

Tracing the Genesis and Development of Eco-phenomenology: Through the Phenomenology of the Ontopoietic Logos of Life of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

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The paper presents the acceptance of the idea of “eco-phenomenology” specific to the World Phenomenology Institute, an understanding developed in the course of 50 years of research in the phenomenology of life carried out by its founder, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. She brought about the maturation of Husserlian phenomenology from transcendental to eco-phenomenologic by taking a further phenomenological reduction than Husserl had. From such a reduction, which reaches the level of life and therefore enables deeper phenomenological descriptions, arises the vision of transcendental consciousness and related cogitative intentionality as rooted in the human-condition-within the unity-of-everything-that-lives. Starting from here, transcendental phenomenology, having evolved into phenomenology of life, has matured into eco-phenomenology, the genesis and development of which are explained by the ontopoietic logos of life.

Keywords: eco-phenomenology, phenomenology of life, ontopoiesis, logos, A.-T. Tymieniecka

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka revealed that the phenomenology of life had matured into an eco-phenomenological Enlightenment, in an interview with the Norwegian journalists Lars Petter Torjussen, Johannes Servan, and Simen Andersen Øyen, in Bergen, when she was there to receive the University’s “honorary doctorate in philosophy [...] for her contributions to phenomenological research and philosophy in general and for the unique way she has organized philosophical activities world-wide”, in the words of Konrad Rokstad, promoter of the event (Rokstad, 2008, p. 23).

With this Tymieniecka announced that her inquiry into the phenomenology of life had achieved such an innovative result that it even opened up the event of a new eco-phenomenological Enlightenment on the basis of the discovery of a deeper logic, ontopoietic level, intrinsic to life and thus capable of a more solid foundational capacity and broader inclusivity compared to that assured by mere transcendental research, which Husserlian phenomenology had developed starting from the valorization of the properties of cogitative intentionality of consciousness.

Curious to understand better the structural phenomenological newness that Tymieniecka proposed, the interviewers asked her about the practical value of phenomenology compared to contemporary science.

This question had already been raised by Stephen C. Pepper and Alfred Tarski in the 1960s when

Tymieniecka, newly arrived in the States, was reading Husserl's *Logical Investigations* at the University of California. Tymieniecka reminded the Norwegian interviewers that such a pragmatic test had already been amply passed. In her 1962 book, *Phenomenology and Science in Contemporary European Thought*, which sold over 10,000 copies in America, she had demonstrated that phenomenology was not a mere mental game, incapable of leading to practical results, technical innovations, or solutions to the world's problems. Even back then, phenomenology had found fruitful applications in psychology, psychiatry, the fine arts and critical analysis in general. And now, after 50 years of phenomenological work focused on life, it was an incontrovertible fact that phenomenology had entered into all sectors of knowledge, including physics and embryology, as a praxeology of both practical and theoretical knowledge (Torjussen, Servan, & Andersen Øyen, 2008, pp. 25-26).

In a surprising convergence with the evaluation of Jürgen Habermas (1992, p. 3), Tymieniecka emphasized that the phenomenological approach, which time and time again (*immer wieder*) starts from living experience (*Erlebnis*), is the most suitable one for promoting the growth of knowledge in the post-modern era because it carries

a vision of reason that breaks out from the narrow traditional frameworks and opens up creatively toward appreciation of the host of new rationalities [...] in order to deal with the changeable currents of existence, to generate criteria of validity, predictability, prospects, measure. (Tymieniecka, 2009, p. xxiv)

The interviewers pressed Tymieniecka on this point and asked her to give examples of the concrete utility of a phenomenological approach, applying it to the ecological crisis of our times. In fact, there was a sharp divide between most people, who perceived this crisis as a problem for the physical sciences, to be solved through technological innovation, and eco-phenomenologists who, instead and paradoxically according to the interviewers, paid no attention to the lived experiences of real individuals, and considered only the metaphysical dimension of the crisis. That is, they simply asked for “a fundamental reconceptualization of human values and our relationship with nature”, without wondering how this can be achieved.

Tymieniecka responded dryly to this provocation: “Actually, my account of ontopoiesis is an eco-phenomenology. Ontopoiesis reaches to the very germs of ecology: development and genesis” (Torjussen, Servan, & Andersen Øyen, 2008, pp. 26-27). In one fell swoop, and without reticence, Tymieniecka indicated that her phenomenology of the ontopoiesis of life was at the basis of all theorizations of ecology, environmental studies, and ethics. It was also at the basis of any innocent trust in science and in technological innovation in the fields of human life and the natural environment.

How did Tymieniecka come to these convictions?

The Organic Continuity of the Phenomenological Movement as an *Ante Litteram* Ecological Question

Tymieniecka's maturation of Husserlian-inspired phenomenology into eco-phenomenology began in the 1960's and 1970s, when concern about ecology and sustainable development was just dawning¹ and

¹ The Club di Roma, with Aurelio Peccei commissioned MIT in Boston to develop the Project on the Predicament of Mankind, the final report of which, *The Limits to Growth*, was published in 1972, the year of the first *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment*, held in Stockholm. In 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development wrote *Our Common Future*, known as the Brundtland Report, which defined the concept of sustainable development, which is still shared today. In 1990 the first *Human Development Report* was published in the context of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which today is working toward achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

phenomenology itself seemed far from the problems of preserving living systems and their environment, considered extrinsically from the pure dimension of consolidated transcendental inquiry, even though in principle included in the phenomenological explorations of being-in-the-world and the world-of-life.

Instead, in those years Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka was facing a true question of phenomenological ecology. There was a strong sensation that the entire phenomenological movement risked extinction due to the declining numbers of the community of phenomenological research and the progressive degradation of the environment of intersubjective and interdisciplinary living experience, from which that research drew nourishment and energy.

In fact, with the 1970 death of Roman Ingarden, the last eye-witness of the first Husserlian school, the organic succession of the phenomenological vicissitude seemed definitively compromised and there was the danger that phenomenology would devolve from a living thought based on *Erlebnis* (living experience) into dead thought. There was the fear that in phenomenology, too, thinkers would have to settle for “polishing the tombs”, to use the expression of John Langshaw Austin, which Tymieniecka made her own (Tymieniecka, 1972, p. 3), and would have to dedicate themselves to phenomenological archaeology rather than the cultivation of the transcendental consciousness’ relationship with the world-of-life, as Husserl had augured in his later years.

There were two issues to address.

On the one hand, it was an “environmental” question of revitalizing the *humus* of dialogical intuitivity upon which phenomenology was based and that was intrinsic to Husserlian philosophical conduct itself, as Edith Stein documented in her autobiography (Stein, 1986).

To this end, in 1976 Tymieniecka founded and began directing the “World Phenomenology Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning”, which promoted a long series of world-wide conferences that drew well-known and important participants the likes of Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, and Francisco Varela. The contributions of each conference were published in a volume of the “Analecta Husserliana” series, now published by Springer Nature. These conferences were marked not by solitary contributions, but always intersubjectively shared verification of intuitions and horizons of meaning, typical of the beginnings of phenomenology in Göttingen. A new and updated set of scientific, aesthetic, psychological, and psychiatric experiences began to circulate among scholars and students of phenomenology, who found a stable environment of common living experience where they could renew and expand their contacts and update the debate.

Tymieniecka profited from this newly enriched intersubjective and interdisciplinary exchange to address, in an original and effective way, the second and more challenging side of the problem relating to the risk of the archeological distortion of phenomenology. Indeed, she understood the question of the theoretical revitalization of phenomenology as a problem of eco-sustainability *latu sensu*.

One could have expected, as Jürgen Habermas noted, that once all the protagonists of Phenomenology’s founding moment had disappeared, it would achieve its “post-ism”, like Post-Analytic Philosophy, Post-Structuralism, or Post-Marxism (Habermas, 1992, p. 3); once it had found its own historians, standard portrayals, and seminal documents, it would follow the fate of the Hegelian “shape of the spirit” (*Gestalt des Geistes*), which “as soon as it is recognized in its uniqueness and named, is placed at a distance and condemned to decline” (Habermas, 1992, p. 4), reducing its vitality to a mere “history of its effects” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*).

This is exactly what Tymieniecka feared when, alarmed by the condition of stall and the individualistic dispersion of phenomenological inquiry throughout the world, she set out to embrace the Husserlian inheritance. But Habermas himself would have acknowledged that, unlike the other contemporary philosophies, phenomenology was essentially characterized as a living philosophizing, that is, it was “permeated with

existential topicality” so that it “anthropologizes broadly and ontologizes deeply” (Habermas, 1992, p. 4).

By holding firm to phenomenology’s distinctive feature of existential topicality, Tymieniecka managed to successfully address the question of the organic continuity of the phenomenological movement and ensure an eco-sustainable assumption of the Husserlian theoretical inheritance.

According to the typical attitude of feminine thought, oriented primarily to what is alive, as revealed by Edith Stein (Stein 2017), Tymieniecka approached empathetically the theoretical Husserlian legacy. Thus, she spared herself the “effort to interpret phenomenology through its method” (Tymieniecka, 2005, p. xv) and instead, taking up the challenge launched to transcendental phenomenology by Ortega y Gasset, who held that not dead ideas but “life was the theme of our times” (Tymieniecka, 2004, p. 444; 1997, p. ix), she set out on the search for the source of the vitality that had animated Husserl’s inquiry, soon coming to the realization that Husserl, in his complex and fruitful reflective proceeding, did not keep to the logic of the “speculative thinker who [extrinsically] seeks to unify his various insights”. Rather, presiding at the succession of phases of the “integral Husserl” (Tymieniecka, 2002a, 2b) was the same logos at work in the formation of “the planes of human reality” (Tymieniecka, 2002a, 3a), the living and temporally constructive logos that “carries on the great streaming edifice of life” (Tymieniecka, 2000, p. 4).

Tymieniecka wanted to come into contact with “the seminal virtualities engendered by [Husserlian] thought”. She believed that in making the founder’s theoretical intentions “relive” (*nacherleben*) in herself, even the logos which presided over their living deployment would emerge, thus reestablishing the organic connection between “the historical body of phenomenological learning” and “the horizons for future programs” (Tymieniecka, 2002b, 685a). In this way, Tymieniecka supported the growth of the germ of *mathesis universalis* sown in Göttingen’s time. Thus, she originally intended

to follow the progress of the method in order to inquire into its very logos and its yieldings [...] to learn, from the strengths and the weaknesses of the specifically phenomenological rationalities, the nature of the universal rationality that is involved in the emergence and run of our reality that subtends its genesis—the logos reaching beyond it and yet essentially engaged in the constitution of ourselves within our lifeworld and its horizons. (Tymieniecka, 2005, p. xv)

In accepting to use this “twist” (Tymieniecka, 2000, p. 3) of thought on experience, Tymieniecka set herself to follow Husserl as the “beginner of philosophy” (*Anfänger der Philosophie*) (Husserl, 2019, p. 5) who, sceptical of the present cultural condition, increasingly sought to draw from the field of forces from which philosophy itself began. In this perspective, the reference to Husserl is charged with renewed vitality since his theoretical intentions are assumed as intentions from which to start out and carry forward in a theoretical continuation with organic breadth.

In any case, according to the philosophical testament of Husserl, did not precisely that establishment of a living empathetic (Husserl, 1989, pp. 209-210) relationship in the sphere of the “community of monads” (Husserl, 1982, p. 120), represent that source of “reproduction” (*Fortpflanzung*) of philosophizing through the succession of generations (Husserl, 1993, p. 364)? Is not empathetic relationship, according to Husserl, the only one that leaves hope for the passing beyond of “historically degenerated metaphysics” (Husserl, 1982, pp. 139-140) of the 20th century?

In other words, presiding at the succession of phases of the “integral Husserl” is the same logos that is at work in the formation of “the planes of human reality” and that, in the temporal continuity of experience, builds the human being and opens him to ever-new cognitive and practical conquests. It is with exactly this living and

temporally constructive logos that “carries on the great streaming edifice of life” (Tymieniecka, 2000, p. 4) that Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka syntonizes herself, grasping the “thread of the iron necessity of the logos” of self-individualizing life that runs through the various phases of Husserlian thought and determines the reciprocal congruence of them in such a way that each level acts as a “springboard” for inquiry in a more profound direction.

The phenomenological logos that guides the evolutive sequence of the integral Husserl, “at deeper and deeper levels, establishing novel frameworks of legitimation as he went: eidetic, transcendental, the lifeworld, intersubjectivity, bodily participation in the constitutive process etc.” (Tymieniecka, 2002a, 2a), is therefore rooted in the constructivism of life itself, that is, on that organic dynamic that, according to “the interrogative mode of the logos of life”, “proceeds by throwing itself from the already achieved to the presumed” (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 20). Tymieniecka comments:

Thus, man’s elementary condition—the same one which Husserl and Ingarden have attempted in vain to break through to, by stretching the expanse of his intentional bonds as well as by having recourse to prereduced scientific data—appears to be one of blind nature’s elements, and yet at the same time, this element shows itself to have virtualities for individualization at the vital level and, what is more, for a specifically human individualization. These latter virtualities we could label the subliminal spontaneity. (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 28)

Passage to the Phenomenology of Life

A Critique of Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology from the Point of View of Life

The winning move of A.-T. Tymieniecka was to accept the challenge of instituting a more radical phenomenological criticism than the mostly gnoseologic one, inspired by both Cartesian subjectivism and Kantian transcendentalism, followed by Husserl and also by many of his followers, among them Eugen Fink.

This setting based only on “intentional/cognitive rationality” (Tymieniecka, 2005, p. xiii) did not give the expected results: It was unsatisfactory from the point of view of ultimate foundation of phenomenology since it maintains a latent dualism between object and subject, nature and consciousness, life and spirit to the point that Husserl himself believed that “‘the dream’ of the apodictically certain cognitive ground is *ausgeträumt* (=dreamed)” (Tymieniecka, 2005, p. xxxiv).

Husserl in the *Cartesian Meditations* and Frings in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* tried to radicalize the transcendental-subjectivist turn, in order to verify whether, from the sphere of thinking substance, one can reach the transcendental connection with intersubjectivity and extended substance (Cristin, 1994, pp. viii-ix, xv). But their attempt proved unsuccessful. In fact, it is not sufficient to inventory facts or speculate about reasons, because

at its core the project of phenomenology is to reach reality in a way that neither subsumes it within general concepts nor reduces it to elements. It is one attempt to make reality foundational and thought immediate, the better to focus and raise sites, to see reality in the round. (Tymieniecka, 2002a, 1b)

Tymieniecka in no way underestimated the phenomenological-foundational achievements made by Husserl also in relation to the development of an eco-phenomenology. The transcendental subjectivity that he discovered is truly the place of manifestation in general, the place in which things manifest themselves, in which reality itself phenomenalizes and announces itself, as the Italian phenomenologist Vincenzo Costa believes (2007, p. xii); however, it does not satisfies its intrinsic postulates of apodicticity and indeed demands the transition to a “phenomenology of phenomenology” capable of questioning the totalitarian role of constituent intentionality (Tymieniecka, 2005, p. xxxiii) and of showing that the function of logical creation and ontological ciphering does not belong to the spirit of man to the detriment of its organic dimension and in disconnection with it.

For Tymieniecka, it is necessary to overcome what Husserl calls the “paradox of human subjectivity: being a subject for the world and at the same time being an object in the world” (Husserl, 1970, p. 178). Indeed, this impossible situation of a subject that simultaneously constitutes the world and is an objective element of it, makes phenomenology incapable of advancing “to unearth the universal logos and solve the quandary that puzzled Husserl” (Tymieniecka, 2005, p. xv), since the described phenomena lack an adequate logico support which could save and protect them against the persistent Cartesian dualism/Kantian transcendentalism, as an eco-phenomenological perspective would request (Toadvine, 2003, pp. 12-14).

Thus, rather than proceeding with a self-critique of phenomenology upon its very own transcendental/subjective assumptions (Tymieniecka, 2005, p. xv), Tymieniecka set out to achieve an “enlarged inquiry that will advance in virtue of rationalities that are not identical with constitutive/cognitive/intentional transcendentalism”, seconding the tendency present in the late Husserl to break with “the early theoretic-methodological restrictions that his focus on intentionality [had] imposed on him” (Tymieniecka, 2002b, 685a). Therefore, Tymieniecka moved onwards to identify the yet inexpressed virtualities of the lived experience itself in search of a further and more originary talent/disposition of consciousness (*Uranlage des Bewusstsein*) (Tymieniecka, 1971, p. 9).

Drawing upon the results of the most recent phenomenological psychiatry (Ey, 1963; 1966; Blanc, 1966; Lanteri-Laura, 1966),² she showed that constituent transcendental consciousness is not closed in its absoluteness, but engages in a fruitful relationship with forming spontaneity (*gestaltende Spontanität*) of normal and pathological conscious living that develops beyond the system of constitution, for example, in the typical elementary formations of the collective imagination or in states of dreaming or mental confusion (Tymieniecka, 1971, pp. 4-8).

In addition, since developments in the natural sciences have overturned the assertion of corporeality as the “point zero” (*Nullpunkt*) of the transcendental constitution of the life-world, revealing that “the conscious datum” (*das Bewusste*) is rooted in “own-living-natural-body” (*in dem “Leiblich-natürlichen”*), it is possible to ascertain that consciousness possesses a peculiar modality of “being-body” (*Verleibung*), where, through the experiences of the psychic processes in general—their succession, interweaving, and motivation—it enters into contact with the entire spectrum of nature (*Naturgefüge*), in turn understood as autonomous (Tymieniecka, 1971, pp. 2-3).

Precisely consequent to this openness and contextualization of consciousness and reason in the vaster sphere of investigation that is the “universe of human existence in the unity of all”, within “the unity of everything-there-is-alive” (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 6), Tymieniecka found herself immersed in a completely new phenomenical situation: that of “givenness of life”, as

the vast sweep of the significant modalities entering into and interplaying in the vertiginous outburst of unfolding forces in the ongoing gigantic play of the manifestation of beingness and all the fragments, sequences, segments of complete constructive processes subject to disruption by unforeseeable conditions and influences. (Tymieniecka, 2000, p. 3)

² The 1966 volume edited by Henri Ey, *L'incoscient*, gathered the contributions presented at the VI Colloque de Bonneval during the four days around the feast of All Saints in 1960. It featured the best reflections from psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, philosophers, and sociologists from the *Société française de psychanalyse* (SFP), the *Société psychanalytique de Paris* (SPP), and Henri Ey's organodynamic school of psychiatry. Jacques Lacan participated personally with his students Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire. Other participants were: Claude Blanc, René Diatkine, Sven Follin, André Green, Paul Guiraud, Jean Hyppolite, Catherine G. Lairy, George Lanteri-Laura, Serge Lébovici, Henri Lefebvre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Eugène Minkowski, François Perrier, Paul Ricoeur, Conrad Stein and Alphonse de Waelhens. It was a memorable conference on psychopathology. The Acts were recently republished (Patrice Belzeaux Ed., 2024, Perpignan, France: Cercle de Recherche et d'Édition H. Ey Publisher).

No exposition following the traditional rules of organization may convey this flood-like concatenation of processes that is life (Tymieniecka, 2000, p. 5)! This “streams in all directions and will at any point refract its modalities and their apparatus into innumerable rays that flow concurrently onward” and therefore requires the engagement of “all modes of human functioning, [not only the rational-intentional ones but] all human involvement in the orbit of life” (Tymieniecka, 2000, p. 3).

Phenomenology of Life

To access the givenness of life, Tymieniecka sought a new “Archimedean point” from whence everything is able to find its proper place (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 4) and she found it in the creative act of the human being (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 7).

The phenomenology of life, as realized up to this point, had opened a “vision” unlike the transcendental-structural outlook of classic phenomenology, which begins with the human being as demiurge. Instead, in the phenomenology of life, man is both “caught up in the turmoil of a generating progress” (Tymieniecka, 1986, p. 10) and at the same time the bearer of the “creative orchestration of human functioning” (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 384).

Tymieniecka described the new philosophical position reached in terms of geometry: The plane of the human condition intersects perpendicularly that of the phenomenology of life, since it is by proceeding in the description of the vital flow, understood as evolutive genesis of ever more complex and individualized forms, that one reaches the phase in which the human condition is configured.

The human condition is characterized by the presence of original “creative virtualities”, that, starting from themselves, that is, horizontally on their own plane, open the vast kingdom constituted by being’s propensity to undertake projects (Tymieniecka, 1987, p. viii).

Therefore, it is the phenomenological description of the natural vital flow that shows that “all the modes of life’s forces, forms, energetic complexes [...], synergetic virtualities” reach, in constant auto-individualizing flow, the stage of the human condition, and here they are structured according to a new meaningfulness, in the measure to which they pass through the “intergenerative schemas” of that “processor” that is the human person. In other words: The natural vital virtualities, once they flow into the level of the individual living human being, continue their development in a sphere where “the [all-embracing] heart of the meaningfulness of life in general” beats (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 384) and issues them “ciphered” according to the new structure of the meaning of being, always renewing themselves throughout history (Tymieniecka, 2000, pp. 197-205).

Thus, on the one hand, man-source of classic phenomenology is re-situated within the broader ontological field of inquiry of life and therefore arises from the tangle of vital networks as the “vortex of the universal sense”, in which the various orders of those networks meet (Tymieniecka, 1986, p. 11), according to a metaphysical *topos* common to various personalist thinkers, for example Maine de Biran, Charles Renouvier, Maurice Blondel, Emmanuel Mounier, and Max Scheler.

On the other hand, the vital virtualities of nature, that reach the human level of life and run through it, are “processed” in such a way that on the flow of “constructive advance” of life or autopoiesis, in the wording of the two Chilean neurophysiologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (Maturana & Varela, 1980), the “composition” of a more elevated “style” imposes itself (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 384) and becomes an ontopoietic one, which is a style in conformity to the being as “firstness” of the process of creative existential formation that belongs only to the living human being (Tymieniecka, 1996, p. 15).

On the basis of these descriptions of phenomenology of life, Tymieniecka could observe that:

instead of the field of the life-world assumed as the ultimate ground, even by Merleau-Ponty, yet seen as the expansion of the constitutive, objectifying consciousness which is being restricted to the intellectual surface of life, we gain with the “creative context”, a full-fledged field of philosophical inquiry into Nature, life, its specifically human meaningfulness and the sense of human orbit, in which human functioning is not cut off at source points but stretches in all directions and into all dimensions—is not dwarfed as some or other modality, rational or sensuous, but comprises them all. (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 10)

Activating this new intuitive level, directed at the living human being, the carrier of consciousness, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka freed herself from the hobbles that limited Husserlean phenomenology, which, submitting “to the sovereign rule of intentionality”, limited the field of inquiry, concentrating on “a misleading focus: human consciousness”. At the same time, she also took the step out of the dominion of rationalistic despotism, inherited from modernity, but did not lose its achievements, neither from the point of view of consciousness, nor from that of reason. If anything, she integrated both, contextualizing them in the vaster sphere constituted by the “universe of human existence” (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 6) “within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive” (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 4) and radicalising their investigation. In this way she gave rise to an inquiry that can engage the ecological question of metaphysical profundity regarding the “origin of forms of this involvement, that is, of life itself” (Tymieniecka, 1988, p. 6), according to its logos.

From the Ontopoietic Logos of Life, the Principle of Genesis, and the Development of Eco-phenomenology

The focus on life truly enabled Tymieniecka to go beyond in an eco-phenomenological sense the theoretical and practical difficulties that blocked Husserlian phenomenology from manifesting the logoic power that generates and leads the evolution of the entire phenomonic world of living beings, human and non, and their life environments. The discovery that there is one logoic force of self-individualization, the ontopoietic logos of life, that incessantly generated new being at all phenomenal levels, overcoming disjunctions and leading virtualities to realization, indeed, enables the phenomenological description to reach the vision of the entire being as one real living organism, richer than the inanimate sphere of Parmenides and inclusive of the individualities of the evolving entities, which in turn are original and irreplaceable vehicles of the ontopoiesis of life.

Above all, in this outlook, the subject-object dualism, which afflicted Husserl, appears recomposed, since Tymieniecka was able to exhibit a real poietic continuity between the constructivism of natural life and the creative evolution of human life, having discovered, as subtended to all the phenomena of life, an unexpected non-rationalistic logos that is even force, since it is intrinsic to the concrete advancement of life.

The ontopoiesis of life as new philosophical paradigm was announced in the Round Table at the beginning of the Program of The World Phenomenology Institute at the XXth World Congress of Philosophy, in Boston, in August 1998.

Tymieniecka developed from that speech a long and detailed essay, written as a dialogue with such exponents of the so-called “New Science”, as René Thom, Ilya Prigogine, Isabelle Stengers, Alvin Toffler, Stephen Jay Gould, Benoit Mandelbrot (Tymieniecka, 1998, pp. 12-58). She wanted to transmit the idea that “the notion of the ontopoiesis of life, situated within the philosophy of life, its center and its nerve, [...] promises to fulfill the expectation of a new intellectual paradigm” (Tymieniecka, 1998, p. 15), for facing the imminent problems of the ecological crisis, given its metaphysical relevance in an ecological sense.

Taking her lead from the creative phase of phenomenology, which she herself had initiated, and following the creative act of the human being in its constructive thread, Tymieniecka descended to the plane from which the constructive design of self-individualization in beingness takes off. This is the plane of the logos of life, of the constructive logos that carries the entirety of the givenness discovered on the track of impetus and equipoise; it harnesses the universal becoming into the genesis of self-individualizing beingness as it both participates in the universal flux of life within the world, constituting it, and simultaneously makes it present to itself in innumerable perspectives. Here, at the onto-poietic level, the logos of phenomenological “interrogation” as logos of life, losing nothing of its postulated cognitive rigor, does not need any further clarification: It reposes in itself as the ultimate that is absolute in need of no further “reduction”, being the yield of the very last reduction (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. xxxviii). “In logos omnia” concludes Tymieniecka (Tymieniecka, 2009, pp. xxiv-xxvi).

At this point, the ecological maturation of the phenomenology of life is doubtless: We are beyond the situation noted by David Wood, the presence of both a “phenomenological ecology” and a corresponding “ecological phenomenology” (Wood, 2001). In fact, the onto-poiesis of life is the suitable principle for guaranteeing the genesis and development of an integral and apodictic phenomenology of the eco-sphere. But a metaphysical problem arose and Tymieniecka asked herself: “Does this logos stop with the timing of life?” (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 21) Will “the driving force of the logos” that unfolds life in its complete self-individualizing dynamic, be able to conduct it from “the incipient instance of originating life in its self-individualizing process” all the way to “the subsequent striving toward the abyss of the spirit”? (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 19)

The question was crucial because if the onto-poietic logos of life were qualified to found only the natural dimension and could not bring itself beyond the temporal and chronological constructivism of nature, in the kairic dimension of the freedom of spirit to supernatural eternity, which is specific to the human condition, its non-dualistic eco-metaphysical value would be in vain. For this reason, Tymieniecka turned her attention once again to the phenomenology of life and the integral onto-poietic dynamic that “the very creative act of the human being itself” reveals in the degree to which it “brings to the sense-giving apparatus of living being the specifically human virtualities that fashion sensorial, emotional, even pre-experiential material into human constitutive-conscious life-significance” (Tymieniecka, 2005, p. xxxvi).

She thus focused on the fact that the logos that is intrinsic to life has manifested itself as “a primogenital force striving without end, surging in its impetus and seeking equipoise”: It promotes “the constructive prompting” that determines “the progress of life” and “it prepares its own means/organs for its own advance” (Tymieniecka, 2009, p. 33). This advance means the fulfillment of constructive steps toward transformations, that is: “step by step unfolding projects of progressive conversion of constructive forces into new knots of sense” (Tymieniecka, 2009, p. 33). Therefore, “the crucial factum of life” has not appeared without reason, “brought [...] out of ‘nowhere’”; on the contrary, the “logoic force of life has its purpose”—just like Friedrich Schelling’s living nature, that embodies the “scheme of freedom” (Schelling, 1856, p. 236)—and that purpose reveals itself to be achieved in an onto-poietic way inasmuch as it expresses itself “in preparing scrupulously in a long progression the constructive route of individualizing life so that *Imaginatio Creatrix* emerges as an autonomous modality of force with its own motor, the human will” (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 20). Crowning its development, the force of the logos of life, with the will as new modality of force, finds itself able to advance from the vital/onto-poietic round of significance into two new dominions of sense: that of the creative/spiritual and that of the sacred (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 20).

In the terms of traditional ontology, this means that “‘substances’ undergo a ‘transubstantial’ change” and also that “the inner modality of the logoc force undergoes an essential transmutation”. Therefore, “life, [...] as a manifestation of the ontopoietic process [...] is far from a wild Heraclitean flux, for it articulates itself”. In addition and first of all, “[life] ‘times’ itself” (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 20), because time reveals itself as “the main artery through which life’s pulsating propensities flow, articulating themselves, intergenerating” (Tymieniecka, 1997, p. 4).

Therefore, the ontopoietic logos of life is characterized in an entirely original way compared to any other previously theorized: In fact, it is metamorphic, inasmuch as, while maintaining constant its being and its essential function, it varies its own form to remain immanent to the vectors in which it expresses itself each time, for example the laws of physics, animal instinct, or creative imagination. For this reason, the ontopoietic logos of life is endowed with a sentient nature; it is through the sentience of the logos which permeates all the functional moves of the unfolding life and in which the constructive designs are processed, that a continuity is maintained throughout (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 31).

In such a metamorphic sentient capacity that intrinsically qualifies the ontopoietic logos of life, there is the possibility for “the new [eco-]metaphysical panorama” (Tymieniecka, 2009, p. xxv), through which we can transcend “the timeless pattern of surrender to nature” and go beyond “the equipoise established through millennia of life between nature and human beings and between the gifts of nature and their use by living beings” (Tymieniecka, 2000, p. 99) also establishing new nexuses between time as Chronos and Kairos (Tymieniecka, 1997, p. 4). The fulcrum of this metamorphosis is that “unique phase of evolutive transmutation” in which the “mature” phase of the platform of life manifests an extraordinary character and gives rise to the Human Condition within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 31). The essential differentiation of the human condition amid the unity of life is “a watershed event, essentially a transformation of the significance of life”: It brings with itself the “enigmatic” surging of *Imaginatio Creatrix* in the middle of ontopoietic sequence, surging freely as it floats above the inner working of nature (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 31).

Here we reach—observes Tymieniecka—the most surprising turn of logos of life, because this great shift was being prepared by the logos’ constructive steps, starting at the very beginning of self-individualizing of life, but it produces a “countervailing move”, that “brings about a complete conversion of its hold on life’s individualization and opens the entire horizon of freedom” (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 32).

Imaginatio Creatrix, rooted within the functioning of Nature-Life and yet an autonomous sense giver, introduces three new sense giving factors: the intellective sense, the aesthetic sense, and the moral sense. The moral sense lies at the core of the metamorphosis of the life situation from vital existence into the advent of Human Condition (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 33): “Indeed—Tymieniecka exclaimed—through the moral and entirely freely chosen work of the conscience, the self-enclosed ontopoietic course may be undone and remolded in a free redeeming course!” (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 60).

The logos of life has led us to a borderline place between the ontopoietic logos of life and logos’ sacral turn toward territory that is beyond the reach of the logos of the vital individualization of beingness (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 60). It is here that the Great Metamorphosis takes place: “Ontopoiesis carries its own necessities and opens to the transformative advance of the Great Metamorphosis that completes life’s meaning in a transition from temporal life to a-temporality, or better, hyper-temporality” (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 67).

Conclusion

Through this *excursus* upon the thought of A.-T. Tymieniecka, highlighting the passages that enabled her to trace the genesis and development of eco-phenomenology, we have witnessed the dynamic re-composition not only of the subject-object dualism, but also of many of the disconnections inherited from Modernity—such as the oppositions of nature/consciousness, life/spirit, being/becoming, nature/supernature, human being/other-living-beings, and body/mind—all of which impede maturation of the ecological vision needed to face the current ecological crisis.

We have encountered descriptive passages of a “first philosophy” where the entirety of being is represented/theorized through the “Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life” (Tymieniecka, 2009, p. iv) as an ecological phenomenon in march toward its fulfilment.

However, the phenomenology of the ontopoiesis of life must face a final pragmatic test in order to not want to be one of the beautiful theories that do not impact life. In November 2006, closing her speech on “The development in question” at the international conference organized by Francesco Totaro of the University of Macerata in Falconara Marittima, Italy, Tymieniecka herself underwent the test, asking herself “how to master the routes of the human development within the individual as well as within its interactive world, society, culture while navigating upon the stormy sea between and among conflicting forces without a compass” (Tymieniecka, 2007, p. 16).

The answer was that the delineation of a new ontopoietic groundwork for human development has in itself clearly definable consequences of orientation.

What comes to light right away is the double anthropological effect that derives from the ontopoietic conception of life, by which man is simultaneously more dependent on life and more capable of dominating it. On the one hand, we have witnessed the emergence of the creative human condition from the unfolding of the self-individualizing logos of natural life, which remains the boundary of continual exchange that conditions man, who draws material and moral sustenance from his environment. But on the other hand, it has become evident that all the possibilities for empowerment of life are placed in man and his creativity.

One can draw a direct proportion between man’s growth in humanity and the development of the vitality of society and the cosmos. In other words, until now human enhancement was principally entrusted to the creative acts of human beings, understood as innovation acts at the service of the human will to power. Instead, now the eco-phenomenology of the ontopoiesis of life proposes the new scenario of a growth-together for humans, living beings, and their common environment.

In effect this is not merely a proposal, since it describes the only condition of survival for every living being and its world!

To conclude, in Tymieniecka’s words:

in order to control, in some way, the flux of human development for its existential advantage, human being has to assume a special frame of mind. Keeping in sight the ontopoietic groundwork sketched above, human calculation and balancing out of life’s conditions should be handled according to it with measure, proportion and temperance. (Tymieniecka, 2007, pp. 15-16)

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