

# SELF IN THE PATH(O)S OF THE NEW ENLIGHTENMENT: TOWARDS A NEW CLINICAL THEORY

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**Abstract:** Starting from the New Enlightenment, announced by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka to be emerging in the post-postmodern era, a conflict is possible to manifest between the positive spirit in the name and the awareness of today's societal and cultural problems. The paper focuses to resolving this conflict. The idea of New Enlightenment comes out of Tymieniecka's phenomenological analysis of the logocentric networks of life with identification of logocentric unification of reason and intuition, and the insight into the ontological self-poiesis of life, i.e. onto-poiesis. Scientific progress takes place due to the onto-poietic self-disclosure of life. Understanding the onto-poiesis refocuses attention from trauma to the growing loci of the self, and creates an emergent alternative to existential pessimism of postmodern therapies. The paper examines healing aspects of onto-poietic direct intuition that mediate living engagement with the real. Human subject is not thrown into existence against the will, but is integrated into the flow of life and possesses self-reflective freedom of choice. This reframing of existential yearning invokes new clinical theory. The expanded interpretation of self and other, of health and disease calls for transformation of the mind towards the rise of onto-poietic intuition and direct perception of logocentric onto-poiesis.

**Keywords:** Tymieniecka, phenomenology, self, postmodernism, clinical theory

Considering the New Enlightenment, announced by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka to be emerging in the post-postmodern era, one faces a conflict between the positive spirit in the name and the awareness of today's societal and cultural problems.<sup>1</sup> Amidst cultural choices related

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, at the 2010 Congress of the World Phenomenology Institute in Bergen, Carmen Cozma asked Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka exactly the same question: Given that there is so much "evil" (an endless list of cultural, economic, humanitarian and environmental problems), how can there be a New Enlightenment? Professor Tymieniecka's answer was that there is New Enlightenment due to new knowledge.

to global survival, an idea that there is “enlightenment” going on sounds quite paradoxical. According to Tymieniecka, the key to her view is an understanding that increase of knowledge is central to post-post-modernity. The knowledge changes not only qualitatively, but also in its properties. The phenomenology of life is itself a result of this change in knowledge, a part of this process, and a catalyst of it. With this hermeneutics in mind, I will examine the nature of this new knowledge, and further, the potential cultural impact of Tymieniecka’s thought with regard to societal healing systems. Among the latter, psychology in particular from its inception has continually taken its conceptual templates from philosophy. I propose that the phenomenology of life can influence psychological clinical theory towards building a more effective and less iatrogenic perspective.

#### THE ENDANGERED SELF

The ideas of New Enlightenment are at a radical contrast with the gloom of postmodernism.<sup>2</sup> Postmodern self is an endangered self; the human species is an endangered species. Postmodernism came on the heels of unprecedented catastrophes, and its mentality is that of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>3</sup> According to clinical theory, PTSD takes place after a physical or psychological trauma, when one suffers a partial disintegration of their sense of identity and an erratic reactivity, paradoxically combined with emotional numbness. In philosophy, the idea of self-fragmentation was introduced by Hegel; postmodern philosophies describe the current fragmentation and shattering of the self.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> At the Fourth International Conference on Phenomenology, “Phenomenological Paths in Post-Modernity. A Comparison with Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka’s Phenomenology of Life”, at the Pontifical University “Antoniano” in Rome, January 13-15, 2011, G. Basti introduced a distinction between nihilistic and constructivist versions of postmodernism. As distinct from either of these, and from postmodernism as a philosophy, the present paper refers to postmodernism as a historical period.

<sup>3</sup> PTSD is a relatively new diagnostic category; it was introduced into psychology in 1980s, though the clinical picture of PTSD can be traced back to World War I. The prevalence of PTSD has grown so rapidly in the last few years that there is a major online mental health database completely dedicated to it.

<sup>4</sup> Richard D. Chessick (2008). “The Relevance of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit to the Process of Contemporary Psychoanalysis,” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalytic and Dynamic Psychiatry* 36; Richard D. Chessick (2010). “The Rise and Fall of the Autochthonous Self: from Italian Renaissance Art and

Culture and self co-constitute one another.<sup>5</sup> Each new period in history brings the new psychological climate, new artistic and literary creations, new attainments of science, new structures of the economy, and a new formation of the self. The dominant philosophies of the era and the self are interconnected in mutually defining constitutive cycles. The postmodern self is unable to find a congruency of meaning, and is prone to irrationality, self-nihilism, mechanistic, quasitechnical vocabulary, and a sense of emptiness and loss of identity and center.<sup>6</sup> This configuration of the self has come along with the wars and other traumas of the twentieth century; one can trace its roots back to the unprecedented scope of these cultural catastrophes. Correspondingly, philosophy has acquired “relativistic, discriminatory, fragmentary orientations, [whereby it] refuses principles, reasons, causes—in short, integration”<sup>7</sup>. In higher education, the postmodern outlook manifests in the heavy use of cliché neologizing and in never-ending analysis of structure at the expense of content, making everything equal to everything else. In the area of theology, it has manifested in the importation of Eastern religions that, by positing the foundational ontological emptiness of the self, justify its empirically lived emptiness.

While philosophy and religions reflect the self and articulate its suffering, the healing systems also match the configuration of the self. Therefore, are unable to change, in a radical way, the self; the self and the healing system are a fixed tandem within a given era, they are custom tailored to one another and reproduce the structure of the self. The contemporary healing systems, psychology and medicine, preserve the self’s fragmented configuration by making the self more adapted to

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Shakespeare to Heidegger, Lacan, and Intersubjectivism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry* 38.

<sup>5</sup> For more on relativism in psychology, see: Richard Shweder (1991). *Thinking through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Michael Cole (1996). *Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline* Cambridge: Belknap Press. For more on constructivism, see: Kenneth Gergen (1999). *An Invitation to Social Construction*. London: Sage. For more on cultural formations of the self, see: Philip Cushman (1995). *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the endangered self, see: Richard K. Fenn, and Donald Capps, eds. (1992). *The Endangered Self*. Princeton: Center for Religion, Self and Society.

<sup>7</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2009). *The Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life*. Book 1: *The Case of God in the New Enlightenment*. Dordrecht: Springer, p.56.

living but leaving its fragmentation intact.<sup>8</sup> With regard to the fragmented self, such situation is a perpetuation of suffering. If the postmodern self is indeed the traumatized self of PTSD, the mere rationalization or spiritualization of the situation is not radical enough to bring healing.

Thinkers such as Levinas and Lacan go so far as to suggest that existence *per se* is traumatic. Psychology maintains that the trauma of birth defines one's life.<sup>9</sup> However, is trauma indeed an inherent component of living, or is this perspective a result of the co-constitution of culture and self, and therefore is valid only in the particular cultural context? If trauma is not normative to human existence, there is a chance that it can be altogether avoided, or at least that the probability of its occurrence can be significantly lessened.

Tymieniecka maintains a completely different perspective: she does not focus on the fragmentation of the self, and does not attribute such a central role to existential trauma. To her, the central category is life, where one's beingness is a particularization of life's unfolding dynamics. This terminology is a key one. The word she uses for one's actuality is not "existence" but "beingness"; the latter is not a static category, but a process category.<sup>10</sup> As a process category, it is connected with the category of time. The Tymienieckan timing of life is an expression of its logico-ontopoiesis, which is different from the timing with which a mind in the natural state categorizes existence. As Haney describes it: "Tymieniecka's theory of time moves beyond Paul Ricoeur's notion that time is a proto-constitution. Rather, because life

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<sup>8</sup> For examples of situations where medicine functions as a reflection of the cultural zeitgeist, see: Grant Gillett (2006). "Medical science, culture, and truth," *Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine* 1. Retrieved from <http://www.peh-med.com/content/1/1/13>; Grant Gillett (1995). "Virtue and truth in clinical science," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 20.

<sup>9</sup> For more on existential trauma, see: Michael Newman (2000). "Sensibility, Trauma and the Trace: Levinas from Phenomenology to the Immemorial," in *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God*, ed. Jeffrey Bloechl. Fordham University Press; Sean Homer (2005). *Jacques Lacan*. New York: Routledge. For more in psychology on the trauma of birth, see: John Rowan (1996). "The Trauma of Birth," *Primal Renaissance: The Journal of Primal Psychology* 2, accessed March 2, 2012, [http://www.primalspirit.com/pr2\\_1rowan\\_traumabirth.htm](http://www.primalspirit.com/pr2_1rowan_traumabirth.htm).

<sup>10</sup> Multiple examples can be found in: Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2009), *op.cit.*

times itself, constitution of worlds and others is an opportunity for the creativity that fulfills the promise of the human condition”.<sup>11</sup>

This understanding of time reformulates the whole mental continuum of trauma-related conceptualization. Phenomenologically, trauma is a distortion of the constitution of time in one’s mind.<sup>12</sup> As a mental event, i.e. as a phenomenological moment, Tymieniecka’s Phenomenology of Life<sup>13</sup> pertains to a different phenomenological horizon than the regular time-constitution. In the horizon of Phenomenology of Life, there is logocentric ontopoiesis; this horizon is not disrupted by trauma. On the contrary, every event in this horizon is an expression of—and a possibility of—the self-creation of life. Therefore, Tymieniecka focuses her philosophical intuition on the flow of time within which the inner workings of the Logos of Life constantly decipher the scaffold of the self.<sup>14</sup>

## SCIENCE

By the same token, the categorical apparatus of the Phenomenology of Life is different from that of all preceding philosophies. In contrast to the dichotomizing reason of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, reason in Tymieniecka’s philosophy is discriminating yet unifying. Her philosophical intuition seizes upon all expressions of life, capturing expanses as far-reaching as global development and fields of knowledge as condensed as the immediate givenness of one’s interiority. In this inward-outward expanse of life, science itself is reinterpreted as a phenomenon positioned within unfolding life, as a part of life. Against previous philosophies where science is a derivative of reason, and is considered in opposition to nature, such an idea is in itself a developmental novum in the history of thought. Consequently, the Phenomenology of Life interacts with the reader’s consciousness in a manner different from, for instance, philosophy of mind. Instead of

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<sup>11</sup> Kathleen Haney (2007). “The Ontopoietic Timing of Life Versus the Kairic Unfolding of the Trans-Natural Destiny,” in *Timing and Temporality in Islamic Philosophy and Phenomenology of Life. Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology in Dialogue, Book 3*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Dordrecht: Springer, p.285.

<sup>12</sup> Wendy O’Brien (2007). “Telling Time: Literature, Temporality and Trauma,” in vol. 86 of *Analecta Husserliana*, edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Dordrecht: Springer.

<sup>13</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2009), *op.cit.*

<sup>14</sup> “Ciphering” is Tymieniecka’s term, which she uses with regard to the expression of Logos in life. For a description, see: Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2009), *op.cit.*

internalizing a cognitive schema that explains the experience of living, the reader has to follow the direct intuition of the philosopher to join in her apperception of things. One has to come face to face with the same manner of things, has to confront directly the living unfolding networks of life, within the self as well as outside of it. Reading Phenomenology of Life turns into an act of intimacy with logioic self-articulation. When science makes discoveries, it accomplishes the same thing; that is, science taps into acts of logioic self-disclosure. Paradigm-shaping discoveries, as well as the Tymieniecka reappraisal and reformulation of the whole philosophical discourse, could not occur without a logioic imperative behind them.

In contrast with Tymieniecka's refocusing on the healthy opportunities of consciousness, postmodern approaches use deconstruction as their means of healing. The trauma of the self must be deconstructed. As distinct from a purely philosophical procedure, and with regard to the living self, deconstruction means discarding the wounded identity and stripping the self of all meanings and constitutive influences that enabled the trauma. Taken to its extreme in so-called "nondual" spiritual New Age groups, deconstruction reduces identity to a pure, formless residue of subjectivity, without any definition or quality. The tenets of such groups include statements such as "Nothing ever happened," and "You are whole and complete, never wounded." Neo-Vedanta and other Western misinterpretations of Buddhism posit that the True Self is empty of any meaning; and unless this is recognized, one is condemned to unhappiness.

Such use of deconstruction in lieu of healing cannot negate the fact that the cultural horizon is overshadowed by ecological disasters and unstoppable military conflicts, especially in the regions most cherished by historians and spiritual seekers alike. These conflicts often lead to the destruction of the precious cultural legacy essential for sustaining the human species (for example, the looting of the Baghdad museum or the attempts to sell off the Persepolis Tablets). The irreparable loss of biological, cultural and linguistic diversity due to the abuses of globalization completes this dark picture. The self remains endangered. So, what sustains Tymieniecka's radical optimism, and is it possible that the future will not bring the extinction of the human species?<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> During my presentation at the Conference "Phenomenological Paths in Post-Modernity. A Comparison with Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's Phenomenology of

Psychological theories claim that trauma leads to post-traumatic growth, in which the shattering and removal of the calloused old structures initiates the reconstitution of the fragmented self.<sup>16</sup> In postmodernism, a human community or the culture at large provide resources for this reconstitution. What is left out in that model is that there is no community or culture left untouched, but that malfunctioning communities and cultures are part of the problem. Two principles in the Phenomenology of Life, the logos of life and the ontopoiesis of life, propose a different mode of healing, which can be considered as an alternative to post-traumatic reconstitution.

### THE LOGOS

In contrast with postmodernism's focus on the fragmentation of the self, the insight into unity-of-all-there-is-alive in Tymieniecka's philosophy brings to visibility essences more fundamental to the present epoch than even community or culture. Such insights require preliminary work: the intuitive discernment of the New Enlightenment amidst the ashes of "Ground Zero" happens after a monumental epoché that suspends all preceding Western philosophical perspectives and prepares the clearing for the discernment of the Logos of Life. In this clearing, the grasping of the realities of life is a matter of direct intuition. Tymieniecka says: "... the givenness of life, which in its manifestation extends over multiple spheres of significance, [can not] be brought adequately to disclosure and clarified in understanding by any one procedure in philosophical enquiry...No one single so-called *philosophical method* or approach applies to the numerous modalities of the real..."<sup>17</sup>

The wholeness of life, given in the presentive intuition in the phenomenal field of life, serves as a matrix out of which the philosopher distills its structural patterns, which are the foundational designs of life. Such is the logos of life, an intelligent design of all things, and intelligence itself. This reason of all things is, of course, the

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Life", at the Pontifical University "Antonianum" in Rome, January 13-15, 2011, Daniela Verducci suggested that I use the term "realism" instead of "optimism". I welcome her suggestion, but present the original version of this paper here.

<sup>16</sup> For more on trauma and post-traumatic growth, see: Kathleen Wall and Olga Louchakova (2002). "Evolution of Consciousness in Responses to Terrorist Attacks: Towards a Transpersonal Theory of Cultural Transformation," *The Humanistic Psychologist* 30.

<sup>17</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2000). *Logos and Life*. Book 4: *Impetus and Equipose in the Life-Strategies of Reason*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, p.3.

specific kind of reason. With regard to the world, it is the measure and proportion of all things, and with regard to the self, it is an all-encompassing intelligence, a combined faculty of logic, insight, direct intuition of phenomenological nature, and awareness-sentience. This is a primordial, primeval intelligence, an ontological source of all variations of knowledge pertaining to life. The cognitive strategy behind discovery of the Logos is beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to emphasize here that it is not inferred, deduced or otherwise created by logic, but it is directly intuited within a phenomenological horizon of life.<sup>18</sup> The inner workings of the logos can be discovered by philosophizing mind by entering into its very own logocic manifestation first, then into the circuits of bios, zoe, cosmos progressively/regressively encircling it; and lastly into the inner workings of the primeval logos, dynamic, self-constitutive and self-directed...on entering the very workings of the Logos through creative acts that participate in them, we discover the very language of the Logos in action along with the new set of semantic categories that it reveals.<sup>19</sup>

Bergson, a strong influence in the formation of Tymieniecka's thought, argues against Levi-Bruhl's idea of "primitive mentality" that in terms of biological evolution of homo sapience, there is no evidence of the evolutionary changes of the mind. The changes are only situational or cultural, i.e. structural changes.<sup>20</sup> Biology of human species remains the same throughout history. Assuming that the biological capabilities of the brain and the structure of human intelligence are at least in correlation,<sup>21</sup> the foundational change in intelligence should be accompanied by a foundational change of the brain – and there is no evidence of such. Then, all forms of intelligence, all of its multiple aspects, are within the potential of the human brain, and are actualized as the different cultural and social conditions are brought along, in hermeneutic mutually interpretive

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<sup>18</sup> Olga Louchakova-Schwartz (2011). "Intuition of Life in Tymieniecka's Phenomenology with a Reference to Intuition of Sat in Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedanta," *Culture & Philosophy: A Journal for Phenomenological Inquiry*.

<sup>19</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2000), *op.cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Henry Bergson (1935/1964). *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 103-104.

<sup>21</sup> Nancey Murphy (1999). "Supervenience and Downward Efficacy of the Mental: A Nonreductive Physicalist Account of Human Action," in *Neuroscience and the Person. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, ed. Robert J. Russell et al. Berkeley: Center for Theology and Natural Science.



cycles. If this is so, the new cultural prepare the grounds for the actualization of the new intelligence.

Related to this new intelligence are the two notable shifts in the cultural canvas - scientific discoveries and the emergence of phenomenology as a cultural force. While the increase of scientific knowledge opens the new horizons of life, the higher forms of intuition mediate the phenomenological understanding in different disciplines. This is the manifestation of a new reason that is unifying, imaginative and creative, in contrast to the logical and analytic reason of the first Enlightenment. This intelligence is shifting our attention to the systemic aspects of things in their development and in relation to each other and to the whole. The new reason is discovered to be inseparable from life, which leads Tymieniecka to formulate a new ontology where the inherent unity of knowing and being(ness) replaces their false dichotomy. This perspective counteracts the postmodern loss of meaning not through new meaning-making, but rather through the *intuitive discernment* of the intrinsic intelligence-sentience, which is the precursor of all meaning. It also offsets the tendency of the natural mind to turn life processes into a set of mental objects. It is notable that the unconscious habit of mental objectification can lead to errors of misattribution, such as the abovementioned understanding of trauma as a necessary component of existence. In the framework of the Phenomenology of Life, objectification is only one of many available mental modes, and, therefore, is capable of providing only a partial view of things.<sup>22</sup>

Scientific knowledge also contributes to this change of intelligence. Besides broadening of our conceptualization of life, science increases the resolution in perception of life by zooming into the processes, which remain hidden from naïve or commonsense knowledge. As it has been for her predecessors in phenomenology of life, Bergson and Leibniz, the engagement of scientific data is implicit in Tymieniecka's entire philosophical practice. The discoveries of life sciences culminated around the advent of the twenty-first century.

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<sup>22</sup> Significantly, Tymieniecka engages direct intuition in tandem with the unifying intelligence, in a manner similar to the joint faculties of *shuhud* ('enlightened intellect', Arabic) and *dhawq* ('taste', a capacity of the heart that provides an intuitive grasp of things, Arabic) necessary for the apprehension of the Real in Islamic philosophy. See: Seyed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1990). *The Intuition of Existence*. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, p. 29.

Since at that time philosophy was still drawing its main inspiration from cultural and political changes, life sciences were more on the margin of the philosophical horizon, and only a few philosophers, including Tymieniecka, have commented on the shift.<sup>23</sup> The rise of molecular biology and biochemistry, Borlaug's Green Revolution in agricultural science and advances in RNA-based biotechnology introduced a different, expanded, detailed, and at times completely novel view of what life is.<sup>24</sup> This quiet Big Bang in biology is of special importance for Tymieniecka's new critique of reason, by proving living examples of the principles and tendencies that she articulates.

The logico imperative induces the New Enlightenment shift in knowledge, Tymieniecka's philosophy being a part of it. As the cultural climate is shifting, new processes are taking place inside the self. Associated with these new processes is a shift in the philosophical paradigm towards phenomenology in general, including an acknowledgement of the breadth of human experience beyond the margins of emptiness and trauma. Phenomenological studies demonstrate that, in the depth of our being, there exists a constitutive prereflective experience of a religious nature, a God without an idea of God. Ales Bello says: "Consciousness is immediately aware of the fact that there is a transcendent, absolute being; this is inscribed in consciousness itself. Consciousness knows this and this particular consciousness is religious insofar as the awareness is an awareness of the presence of God, which is simultaneously not reducible to consciousness itself. God's self-presenting as 'Other' is based on the recognition of His presence-absence".<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> I am not referring here to the Philosophy of Science *per se*, which, in the famous (though perhaps apocryphal) words of physicist Richard Feynman, is "as useful to scientists as ornithology is to birds", but to philosophical reflection on the discoveries of biology. The relevant process is not going from philosophy to science, but going in the opposite direction: The content of scientific discoveries informs philosophical enquiry.

<sup>24</sup> I do not mean to say that all of these discoveries necessarily serve the betterment of human life; for example, discoveries related to genetic engineering can be quite ambiguous, if not dangerous. (This has also been the case with discoveries in nuclear physics.) My emphasis here is on the increase in knowledge, and the change in its quality, not on its ethical ramifications.

<sup>25</sup> Angela Ales Bello (2009). "The Divine in Husserl and Other Explorations," in vol. 98 of *Analecta Husserliana*, edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Dordrecht: Springer, p. 66.

In the articulation of this presuppositionless, pre-predicative and prereflective religious experience, the metaphysical perspectives of antiquity find their revival and reification within the nontheistic stance of the Age of Reason. The new ontologies underway, this constitutive domain is yet another source of endogenous, ontogenetic healing for the self.

### THE ONTOPOIESIS

Combined with the postmodern opening of the self into larger cross-cultural contexts, this inside-out ontogenetic positing of a new self is complemented by an outside-in-directed reconstitution.<sup>26</sup> As phenomenology has penetrated into the domain of psychotherapy, both the cultural reconstitution, and the inside-out endogenous reconstitution have been utilized in therapeutic strategies such as growth-centered or positive psychologies. Working from Tymieniecka's notion of ontopoiesis, one can speculate that the healing of the self is a necessary part of ontogenesis, or the ontopoiesis of the self.

Ontopoiesis is a term introduced by Tymieniecka, and it denotes the self-creative activity by which the Logos of Life actualizes its potentialities. Ontopoiesis expresses itself in the emergence of intelligible structures in life, along with a progressive increase in freedom of will and action, the emergence of the self-reflective condition of the imagination, ethics, and spiritual experience. Thus, the creative ordering of life transcends the chaos of "barbary" (barbarism).<sup>27</sup> In Tymieniecka's vision, the various phenomenological conditions and configurations of the self should be understood not as isolated states but as developmental loci within the flow of individualizing life.<sup>28</sup> The self is both a mode of Logos and one of its

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<sup>26</sup> For more on the ontogenetic, ontopoietic reconstitution of the self, see: Olga Louchakova (2007). "Ontopoiesis and Spiritual Emergence: Bridging Tymieniecka's Phenomenology of Life and Transpersonal Psychology," in vol. 94 of *Analecta Husserliana*, edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Dordrecht: Springer.

<sup>27</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2009), *op.cit.*, p. xxi. Tymieniecka originally adopted this term from Henry.

<sup>28</sup> For more on the phenomenology of the egological and nonegological self, see: Dan Zahavi (2005). *Subjectivity and Selfhood*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Independently, I found similar phenomenological configurations of the self in interview-based research; see: Olga Louchakova (2006). "Ontopoiesis and the Self: Phenomenological Investigations of Egological and Non-Egological Condition," *Consciousness Research Abstracts* 238.

ontopoietic stations. The human condition, i.e., the self with all of its conscious, unconscious, intrasubjective, and intersubjective modes, is the ultimate instance of Life's individuation. Moreover, Tymieniecka's understanding of the self's emergent and interactive faculties, both in the sphere of intellectual rationality and in the spheres of the vital and the biological order of life, contributes to this view of life's individuation. Life is capable of complete self-transcendence in the creation of a novum. For the human condition, the novum consists in the actualization of the self-reflective capacity of imagination and action, and in the conscious and synthetic articulation of the workings of the Logos. The soul "...works on and with all virtualities as a lens of life, offering the ground for their encounter and opening the space where it can intervene in those virtualities and transform them in particular ways".<sup>29</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the conceptualization of the self as a process is not unique to the Phenomenology of Life. For example, a process orientation in the interpretation of the self (as opposed to the object-like "I am" of Descartes) is found in Heidegger, or, earlier, in Hegel. Similarly, Western phenomenology in general, cultural psychology, psychological systems theory, and constructivism all acknowledge systemic influences in the constitution of the self. Lacan takes it even further and completely decentralizes the self into the constitutive influences of language and society. However, none of these approaches interpret the self as an integral part of the whole design of life, as life's locus of individuation in its invariable place in the world, nor apprehend its importance with regard to the workings of the universal reason.

It appears that the self, in Tymieniecka's philosophy, is not really bound by the dichotomies that haunt it in the thought of previous philosophers. Firstly, the natural, the vital and the human orders of life all contribute to the formation of the human self, so these levels of constitution do not function in isolation, but rather, are in harmonious and mutually reciprocal relations.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, the emergence of the different orders of life is a dictum of Logos, and therefore, there is no contradiction between materiality and ideality; they contribute in harmony to the transnatural destiny of the soul.

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<sup>29</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2009), *op.cit.*, p.224.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

In Tymieniecka's perspective, there is no chiasm between the biological, instinctual life of the body and the workings of the mind and spirit. The latter emerge as the rationalities of Logos and the virtualities of life, orchestrated by the Logos of Life. Life and its Logos are not two separate realities; they are separate only as categories in philosophical articulation. Life, in Tymieniecka's thought, does not have a metaphysical substratum other than itself. On the contrary, since life is pervaded by sentience, it is capable of giving rise to potentialities that constantly transcend the preceding orders of beingness.

Discoveries in biology support this understanding of life by presenting the most intimate processes within all orders of life. The sciences are expanding the spectrum of observations beyond the scale of time and space inherent to the natural human condition. Therefore, the human condition itself is expanding and deepening as it incorporates knowledge of new levels, manifestations and domains of life (for example, life elsewhere in the cosmos). As the human presence embraces these new areas of knowledge, the laws and tendencies that govern life become more available for realization and articulation. The whole perceptual field is growing and changing its quality by engaging the new virtualities in the self-reproduction of life. Thus the pathos of the natural philosophical vision, akin to that of the ancient Greeks, is now being reengaged phenomenologically, on a larger scale and with a much deeper presence.

If this is so, it must be because the logoc flow of life intends deeper and deeper levels of self-disclosure, and that therefore, philosophy will at last be able to bear fruit with philosophical truths that are fulfilling. With the self-disclosure of life engaged, philosophical enquiry no longer needs to depend on pure reason, nor on the senses nor even constitutional analysis. Rather, one can access the direct-intuition-based observation and description of phenomena that are made clear by life itself. Russian Cosmism is one instance of such a shift in philosophizing; Varela's neurophenomenology is another one. From this point of view, as life speaks for itself in increasing self-disclosure, the philosopher's job is to sum up the possibilities contained in that revelation.

Once articulated, this disclosure becomes a framework for the analysis of the emergent human condition, with the principle of individuation operating on each of the many levels of life. Individuation entelechially aligns all stages of Logos with the

developing principle of inwardness that culminates in the human condition. This is reflected in newly emerging scientific disciplines such as psychoneuroimmunology and cognitive science. The Phenomenology of Life's interpretation of the self is being validated in other modes of enquiry, even modes as remote to philosophical enquiry as those of the natural sciences.

The vision of the human condition in Tymieniecka's philosophy emerges through her dialogical interrogation of the Logos of Life, via the dialectics of logoc self-disclosure and the human articulation thereof. The sciences, with their *sui generis* current of discoveries, are essential in this vision—as well as essential to its development. The onto-poietic impetus of Logos is behind both those discoveries and the onto-poietic healing of the self. By comparison with Freud's understanding of human beings as primarily driven by *eros* and death (and, in his latter works, violence), the conscious employment of such an onto-poietic impetus in psychotherapy brings a completely new humanistic flavor to the process of healing. This has already been tried in growth-oriented therapies, which appear to be aligned with the true order of things. Beginning with the differentiation of a single cell, and eventually reaching the novum of creativity that is always working to reinvent the human self, onto-poiesis is a powerful antidote to self-fragmentation.<sup>31</sup>

## THE HEALING

Tymieniecka's view of onto-poiesis, and a consequent idea of the self-emerging from an individualizing matrix of life, creates a view of the self without a mind-body split, not stuck in trauma and dynamically connected to the larger whole of life. Intriguing, as it is philosophically, this perspective is even more intriguing clinically. Foundational to clinical theory is always a conceptualization of human subjectivity, be it a category as reduced as is the notion of personality, or as expanded and poorly defined as is the notion of the self. According to the phenomenology of life, life individualizes in spheres, where the shapes emerge from the orchestration of powers ordered by the logos of life. The living self is a mode of life's individuation, arising in its inward expanse and serving as a laboratory for the pure vision of the self-unveiling of onto-poiesis. Self-creation is the highest

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<sup>31</sup> For more on intrapsychic onto-poiesis, see: Olga Louchakova (2007), *op.cit.*

purpose of life, and a spectacle where it manifests in a spiritual experience.

Since health and pathology of the self are the next in importance categories, I will review them next. According to the World Health Organization, there is no one “official” definition of mental health. Cultural differences, subjective assessments, and competing professional theories all affect how “mental health” is defined. One way to think about mental health is by looking at how effectively and successfully a person functions. Feeling capable and competent; being able to handle normal levels of stress, maintain satisfying relationships, and lead an independent life; and being able to “bounce back,” or recover from difficult situations, are all signs of mental health. Well-being, then, is the absence of constraint, an attunement to this essential flow of experience, in accordance between the configuration of the mind and the understanding of this underlying, essential configuration of the life’s flux, its onto-poietic ordering. The more transparent is the mind to the foundational realities of existence, the healthier it experiences itself. In that recognition of the nature of one’s beingness, its positioning in the order of things, the capacity of this recognition can be seen as an equivalent of mental health, i.e. equivalent of happiness. Healthy mind then will be a happy mind, not by the degree of adaptation to the particular social-economic system, but by the degree of accordance with the “life” itself, as it manifests in the current socio-economic system. The pathology of the soul/self will be a form of inadequacy, obscuration of onto-poiesis (developmental block), in which the restoration of health is the “triumph” of onto-poietic self-revelation, the take over, gloriously, of the onto-poietic functionality of the soul. Then, diseases are such only in relation to the essential designs of the Logos of Life, and its particular manifestation in the particular structure of the particular soul. A recovery will be a condition where life is giving a chance to fully utilize its onto-poietic potential towards the realization of the possibility of healing, at a crux of conscious manifestation of onto-poiesis.

To accept such a vision would be a paradigmatic shift for psychology and medicine; it would mean a monumental restructuring of research, clinical theory, diagnostic categories, treatment strategies, and bioethics. It occurred to me that the first step towards fertilizing psychology with the ideas from phenomenology of life would be to trace the onto-poietic processes in the living psyche, to check whether there is something that can be called, perhaps, an intrapsychic

ontopoiesis. Amidst the developmental theories in psychology there are so called emergent theories, which acknowledge for a possibility of non-causal, unpredictable shifts in the adult psychological development. Some of these shifts can be curative, some occur during the so-called post-traumatic growth. It seemed plausible to look for signs of intrapsychic ontopoiesis amidst people with so-called spiritual emergence, which is an endogenous, unpredictable developmental condition with spiritual or religious connotations. Spiritual emergence appeared on the diagnostic map during the last 20 years, and was researched in detail within the new brand of psychology known as transpersonal psychology. Research conducted on large numbers of people with spiritual emergence demonstrated that in the aftermath of this emergent condition, new structures of the self appear, including even such massive changes as those in a positive characterological transformation. In the language of phenomenology of life, in the post-emergency period new ciphers of the self are deployed from the prereflective matrix, which is an evidence that ontopoiesis is not only a category pertaining to life at large, but can be observed as a part of constitutional processes which serve to formulate the living self.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the philosophical concept of ontopoiesis is not a reflectively obtained abstraction, but a description of phenomenological given introspective reality that can be referred to as a mechanism supporting the formulation of clinical theories.

In some ways, the ground for such a direction of clinical thinking has already been laid by the advent of postmodernism.<sup>33</sup> Even though postmodern thought bears the danger of disintegrating into nihilism and irresolvable paradoxes, it has accomplished two essential advancements in the understanding of a person: attention to the space of the Other and the idea of multiple narratives. In psychology, this had led to research on yet another malady of the self, alienation. From the standpoint of psychoanalysis:

“The sense of alienation as a state of consciousness is much more than an intellectual stance; truly alienated individuals or societies are often raging, paranoid, vicious, and thoroughly demoralized, or they express their alienation by a variety of psychosomatic illnesses

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<sup>32</sup> Olga Louchakova (2007), *op.cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Richard D. Chessick (1996). “The Application of Postmodern Thought to the Clinical Practice of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy,” *Journal of American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 24.



or social maladaptations, or making wars. We can easily find examples such as Dostoevsky's 'underground man,' Kafka's 'Joseph K.,' historical figures like Hitler or Stalin, and many many others. Societal examples also abound, for example, Germany between the two world wars, China during the 'let a thousand flowers bloom' revolution instigated by Mao, and the general abuse of drugs and alcohol in many countries today where this has found social acceptance (in spite of laws against them). None of this could be overcome by the dialectical process of reason".<sup>34</sup>

The world of the New Enlightenment is not any more the congenial and reasonable world of the first Enlightenment. What are the onto-poietic possibilities of this situation? Hegel believed that alienation is a catalyst for the advancement of the human consciousness: Discomfort propels one to explorations of the self and attainment of a new level of consciousness.<sup>35</sup> For her readers, Tymieniecka's philosophy encourages connection with the evolutionary impulse in the psyche. If, as my research on people undergoing spiritual emergence shows, onto-poiesis happens intrapsychically, this impulse has a curative value insofar as the intrapsychic onto-poietic possibilities are actualized and cause positive transformations of character and personal growth.<sup>36</sup>

There are yet more resources for psychological healing to be found in Tymieniecka's new concept of reason. In general, the concept of reason in the first Enlightenment was that it was derived from a reality that—be it nature or an ideal metaphysical principle—transcended the self and the perceptual world. In Tymieniecka's approach, there is no need to posit a metaphysical entity that is separate from the givenness of life and responsible for the emergence of reason. This is because the process orientation of Tymieniecka's philosophy precludes any habit of mental objectification of the pure

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<sup>34</sup>Richard D. Chessick (2008), *op.cit.*, p.702.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem. For more on alienation, see: "Alienation and Estrangement," Blackwell Reference Online, accessed March 2, 2012, [http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9780631175339\\_chunk\\_g97806311753395\\_ss1-5](http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9780631175339_chunk_g97806311753395_ss1-5).

<sup>36</sup> Olga Louchakova (2006), *op.cit.*

subjectivity of awareness/sentience.<sup>37</sup> It is understood that pure awareness in the transcendental ego is not a separate static condition, but a particular mode of Logos. By the same token, sentience itself is an attribute of Logos, pervasive to all manifestations of life; Logos is a process by which all life is intelligently organized. The capacities of imagination and self-reflectivity and the capacity for localized, focused action are also present, as potentialities or actualities, in all logotic conditions of life. They become fully transparent and expressed overtly when Logos-reason is particularized in the human condition. The pervasive principle of unity-of-all-there-is alive stresses the continuity between Logos in the human condition and Logos in other (no anthropomorphic) manifestations of life. Most importantly, Tymieniecka's Logos is not merely inferred from the analysis of life's manifestations, but is determined by direct observation of Logotic factual givenness; Logos-reason is directly available to the intuition. If this unifying, universal sentience-reason is experientially discovered in one's interiority through acts of direct intuition, one's own logotic manifestation becomes a cure for alienation.

Many psychologists have addressed the therapeutic value of self-knowledge and the similarities between the process of philosophical self-knowledge and psychotherapeutic healing.<sup>38</sup> Tymieniecka's philosophy brings a significant new element to her readers' self-knowledge: a realization of the ontopoietic manifestations within their own selves. Since there are no axiomatic principles in Tymieniecka's philosophy, and all knowledge is the result of direct intuition, mastering direct intuition within the clearing created by Tymieniecka's philosophy leads to a gestalt of one's self as a whole. In that gestalt, the mind's various cognitive modes are not contradictory but complementary to one another. This gives one a sense of satisfaction and an optimism stemming from the apprehension of the wholeness of one's being and the resulting sense of certainty and truth. In contrast, postmodern philosophies do not offer this sense of personal fulfillment upon the discovery of truth. "...[S]ignification is never

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<sup>37</sup> For more details on process orientation in Tymieniecka's method, see: Olga Louchakova-Schwartz, "Method and Direct Intuition in Tymieniecka's Phenomenology of Life," in *Analecta Husserliana*, edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (in press).

<sup>38</sup> For example: David A. Jopling (2000). *Self-Knowledge and the Self*. New York: Routledge. For more on the influences of philosophical approaches to self-knowledge on psychology, see: Richard D. Chessick (2008), *op.cit.*

comprehensive in relation to the subject's encounter with the real".<sup>39</sup> In Lacan, for example, the encounter with life is never satisfactory: One feels that there is more to an encounter than one can currently (or indeed ever fully) comprehend, and the resulting psychic incompleteness is potentially disturbing or worrying.<sup>40</sup> Another approach to truth, science, aspires to formulate a so-called "objective" truth, but in fact, the latter is always a function of a particular cognitive map. In contrast, Tymieniecka does not posit truth as something independent of a subject and does not suggest that truth can be conceived in an isolated intentional world. Her vision of truth is connected with the accumulation of the practices of life that lead to a sense of truth and action based on the intuition of future possibilities.

Behind the vague longing for some kind of "purity of the soul"<sup>41</sup> in postmodernism is a longing for the real. Direct intuition of the kind that Tymieniecka practices fulfills this longing, because it engages with the real. In Tymieniecka, an encounter with life is all-embracing, and, therefore, reveals the truth:

"The natural belief of human being...basic existential trust...consists of our mute natural conviction of the indubitable *constant* background of our reality insofar as our life-individualizing process is simultaneously crystallizing the "outward" framework of our existence within the world and manifesting "inwardly" the entire spread of our vital, existential and creative virtualities they may unfold. ...The adequation of our expectation and the actual state of affairs we call, in general, "truth"...the search for truth is the constructive device intrinsic to the 'logos' onto-poietic manifestation in life".<sup>42</sup>

The human subject is not thrown into existence against the will, but is integrated into the flow of life with a self-reflective freedom of choice.

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<sup>39</sup> Grant Gillett (2006), *op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> For more on the encounter with the Real, see: Jacques Lacan (1991). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

<sup>41</sup> Grant Gillett (1995), *op.cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>42</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2002a). "Introduction: Phenomenology as the Inspirational Force of Our Times," in *Phenomenology World-Wide: Foundations—Expanding Dynamics—Life-Engagements, a Guide for Research and Study*, Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. xi-xiii.

This is a powerful reframing of existential yearning, and a truth of a completely different nature than the one offered by existentialism. Within this truth, there are possibilities for cultural healing which can be incarnated into the clinical theory.

### CLINICAL THEORY

Clinical theories in psychology include a host of theoretical approaches such as psychoanalytic, cognitive, behavioral, affective, systemic, constructivist, humanistic-existential, transpersonal, developmental, etcetera. Even though clinical thinking is claimed to be ontology-free, clinical theory are implicitly ontological in so far as it is based on the materialistic assumptions of natural science. A couple of exclusions from this general rule will be existential humanistic psychology with its Heideggerian orientation and tendency to consider experience on its own grounds, transpersonal psychology with its vague spiritualistic flavor, and Christian psychology which is overtly theistic. Recently, there appeared voices insisting that clinical theory needs a well formulated ontology, because without a proper ontology clinical theory tends to be caught in Cartesian mind-body dichotomy which is contradicting an evidence rising from clinical praxis.<sup>43</sup> Since the clinical picture of always is an evolving reality, not a static canvas, this new clinically relevant ontology will have to avoid the traditional traps of static thinking that Tymieniecka indicates as typical for the mind. According to Tymieniecka: “Given the spontaneous tendency of the speculative mind to seek a point of vantage from which the all-embracing intuition could be obtained, the cognitive mode of the mind is led to focus on the static, stationary circuits of the artifacts of the lifeworld that the human mind itself establishes”.<sup>44</sup>

Every clinician knows that living psyche defeats the attempts to capture it within any static framework. Therefore, Tymienieckan ontology with its emphasis on ontopoiesis appears to be exactly fitting with the evidence of clinical practice, especially when the latter concerns developmental and emergent conditions. This ontology provides a developmental template capable of predicting a novum in the psyche that continuously renews itself.

Tymieniecka’s phenomenological gaze is zoomed towards constant unfolding, and self-positing of the new networks of life

<sup>43</sup> Ian Burkitt (2003). “Psychology in the Field of Being: Merleau-Ponty, Ontology and Social Constructionism,” *Theory and Psychology* 13.

<sup>44</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2000), *op.cit.*, p.22.

prompting its continuing advance. This tendency towards process orientation, already outlined in the works of Gottingen/Munich school of phenomenology, mostly received its full development in the works of Tymieniecka herself. This view of renewing psyche provides for the understanding of mental health, and of coping with the ongoing trauma of living.

Practicing Tymieniecka's phenomenology means following the philosopher's phenomenological intuition, i.e. refocusing the attention towards developmental possibilities of consciousness. Tymieniecka says: "Although we apprehend and predicate the status of life by the relatively static form it takes, it is in the energies and play of forces that it takes its shape in the flux of becoming."<sup>45</sup>

Even though Tymieniecka does envision stages, as do psychological stage theories, she doesn't stop there. She captures the development as it is happening - not in increments but in the gradual continuity of a working force. Her strategy is refocusing from what is static, to that what is not only in constant change, but is the growth cone of any development. She says: "It is indispensable to envisage it from two perspectives: one may take in its surface phenomenal manifestation in its formal, structural, constitutive fashion, or one may peer into the depths of energies, forces, dynamisms that carry it relentlessly onward"<sup>46</sup>.

Perhaps, such a cognitive position can be called a "developmental phenomenological attitude," as opposed to a simple phenomenological attitude in Husserl, where the epoche does not resolve in capturing the process but resides in a succession of moments. Further, it is possible to suggest that perhaps such differences in positioning of direct intuition can explain the developmental differences on the behavioral level, where some people do change and others do not. The ontology of change will consist of receptivity to *Imaginatio Creatrix*, and to its whispering prompts, that coming out of reflection we consider to be our own thoughts.

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<sup>45</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2002b). "The Theme: Inaugural Lecture—The Life-Force of the Shaping-of-Life?", in vol. 74 of *Analecta Husserliana*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. xv.

<sup>46</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2002c). "Topical Study: Truth—The Ontopoietic Vortex in Life," in vol. 76 of *Analecta Husserliana*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. xvii.

An ontologically informed clinical theory will have to account for the whole onto-poietic cycle as it is seen in phenomenology of life. This cycle begins with self-individualizing life, and follows the designs outlined by the logos of life. Logos of life utilizes the mechanisms of onto-poiesis to manifest the spheres of energies and shaping, transcending its various orders. The natural order is transcended into the emergence of the soul, the virtuality of which is conceived within the lower matrixes of life, such as womb of life, vial, sharing etcetera. Emergence of the soul with its outward-*inward* expanses creates a consequent differentiation of self and other, and provides for the emergence of the next virtuality, of spirit. Then, the next cycle, the conscious presencing of the spheres of energies and shaping begins. In its downward spiral, the spirit presences the process of onto-poiesis per se, presences the Logos of Life, and presences the self-individualizing life, completing the whole cycle in the descending rounds of self-understanding. As Tymieniecka says:

“Phenomenology properly understood – terminology aside—did not intend to invent a method, evidentiary or intuitive, but to devise an impartial way of clarifying the ways in which humans cognize/constitute their reality. In the new phenomenology, expanded to take in all the ways of life per se, what is at stake is not strictly human reality, specifically human centered focusing operations, but all modes of human functioning, all human involvement in the orbit of life”.<sup>47</sup>

The clinical theory, created within this approach, will have to interpret the self and the other, health and disease, in the context of these expanded understanding of human condition. The clinical issue, isolated first, will have to be positioned in the context of the whole matrix of life. This will require a training of the clinician in such a way that transformation of the mind provides for the rise of onto-poietic intuition, and the direct perception of unveiling of the logic mechanism of onto-poiesis. In the New Enlightenment, such new clinical knowledge will be rooted in the actualization of the logic intuition-reason. In addition, such possibility is to be realized to the benefit of humankind, for which Tymieniecka’s radical optimism is well-warranted.

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<sup>47</sup>Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2000), *op.cit.*, p.4.

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