the hero encounters in tragedy: exile and removal. The arbitrary separation of what reason cannot and does not want to come across demonstrates—as shown by Girard's further reasoning—the ritual genesis of philosophy itself. But if this "expulsion" of certain issues actually occurs, its effect is not only "obscurity," i.e. the lack of knowledge of what is most hidden in culture (see Girard 2000). The philosophical mind cannot be alien to satisfaction with the diagnoses and their effects: precise definitions, classifications, hierarchies. This is the next, even more distant and subtle version of ritual catharsis, whose distant echo can be found even in the last sentence of Ingarden's essay.⁴ Its existence indicates that the "sacrificial

4. "Thus, in outline, Aristotle's position in the *Poetics* presents itself when we attempt to understand it in the light of contemporary studies" (Ingarden 1962, 284).

space" (as Girard puts it) was not exceeded by philosophy, because everything that could lead to it was rejected.

Girard emphasized that the sacrificial effect is strictly dependent on ignorance, which he sometimes described—in the phenomenological language—as “*méconnaissance*” (Girard 2002, 7). The main question is therefore the answer to the following question: does Ingarden’s essay show such a lack of recognition, thanks to which sacrificial logic functions efficiently in it, providing adequate *catharsis*?

Careful reading confirms this intuition, and the key argument is provided by considerations regarding the concept of *mimesis*. Ingarden conducts it with great commitment, devoting a significant part of his essay to it. One can immediately see that this term—as the discourse becomes increasingly analytical and precise—is, so to speak, more and more perfect. Initially, *mimesis* is merely “good” when it eliminates cognition from literature, and then reaches the status of “the best” when it turns out that any fiction can arise from it. Each time, however, it is a *mimesis* of Western aesthetics, which assumes some kind of representation. Criticism of this position often appears in Girard’s writings. Justifying his interest in literature, he stated that:

The great writers ... produced a quasitheory of mimetic desire that is absent in Plato and the ancient world, and that is absent also in the modern age. These authors are almost always the ones—and here the coincidence is significant—whom modern esthetic theory reduces to the perspective of realistic imitation, discarding once more the *mimesis* of desire, nonrepresentational *mimesis*. I could, first of all, show that “esthetic” and “realistic” and subsequently “formalist” and “structuralist” treatments constitute the source of the misunderstanding, the instrument of the real repression. (Girard 1988, 90)

Aristotle’s “Poetics” is a founding work in which this type of repression was first carried out. This is where the famous remark—mentioned by Girard many times—appears that man is the most imitative being. Ingarden could not have missed this definition, but he treated it in a very significant way. According to him, Aristotle

says: “Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature” (1448b, 4–5). However, in his amplification of this point, he does not make clear what these two causes are. One of them seems to be the propensity “to imitate,” and also that “universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated” (1448b, 8–9). But we do not know whether the second

cause is that people learn from imitation, and that "to learn gives the liveliest pleasure" (1448b, 12–14), or the pleasure due "to the execution, the colouring, or some such other cause" (1488b, 17–19). (Ingarden 1962, 277)

Ingarden does not return to this first cause and nor does he wonder what kind of mimesis it assumes.⁵ It is the mimesis of desire—the "evil" *mimesis*, which philosophical discourse eliminates both radically and unknowingly, reflexively. The mimesis of desire is removed here from the scope of analysis, because—as Girard's work shows—it is it that makes literature a unique tool for learning about man and culture as such. Ingarden is unable to accept it, so he performs a quasi-ritual operation: he removes the "bad" *mimesis*, and in its place introduces "good" one, aesthetic.

Now it is only possible to define a double—explicit and hidden—strategy of this philosophical discourse. Paraphrasing the terminology of Girard (introduced in *The Scapegoat*) in the essay analyzed we can see "*catharsis* in the text" and "*catharsis* of the text." The first concept defines the direct object of philosophical inquiry: at the price of a certain contradiction, Ingarden creates a binary system *mimesis*—*catharsis*, in which the first term defines literary fiction (along with its multistratous structure) and the second defines the aesthetic pleasure resulting from its perception. Both of these concepts remain in a close—dialectical—relationship, conditioning each other. However, this binary division is already—like any system of differences—the result of a specific operation. "*catharsis* of the text" is a kind of pre-purified field in which the philosophical intellect can build conceptual constructions (such as mimesis-catharsis relation). This field is opened thanks to the expulsion: "evil," anthropological *mimesis* is removed, thus transferring the entire discourse to the domain of pure aesthetics.

At the first level, the conceptual construction is solid, even if the balance between the concepts sometimes turns out to be unstable, leading to the disproportionate expansion of *catharsis* that I have indicated here. Yet only the mechanism of the "*catharsis* of the text" confirms the validity of Girard's observation of the ineffective expulsion that philosophy has been

5. Ingarden's philosophy is not unique in this respect. Commenting on this fragment of "Poetics" (*Poetics* 1448b, 5–11) Andrew McKenna argues that such a gesture is typical of Western philosophy: "All of humanist tradition has faithfully attended to Aristotle on his second point, which is about formal representation or objective mimesis. The notorious 'linguistic turn' of modern philosophy has been especially complaint in this regard. Only René Girard has recognized Aristotle's first point concerning subjective or behavioral mimesis" (McKenna 1998, 633).

making since the beginning. At the end of the essay, Ingarden insightfully notes that:

Aristotle applies the terms, *mimesis* and *mimeisthai*, to many diverse situations and objects. ... For example, the poet himself “imitates” when he writes a drama or an epic, and the persons shown as participating in a tragedy “imitate,” and their acts and the incidents also “imitate.” Not only *mythos*, but the whole tragedy, is *mimesis*. It is also striking that at one point Aristotle says that when a poet is speaking “for himself,” he is not “imitating,” but he does imitate when the persons presented in the drama speak, although it may be for him; so, the act of speaking can be *mimeisthai*. (Ingarden 1962, 283–4)

Further complaints about the inaccuracy and imprecision of Aristotle will not help. The examples that Ingarden cited using “Poetics” can—and even must—be interpreted as the return of “bad” *mimesis*; unrecognized and therefore safe, articulated return. If the examples given are outside of Ingarden’s approach, then how should they be understood? If the plot of a tragedy, characters, their actions and statements imitate, it is because—as Girard argues—they recreate what the ritual once presented, which in turn mimics the mimetic crisis itself. The “*catharsis* of the text” is thus weakened, and the philosophical discourse—suddenly and unexpectedly—opens up to such senses of *mimesis* that might lead to contradictions.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the analysis was to show how Ingarden reinterprets the concept of catharsis. This treatment is not exposed, and yet it remains extremely important for the entire discourse. For the phenomenologist, catharsis is therefore a purely aesthetic experience that is closely in relation to a recipient’s emotions. By assuming (contrary to his own theory) that catharsis understood in this way strictly conditions *mimesis*, Ingarden may argue that the fiction deprives literature of any cognitive abilities.

Girard’s mimetic theory allows us to see the hidden mechanism by which Ingarden could construct this argument. The origin of catharsis in Aristotle is ritual, which is why it should be described as an effect resulting from the scapegoat’s expulsion. Modern philosophical discourse performs a similar operation: “*catharsis* of the text” is a mechanism that allows to eliminate “bad” *mimesis* from the area of inquiry, because it remains inconsistent with the aesthetic catharsis. From the point of view of mimetic theory, it is not surprising that at the end of the essay “bad” *mimesis* returned. This return is symptomatic in a dual sense: it reveals both the modern inefficiency of

expulsion and signals the problematic status of autonomous aesthetics. To establish it, it is necessary to strictly delineate aesthetic and religious experience, and this is not entirely possible even based on Aristotle's "Poetics."

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