

# Moral Excellence as Cosmicization of Human Beingness in the *Ontopoietic* Perspective

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**Abstract** Designing the core of Phenomenology of Life founded by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “Ontopoiesis of Life” reveals a holistic and dynamical philosophy about the dialectical unity of *logos-ethos-cosmos* in the great plan of life. Grounded in the idea of firstness in existential formation by the continuous creative process of human becoming, the ontopoietic perspective opens to the understanding of moral excellence under the auspices of order and beauty that simultaneously define the cosmicization of human condition. It leads to structuring our endeavor of rising in the horizon of participation in the universal harmony, by appropriating the inward-outward oriented self-individualization through the workings of the “logos of life” in its multiple manifestations. We try to emphasize some articulations of the “Ontopoiesis of Life” as significant marks in developing our moral affirmation by following the ideal axis around which everything is harmonizing within the single whole: the cosmos.

In the context of serious shattering and overturning the valuable reference points of human existence, that of manifesting the peril of chaotic dominants deepening the alienation process from a healthy creative meaning of life, the ideal of moral excellence becomes a priority to be considered in its plentiful force of re-structuring our attitude towards the cosmos we are part of.

More than ever, the human beingness is touched by the captivities of an artificial environment made by the sophisticated information and communication technologies, by the invader digital network; it is an environment that carries new risks into increasing even the distance from the human well-being. What does it mean, briefly?

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It is the purpose followed along the history of moral philosophy, “the central problem” of the “best life for all”.<sup>1</sup> In these terms, our interest for the moral excellence finds support in the necessity of a continuous insertion of the ethical dominant for a way to live well. It leads us to the significance of cultivating the human quality of doing “what is right and just”, by “having received a proper upbringing in moral conduct”, respectively by having some sense of good(ness)/virtue (virtuousness).<sup>2</sup>

Centered on the aretaic becoming, the *moral excellence* represents an eternal ideal of human living as happiness. Gradually, it can be achieved by high-minded man within the effort of inscribing and developing his individuality in distinction, but also in sameness with the whole network of life. It supposes the attainment of a harmonious combination of a plurality of inner and outer coordinates, by conquering the value of just measure – “the golden measure” in all – keeping the existential equilibrium (personal, societal, and cosmic). Finally, it is an outcome of the spiritual and cosmic perspective, by following the “music of the spheres” (from Pythagoras’ theory of consonant intervals) as inspiring a sustainable living, and by integrating in it as much as possible.

Aiming to and working for the *moral excellence* show a certain process similar to that of bringing cosmos from the chaos, or of transforming chaos into *cosmos* – that means order and beauty in an inherent connection with the good, as virtue’s experience.

The problem of virtue needs revaluation(s) as an essential instrument to assure a *human* content for a life in progress, in the tradition opened by Aristotle’s theory of mediation. As “the midst way between excess and deficiency”, a “mean between a too much and a too little”, virtue remains the greatest value for the “excellence of man” as that “makes a man good and able to perform his proper function well”,<sup>3</sup> his *àreté*. It remains the proper force, the *vehicle of moral conduct*, so much needed for the psychosomatic, cultural-societal, spiritual-natural order of equilibrium in life.

In the original *ontopoietic* perspective of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, the question of virtue is tackled like one of the most prominent values for understanding the progressive course of life, generally. It “lies at the heart of the life strategies of the Logos”.<sup>4</sup>

The “Ontopoiesis of Life” – defining the nucleus of Tymienieckan phenomenology – articulates the manifestations of the *logos of life* in multifaceted inventive rationalities that it “projects in the course of carrying our lives and our world-in-transformation”.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the entire *ontopoietic* design engages the crucial function of *Imaginatio Creatrix* – “the fulgurating force within the human

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<sup>1</sup>E.J. Bond, *Ethics and Human Well-Being. An Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1996, pp. 208–209.

<sup>2</sup>Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Romanian translation: *Etica Nicomahică*, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1988, 1095b.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1106a20–1107a.

<sup>4</sup>Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life*, Book 4: *Impetus and Equipose in the Life-Strategies of Reason*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht/Boston/London, 2000, p. 598.

<sup>5</sup>Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “The Triumph of Imagination in the Critique of Reason”, in *Analecta Husserliana*, Volume LXXXIII, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht/Boston/London, 2004, p. xviii.

creative experience”, the *prime force inspiring human endeavors*.<sup>6</sup> With such outlined particularities, the problem of virtue can be disclosed in a larger significance.

According to the author of phenomenology of life, the issue of virtue is situated “at the primogenital human plane where reason with its faculties, on the one hand, and the vital forces, on the other, emerge as partners in the creative orchestration of human functioning that forms the crucibles of intelligibility that is specifically human and that accounts for the emergence of the human universe, that is, the human expansion of the schema of Nature”.<sup>7</sup> (We would extend the last term, by *cosmos*). Thus, man’s mandate of morality gets a chance of realizing as cosmicization, too; that claims an increased sensitivity toward a kind of syntony: an agreement/accord to be found and highlighted as concerns the embedment of human(ness) in the tangible cosmic context.

As part of the whole, man is connected to all aspects of nature, which is essentially even for his very survival. Reviving the cosmological philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato, for example, in an era full of contradictions, man can (re)discover the experience of kinship and affiliation to the cosmic order and beauty rooted in harmony – the “fitting together” of opposites –, and to reconsider natural structures as embodying virtue, after the model of “divine proportion”, in functioning as moral agent in the best possible way.<sup>8</sup>

In searching paths toward harmony and concord, toward proportion, symmetry and measure as marks of a cosmic moral understanding of human life in the universe, the *ontopoietic* metaphysics deploys significant themes, grasping a constructive direction of philosophizing.

Frequently, Tymieniecka underlines the necessity of surmounting the multiple tensions and conflicts, of keeping a perpetual quest for equilibrium that, in a complex process of harmonizing, the *logos of life* manifests “its most powerful engines of creative advance”<sup>9</sup> in assuring the moral order.

In the framework of the *ontopoietic* phenomenology, the fundamental category of “Human Condition” implies – among other things – the seal of harmony. Oscillating between similarity and distinction, proceeding from natural generic roots to the cultural-spiritual situation, moving between without and within, and always in the circuits of flux and stasis, human condition reveals itself as a progressive experience into harmony, by a creative moral transformation. This is happening because the “Human Creative Condition” is fulfilling in the horizon of self-individualizing and integrating not merely in the social order, but in the cosmic one, too.

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<sup>6</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “*Imaginatio Creatrix*, the Creative versus the Constitutive Function of Man and the Possible Worlds”, in *Analecta Husserliana*, Volume III, D. Reidel, Dordrecht, 1974, pp. 3–41.

<sup>7</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life*, Book 4: *Impetus and Equipoise in the Life-Strategies of Reason*, op.cit., p. 598.

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis IN, 2000. 53a–54b.

<sup>9</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life*, Book 4: *Impetus and Equipoise in the Life-Strategies of Reason*, op.cit., p. 372.

An intrinsic part of the “ontopoiesis of life” perspective is the question of understanding the moral lifestyle in connection with the cosmos as steering man to what it is worthy to get as a model of becoming, to avoid the decay and destruction, to overcome the danger of breakdown in barbarity. Beyond the cogent benefits of the scientific and technological advances, we have to recognize, no less, the threatening of human essence – which Michel Henry has signaled as being “the barbarism of the monstrous objectivity of techno-science” menacing and even rejecting human subjectivity.<sup>10</sup> Thus, much more concern for the approach of moral-human-becoming-in-cosmos is entitled by necessity.

The issue of *moral excellence as cosmicization* has arisen in a metaphoric manner, as a process of shaping the moral character under the ideal dimension of our knowledge of cosmos, as an orderly, harmonious, beautiful and perfect living system. An ideal of governing the moral creative condition is at stake: to endeavor to enhancing, to rising in the horizon of cosmic characteristics showing a holistic entity in creative process, in continuous revival, positive lastingness and constructive coherence. Moral excellence as cosmicization covers a telos toward which man is able to work in ordering, measuring, improving and embellishing his own life, especially by living in conformity with the *harmony* – as the dominant note of cosmos. It means that man can find and appropriate the value of harmonization in the most inner self – in himself and with himself – and, no less, beyond the strict individuality – as being for the world, in and with the world. This represents the core synthesized by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka through her thesis about “the human soul in the cosmos and the cosmos in the human soul”. Insisting on the creative virtualities of man, her insight is built on “a new formulation of the concept of nature life, one open to the cosmos and to culture”.<sup>11</sup>

Creativity – as the “Archimedean point” for phenomenology of life, as the “quintessential faculty” of man for Tymieniecka “new critique of reason” – receives an ethical resonance. It appears like a virtue of man, marking the process of his self-creation “with respect to the laws of Nature and of the Cosmos, but especially with respect to the specific ultimate significance of his existence”.<sup>12</sup>

Owing to creativity, man can reach the plenitude of affirmation in the great plane of life by activating an orderly behavior, somehow subordinated to a vision of strength, equilibrium and harmony, of meaningful order, of cosmicization – enrooted in the Greek *kosmiotēs*, with the idea about the unity of *ethos-lógos-kósmos*.

A pillar of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka’s phenomenological inquiry is that about the role of “moral sense”, which is even “a harmonizing logico principle”.<sup>13</sup> The authentic human life is conceived as emerging from the basis of moral values,

<sup>10</sup> Michel Henry, *La barbarie*, Editions Grasset, Paris, 1987.

<sup>11</sup> See Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *The Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life*, Book I: *The Case of God in the New Enlightenment*, Springer, Dordrecht, 2009, pp. 181–211.

<sup>12</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “The Creative Self and the Other in Man’s Self-Interpretation”, in *Analecta Husserliana*, Volume VI, D. Reidel, Dordrecht, 1977, p. 161.

<sup>13</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life*, Book 4: *Impetus and Equipose in the Life-Strategies of Reason*, op.cit., p. 373.

“a universal type of configuration of the life context” originating “from the universally valid moral sense”.<sup>14</sup> Together with the “aesthetic” and “intellective” senses, it is a “giving/valuating factor of sense” to be disclosed “in the projection of individualizing circuits forging them within the inward networks of an *intimate zone* projected into a vast network of *outward* interlinkage with other living beings within a common world of life”.<sup>15</sup>

In the territory of the dynamic and holistic philosophizing upon the “self-individualizing ontopoietic schema” applied to the total life expanse, human condition is conceived in its “knot position”, namely that of the unique responsibility man has toward “everything-there-is-alive”. It is the function of “moral sense” to introduce “the Sentiment of Benevolence toward other living creatures, toward oneself, and toward life in general”, moving to a higher order of significance under the auspices of “the moral measure for life”. This supposes the complex process of “sharing-in-life” on the ground of moral virtues of human being, eventually, in accordance with the cosmic laws – especially, of harmonious resonance, of synergy and equilibrium beyond any conflicts and contradictory forces/energies –, into a creative direction, for the common good of life. Examining the functionality of “moral sense”, Tymieniecka “draws the conclusion that life manifests benevolence at the level of humanity for the well-being of all living beings”; seeing that, “Introduced by the Benevolent Sentiment, the axis of right/wrong balances out the conflict”.<sup>16</sup>

The *moral sense* with the *benevolent sentiment* is an essential component of the “phenomenological attitude” – one given “in the seeing and experiencing act itself”, a crucial one as “spiritual posture” of man in the cosmos, which marks precisely the human becoming as raising to the “openness toward the world”, so speaking in the language of Max Scheler.<sup>17</sup>

The German philosopher has emphasized the role of “love-determined movement of the inmost personal self of a finite being toward participation in the essential reality of all possibles”.<sup>18</sup> In her turn, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka stresses the valences of benevolence and sympathy, and no less of commitment and responsibility to define the peculiar status of man, with respect to the totality of life,

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<sup>14</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “The Moral Sense. A Discourse on the Phenomenological Foundation of the Social World and the Ethics”, in *Analecta Husserliana*, Volume XV, D.Reidel, Dordrecht, 1983, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life*, Book 4: *Impetus and Equipose in the Life-Strategies of Reason*, op.cit., p. 634.

<sup>16</sup> Gary Backhaus, “Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka: The Trajectory of her Thought from Eidetic Phenomenology to the Phenomenology of Life”, in *Phenomenological Inquiry*, Volume 25, Belmont, Massachusetts, The World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning, 2001, pp. 42; 41.

<sup>17</sup> Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (1927); Romanian translation: *Poziția omului în cosmos*, Paralela 45 Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 39–41.

<sup>18</sup> Max Scheler, *Vom Ewigen im Menschen* (1921); English translation: *On the Eternal in Man*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1960, p. 74.

that is the “Custodian of everything there is alive”. Such a key place deep in the midst of “all-alive-unity” unveils man in the singular position “to estimate the life-situation within the living kingdom as well as his own”,<sup>19</sup> striving for the safety and flourishing of life in its plenitude.

On the ground of comprehending the significance of “Custodian of everything there is alive”, the Tymieniecka phenomenology reveals a wise avenue in re-thinking and assuming an urgent duty for contemporary man as regards the protection of the health, integrity and sustainability for the natural capital, for the recovery of global ecosystem.

Accounting for the critical moral and ecological situation mankind is passing through for the last decades, respectively the sketched “*anatomy of bewilderment* – of the disarray humanity now finds itself in”,<sup>20</sup> the syntagm of “Custodian-of-the-unity-of-everything-there-is-alive” is very important for the moral thinking, for an environmental ethics particularly. In a phenomenological insight, it proves a major function to guiding the human attitude to face the natural circumambient forces, by impelling the necessity of working for the moral excellence tying the formative role of “the mobile cosmic architectonics” with its earthly and celestial channels in the complex process of “individualizing beingness”.<sup>21</sup>

This peculiar status of man requires thoughtful deliberation in the valuation process of concerning for the good of each present form of life and for future generations, in a wider culture of environmental stewardship. Heralding “a New Enlightenment”, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka notes that “We are challenged to enter into our depths in order to achieve a new understanding of our place in the cosmos and the web of life, to find new wisdom for charting our paths together and fresh inspiration to animate our personal conduct”.<sup>22</sup>

The lucid awareness concerning the dual games of continuity and disruption, success and failure, advancement and destruction manifested in the universal life-system – as much as we get access –, in the mutual conversion nature-human, does sustain Tymieniecka to manifest trust in man’s discernment in using the inventive faculties on the side of affirmative and constructive way.

In the light of the spirit and especially “in the moral sense”, human being realizes itself a higher birth. It is a “second birth” or “a completion of the Human Condition, which was begun by the entrance into the game of life of the human drama” with “pain and suffering”, “birth and death”; but, eventually, finding the force to evaluate the creative function in the “*kairic* timing” of “freedom and accomplishment” on the

<sup>19</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “Phenomenology of Life and the New Critique of Reason: From Husserl’s Philosophy to the Phenomenology of Life and the Human Condition”, in *Analecta Husserliana*, Volume XXIX, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 1990, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “Measure and the Ontopoietic Self-Individualization of Life”, in *Phenomenological Inquiry*, Volume 19, Belmont, Massachusetts, The World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning, 1995, pp. 26–27.

<sup>21</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “Transcendentalism Overturned: Life’s Geo-Cosmic Positioning of Beingness”, in *Analecta Husserliana*, Volume CVIII, Springer, Dordrecht/Heidelberg/London/New York, 2011, pp. 6–9.

<sup>22</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “Measure and the Ontopoietic Self-Individualization of Life”, op.cit., p. 26.

inward/outward advance of humanness. According to Tymieniecka, “along the path of human creative self-individualizing, kairos is concurrently the timing of the propitious circumstances and forces leading toward the realization of constructive projects, their accomplishment, and concurrently and finally is their measure”.<sup>23</sup>

We face a vision upon the human moral authority as self-accomplishment, sharing-in-life and solidarity not just at a social level of existence, but within the unity of the Deity and the cosmos throughout the inner workings of the *logos of life* in its “constructive *impetus and equipoise*”. This is what Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka has acknowledged as “the ontopoietic unfolding of the *logos of life*” that “manifests itself in the spectacle of the All, cosmos, world, nature, life, the works of human spirit”,<sup>24</sup> engaging various modalities of “vital”, “Dionysian”, “Promethean” and “sacral” *logoi* on the horizon of life, by a perpetual “exaltation of the ideal” of creative development.

In the architectonics of phenomenology of life, the key-concept is that of *logos of life*, as the reason of reasons, the primordial principle, and the all-pervading presence of life. Investigating the “*logos of life*”, Tymieniecka actually establishes some harmonized modalities of progression for this universal reason and “riser” of life. So, she follows its movements from the “vital/entelechia” *logos*, through the “affective, sentient/emotive, sympathetic sharing-in life” that she called “Dionysian” *logos*; also, through the “creative”, “prompting new forms, qualities, hints of life” and expanding in freedom of the human spirit, with the transcendental experience, that is the “Promethean” *logos*. This “ontopoietic” unfolding is completed by which the author calls the “sacral/Divine” rationality as the ultimate, accomplished sense of the “*logos of life*” in a “*logo-theic horizon*”.<sup>25</sup>

To a certain extent, phenomenology of life encompasses the fact that it is time to re-explore the Heraclitean reflection upon the *logos* embracing man, earth, and cosmos; at the same time, to re-think about the Pythagorean message about the human soul brought into harmony with the natural order. It conveys toward the importance of forming a cosmicized interior as a condition of moral excellence, by experiencing a variety of trials and selecting on the side of what really matters for individual and community, for social and natural existence, alike. In this sense, our phenomenologist of life envisions the “individualizing-ontopoietic process of life” as one of “sense and ordering”.<sup>26</sup> Within it, man is the subject of constructive inventive evolution, by cultivating the royal path of virtue closed to all the vital forces, gathered and organized “in proper channels of growth and subsistence within the

<sup>23</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *The Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life*, Book I: *The Case of God in the New Enlightenment*, op.cit., pp. 197–199; 209.

<sup>24</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life*, Book 4: *Impetus and Equipoise in the Life-Strategies of Reason*, op.cit., p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp.320–321. See also Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *The Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life*, Book I: *The Case of God in the New Enlightenment*, op.cit., pp. 231–255.

<sup>26</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “Inspirations of Heraclitus from Ephesus Fulfilled in Our New Enlightenment”, in *Analecta Husserliana*, Volume CX/Part I, Springer, Dordrecht/Heidelberg/London/New York, 2011, p. 9.



stream of becoming”, by “assuming the transcendental role formerly accorded to consciousness” for what Tymieniecka considers to be the “cosmic positioning” of human being.<sup>27</sup>

To the grave question: “how should one live?” a response is certainly inspired by the great learning we get from the cosmological philosophizing implied by phenomenology of the “ontopoiesis of life”. It offers a scrutiny of moral virtue in its profound link with the “logos of life”, as well as the emphasis of the intimacy between man and universal rhythm of life (from mineral to cosmic levels). In discussion is “the rhythm of creative process”, a “precondition” of unity and stability without which neither “the values common to all mankind”, nor a “world order and a meaningful life” could exist.<sup>28</sup> Thus, phenomenology of life gives us the opportunity to circumscribe a picture of harmonizing law that conducts the process of humanization-cosmicization in the arteries of spontaneity and hazard on the one hand, and deliberation and necessity on the other.

We have tried to deal with the concept of cosmicization as a path for human self-fulfilling simultaneously in its uniqueness and its universality, by reaching the balance between differentiation and integration in a more and more estranged from Nature world, a quite technical and material-consumerist one. We could bring part of the ideal of cosmicization in our life, by sharpening an enlightened understanding of its role in registering ourselves on the trajectory of creative moral becoming. It could help us to surpass limitations of an artificial world, by finding the sources to fostering an authentic health and prosperity for humans and nonhumans, both as individuals and communities in the unity of life.

To conclude, the *ontopoietic* phenomenology of life elaborated by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka makes us remember the truth contained in an old Latin phrase, as a directory orienting our care about the moral living: “Naturam si sequemur ducem, nunquam aberrabimus”/“If we take nature for our guide, we shall never go astray”.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “Transcendentalism Overturned: Life’s Geo-Cosmic Positioning of Beingness”, op.cit., pp. 9–10.

<sup>28</sup> Maija Küle, “Logos and Life: Understanding of Rhythm”, in *Analecta Husserliana*, Volume CX/Part II, op.cit., p. 682.

<sup>29</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge/London, 1913, I, 100.



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