Phenomenology of Religious Experience II: Perspectives in Theology

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The “Sacred River” Toward God: Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka’s Phenomenology of Religious Experience

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Abstract: In 1988, Tymieniecka explored the religious phenomenon, pursuing the spiritual experience of the sacred as it surges in the life of our soul. She described three movements of the human soul that lead to revelation of the spiritual experience of the sacred. A first movement of “radical examination” is followed by one of “exalted existence” in which the soul proceeds beyond the usual reflection on the interior of the ongoing current of life. Here, we experience sadness at not being able to transcend our finiteness. When the screen of objectivity is broken, the soul surprisingly does not plunge again into its underground turmoil; on the contrary, it dives into the life-giving waters of an underground stream which, like a “sacred river”, flows imperturbably and silently. On this basis, the soul can move “toward transcending”, and lay the groundwork for the life of the spirit, which seeks the Other from finiteness. Tymieniecka stopped at this threshold in 1988. In 2008, she reiterated that from her phenomenology of life no theology had arisen, and yet she hinted that glimpses in this direction had opened with the start of a metaphysics of the fullness of the logos in a vital key.

Keywords: phenomenology, religious experience, life, soul, A.-T. Tymieniecka

1 Toward heaven

In her last public talk, in Rome in 2011, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka exhorted listeners in Italian to turn their attention to heaven. After 40 years of phenomenological inquiry, she saw before her the enormous task of

showing how the objective constitution depends on what I call the geocosmic dynamism of all, which extends from heaven to the whole earth, and also to all.¹

By this, Tymieniecka did not mean any immediate reference to the religious sphere, much less to the theological one, since, to her mind, “theology is the theory – speculative, intellectual – of the data of revelation”.² However, perhaps yielding to the suggestion of the “system of conformity between metaphysics and religion” identified by Max Scheler,³ she did not deny that she glimpsed in front of her an itinerary of research that, starting from that which is documented in the experience of the soul, led to the discovery of the spiritual and the sacred, and proceeded to the place where “there is the possibility of moving into revelation,

¹ Tymieniecka, “Testimonianza”, 12.

² Torjussen, Servan, Andersen Øyen, “An Interview”, 29.

³ Scheler, *On the Eternal*, 146-160.

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which leads to religion”.⁴ Tymieniecka set out on this itinerary following Edmund Husserl, to the degree to which he had given particular importance to the “soul” in the context of the system of transcendental constitution. In fact, in *Ideas II*, Husserl,⁵ seeking to fill in Descartes’ concept of consciousness, placed under the organizing transcendental system of the intellect (*Vernunft*) all the functional zones “which ground the life of consciousness subservient to it”.⁶ Husserl identified four territories of the consciousness as objective-constituting center, in which the transcendental schema of man and the life-world is diversified:

first, my body as organism (that is, objectified); second, my body as experienced by myself; third, the soul, which is intertwined with the functions of the body and yet consists of a sui generis distinctive complex; and lastly, the soul/the spirit, which is intertwined with the soul complex but nevertheless stands out as an autonomous functional system.⁷

Tymieniecka acknowledged that with this Husserl rightly held that he had reestablished the basic foundational unity of conscious life, in contrast to Descartes, who had left out of consciousness, conceived specifically as ‘thought’, the sentient/corporeal and the affective zones.⁸ In fact, in the dual movement of the transcendental constituting consciousness that, on the one hand, spreads to the territory of existence and on the other hand, at the same time circumscribes the entire circle of human experience, body, soul and spirit are distinctive but simultaneously intertwined without any split between them; all the more so because, while consciousness attracts every sphere of experience and existence into its dominion, at the same time, it extends its own prerogatives well beyond the objectifying intentional/intellectual powers of its pure nucleus.⁹ In this Husserlian system of four functional zones, in which the center of constitutive consciousness is articulated, the soul takes on special prominence, playing the role of intermediary zone between the bodily functions, at the one extreme, and those of the spirit, at the other.¹⁰

However, there are two difficulties with Husserl’s approach. First, while the notion of the spirit should embrace the entire spectrum of the cultural manifestations of the human person, as well as the strictly intellectual ones, Tymieniecka notes that this in fact does not happen, because of the German-Husserlian conception of the spirit as *Geist*, which lacks a clear distinction between the spirit as work of the “translucent” rationality of the intellect, which is one of the strongest factors in the constructivism of life in its specific human meaning, and the spirit as “spiritual” or “religious” experiential modality that not only consists of radically different matter (*Stuff*), but also emerges in response to “a life-distancing drive”.¹¹ By assuming the traditional German attitude, which confuses these two modalities of the spirit whose orientations differ so strongly, Husserl closed phenomenological access to the specifically spiritual/religious experience. Second – and this is a phenomenologically crucial question – Tymieniecka notes how much Husserl, having from the very beginning given a central role to the intellect in the formation of experience, and having consequently mapped the territory of the consciousness around the intellect as its axis, limited the multifunctional expansion of consciousness and the soul as its median sphere to one functional cross-section, namely, the one that dominates “in the perspective of the intellectual sense-bestowing faculty”.¹² Thus Husserl prevented himself from phenomenologically seeing the free expression of the soul/spirit’s dynamic, which is prompted by the human striving to overcome the reach and the rule of life-subservient reason. In Tymieniecka’s view, Husserl, in a sort of re-actualization of the Kantian

⁴ Torjussen, Servan, Andersen Øyen, “An Interview”, 29. It should be emphasized that the phenomenological path towards the divine that was inaugurated by Tymieniecka is distinct and independent from the path of doctrinal theology, and as such is very relevant at present, as we see with Pope Bergoglio that the revealed theology is increasingly driven to confront life experience. See Falque, “The Collision of Phenomenology and Theology”, 211-227; Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*.

⁵ Husserl, *Ideas II*, Sections 2 and 3.

⁶ Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ Ibid., 3-4.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

condition of the spirit, blocked in a philosophically agnostic position,¹³ forced the soul/spirit into the narrow confines of merely existential/experiential zones, made safe but also insurmountable by the exercise of the constituting function of the transcendental consciousness!¹⁴

This is the phenomenological knot that Tymieniecka wanted to untie, originally developing the Husserlian legacy through relating to the method and classical themes of phenomenology from the point of view of life and by operating in it something like an “intuitive resowing” of phenomenology.¹⁵

Tymieniecka set forth a new critique of reason,¹⁶ focusing her attention on the “breaking point of intentionality, on the line that marks the border between the role of meaning-bestowing-agent of the intellect and the zone of the pre-predicative, the meaning of which eludes the mind’s tentacles”.¹⁷ With this, from the level of the constituting consciousness, she regressed to the vast area of the pre-predicative, to reach the point of the “wild or brute being” of Merleau-Ponty,¹⁸ latent with unexpressed virtualities, where

from the seemingly disjointed situation there seems to be emerging the promise of a dynamic skeleton for future fusions of sense. In its expanding advance toward the unknown, scientific inquiry further and further differentiates itself and prompts us to pursue more and more inquisitive paths as there freshly emerge new suggestions of shaping and generative links.¹⁹

To find a philosophical expression of all this new being-generative richness in a metaphysics of life and the human condition, man’s cognitive-constitutive powers and his empirical functioning or actions are inadequate, because they focus on the level of “the structure and source of objectivity as it is given in human experience”.²⁰ Instead, what is faced now is “a new all-encompassing field of philosophical inquiry”, the source of which no longer is the transcendental consciousness and the objectivity that it constitutes, but the new context of “the Human Condition within the system of the constructive unfolding of life”.²¹ Looking for a new “Archimedean point” from which to probe the entire constructive order of human existence and of the life of being as such,²² Tymieniecka, in dialogue with the human sciences and especially inspired by Henri Ey’s organo-dynamic psychiatry, finds it in the creative act of the human person, directed by the *Imaginatio Creatrix*.

In doing so, Tymieniecka opens a new epistemological perspective: not only does she consider “action” as the possible new access to the unity of being, but the creative activity is even proposed as “the prototype of action”, since it seems to have “the privileged access to the inner workings of the constructive progress running through the realms of Nature, human being and the life-world”.²³ Moreover, Tymieniecka observes, in an unprejudiced analysis that is not restricted arbitrarily to the prism of conscious operations, the world appears as a relatively stable system caught in a dynamic progress of structural unfolding onwards, a system wherein things, beings and events are intimately interwoven through the processes they generate. By virtue of his inventive genius, the human being appears as “the major dynamic factor within this system not only with respect to the progress onwards but also at the level of introducing the essential and basic level of meaning through the structurizing work of his consciousness”.²⁴ Classic and current phenomenology, she continues, has identified the constitutive system of consciousness with the whole extent of man’s structurizing virtualities. In contrast, Tymieniecka proposes to distinguish “within the complete human functioning system, conjoined with the constitutive function and yet autonomous with respect to it, another

¹³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 583-589.

¹⁴ Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, 4.

¹⁵ Verducci, “The development of the vital seed”, 33.

¹⁶ Tymieniecka, “First Principles”, 5-7; *Creative Experience*, 15-16; *The Three Movements*, xv-xvii.

¹⁷ Tymieniecka, “The Phenomenology of Man”, xv.

¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible*, 211.

¹⁹ Tymieniecka, “The New Enlightenment”, 9.

²⁰ Tymieniecka, “First Principles”, 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vii-viii.

²² Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, xvii.

²³ Tymieniecka, “The Prototype of Action”, 182.

²⁴ Tymieniecka, “*Imaginatio Creatrix*”, 4.

structurizing and productive function of man: the creative function”.²⁵

What occurs in human creativity, as Nancy Mardas emphasizes, is the phenomenologically observable counterpart to what occurs in being as such. This is why Tymieniecka maintains that through examining the process of human creativity, we arrive at a clear understanding of the nature of elemental being: when she speaks about creativity as the prototype of action, she is referring simultaneously to all human activity and to ontological activity, echoing both Plotinus and Schelling.²⁶ According to her phenomenological intuition, Mardas continues, “the same ‘stirrings’ motivate constructive/creative action at the most elemental level as at the level of the human individual: the drive to differentiate and individualize, to create and proclaim an identity within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive. Such a drive need not be conscious, rational or subjective: it is the action of life itself!”²⁷

It may be surprising that the noun *Imaginatio* is flanked by the adjective *Creatrix*, given that imagination is the capacity to represent things that are not present in the receptive act of sensation. But Tymieniecka clarifies that in such a conjunction lies the key to the very passage from the instinctive imagination of animal living beings to the free imagination of human living beings. In the animal sphere, the course of the individual’s vital affairs is instinctively sustained by the recognition of a fit between the individual’s vital needs and the circumambient conditions, as Jakob von Uexküll demonstrated,²⁸ and when those needs are met, the dynamism of vital striving is extinguished in a dull state of satisfaction. In contrast, in the human sphere, when the human living being is acting, radiating synergies prompt him in acting onward! The very nature of the prompting force in the human beings, the human creative force in itself, “is pregnant with a *sui generis* propensity to be dissatisfied with mere acquiescence to the *status quo* and to see the world about potentialities, virtual transformative capacities”.²⁹ It is this apprehension through *Imaginatio Creatrix* of the potential/transformative virtuality of the “present” state of things that “marks the radical passage from the absorption with survival and the submissive acquiescence of animal life to the undertaking spirit of the human being, which is based in animality but has known the surging of a *sua sponte* fulgurating force”³⁰.

Now we can see phenomenologically that “cognitive rationalities are just a specific modality of human creative genius, and that in turn the human being in all his functioning is himself a manifestation of the forces, powers, constructive rules, and proficiencies of bios, life, and the cosmos”.³¹ Thus, although Tymieniecka agrees with Peter Kemp in foregoing the traditional anthropomorphic and anthropocentric perspective,³² she recognizes that it is still from the privileged position of the *Imaginatio Creatrix* that human beings come to know their place in Nature and discover that they are at a loss without it, since in human creative acts the inner workings of nature emerge and develop.³³

In fact, as illustrated in the *Tractatus brevis*,

[the new field of philosophical inquiry] stretches perpendicularly into the ‘phenomenology of life’, understood in its evolutive genesis of evermore complex forms. One of its phases is marked by the surging of the Human Condition. The assessment of its creative virtualities opens horizontally upon the vast realm projected by the human being, unfolding them as uniquely that being’s own creative powers. To bring together and then to differentiate is the great and enigmatic work of life. Man, who enters into this working, is but one of the constructive links of the unity of everything there is alive [...] and yet, entering life’s constructive progress as a creator, the human being assumes a crucial position with respect to its course. He introduces the human significance of life: culture, history, his own destiny, the quest after the Ultimate Telos of the All.³⁴

²⁵ Ibid., 5.

²⁶ Mardas, “Creative Imagination”, xxix.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ von Uexküll, *Theoretical Biology*, 79.

²⁹ Tymieniecka, “The Triumph of Imagination”, xiv.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Tymieniecka, *Impetus and Equipose*, 189.

³² Kemp, “La Bio-ethique”, 119-129.

³³ Tymieniecka, “The Golden Measure”, 13.

³⁴ Tymieniecka, “First Principles”, viii.

Thus an original and atypical metaphysical heuristic is activated, one that does not settle for investigating the constitution of objectivity as the essential “givenness”, but wants to delve deeply into the genesis of the constitution of objectivity, focusing

its inner workings as the locus whence *eidōs* and fact simultaneously spring. This amounts to saying that not constitutive intentionality but the constructive advance of life which carries it may alone reveal to us the first principles of all things; not the givenness of the world but the ‘poetic of life’.³⁵

From the phenomenological point of view, this radicalizes the inquiry: “the discursive patterns of traditional conceptual frameworks” are no longer primary. Instead, all objectifying intentionality is reduced to the minimum, in order to give space to “our spontaneous intuitions as they appear to our mind/sight in a zig-zag fashion, simply in order to, as the French say, ‘reculer pour mieux sauter’ (=back off to better blow up)”.³⁶ A new ordering of the human faculties is confirmed, because “the supreme role passes from intellect to *Imaginatio Creatrix*, and sensory perception cedes primacy to the will”.³⁷

According to Tymieniecka, through this ontological and gnoseological regression to the level of the very “constructive advance of life” of being, the source of the energy can be found to drive toward the re-actualization of “humanity’s classic dream of a metaphysical vision”³⁸ and also to formulate the question of the divine in an innovative way.

2 The phenomenology of the soul: nature and transnature

The phenomenology of the soul plays a special role in the renewal of metaphysics proposed by Tymieniecka on the basis of the creative condition of human living being, in the degree to which in this context the soul, continuing to be understood in Husserlian terms as “the special system of functional circuits” of the person,³⁹ can go beyond the limitations imposed on it by modern psychology and can manifest anew its function of animator of the body and vitalizer of the spirit, taking an unprecedented place between anthropology and metaphysics, as Stephan Strasser had understood it.⁴⁰

In fact, “all the forces which carry the meaningfulness of natural life” flow into the passional soul. In it are expressed “the ontopoietic vital matrix of generation, unfolding, development of organic/vital significance of individualizing life”⁴¹ but, surprisingly, inserted into the context of the human soul, they “stay ‘in readiness’ to enter into the functional orchestration that will bring into play the virtualities of the Human Condition”.⁴² In other words: staying in readiness, the passional and affective forces of the stream of life constitute “the subliminal soil, in which the great play of the transfusion between the creative, the empirical and the intentional, the natural and the transnatural takes place”.⁴³

On the basis of this new dynamic phenomenon revealed by the gaze centered on the poesis of life, one can also identify in the soul the place of “the transformatory climax of the unfolding of living types which goes in between the vital and the creative, that is specifically human phase of unfolding life, with the advent of *Imaginatio Creatrix*”;⁴⁴ consequently, one can grasp in the soul the affirmation of “the creative matrix of the specifically human development”⁴⁵ which, in addition to the constituting intentional factor, brings forth, “as if exploding the straitjacket of intellectual significance”, the factors of the vital, the poetic and the moral sense.⁴⁶

³⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁶ Tymieniecka, “The New Enlightenment”, 9.

³⁷ Tymieniecka, *Creative Experience*, 11.

³⁸ Tymieniecka, “The New Enlightenment”, 9.

³⁹ Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, 6.

⁴⁰ Strasser, *The Soul*.

⁴¹ Tymieniecka, “Human Development”, 9.

⁴² Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, 10.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Tymieniecka, “Human Development”, 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, 7.

In this way, the soul assumes the role of a “knot” central for the Phenomenology of the Human Condition, the new discipline that emerged in Tymieniecka’s “Logos and Life – Book 1” as a reformulation of philosophical anthropology. Such a knot brings together within the Human Condition the issues of the Metaphysics of life, of Ontogenesis and, most significantly the Phenomenology of the Sacred.⁴⁷

Tymieniecka describes the soul as the middle ground in which all life’s virtualities share constructively in the human universe in-the-making.⁴⁸ It lies between two unfathomable spheres: one is the “loose end” from which the initial Spontaneity surges with its life-prompting impetus, bringing forth the primeval logos of life. The second “loose end” of the soul is the unfathomable sphere of the transnatural, the breaking point of the life-logos, toward which the initial spontaneity stretches, after an expansion in the human avenues of existence, through the entire span of life’s individual course.⁴⁹ Therefore, the soul is seen to be “the conductor of the entire circuit of logos running through life, with the Human Condition as its specific transistor”.⁵⁰ In fact, the human condition, emerging from the unintelligible impetus toward life, expands together with its entire constructive rationale, radiating, reaching its peak, at which point the same spontaneous impetus becomes transmuted and, reversing its course, dissolves in the anti-logos.

3 The movements of the soul

The three movements of the soul document three passages of the path of the life of being through the natural and human world to the spiritual one, and from here, to the transnatural one.

By focusing specifically on the origin of spiritual experience, Tymieniecka was able to present a new phenomenological approach to the religious experience. She was criticizing the classical phenomenology inspired by Husserl, since, proceeding directly to the spiritual, it could not grasp the spiritual at all; it could only talk about it.⁵¹ In contrast, Tymieniecka, having discovered the soul as “a germinal soil in which the play of the primeval life-forces within the life-schema enters into generative contact with the virtualities of the Human Condition”, found a way in which she could pursue the spiritual in its developing in us⁵² through three movements of the human soul.

The first movement of the soul, beyond the usual reflecting on the interior of the ongoing current of life, is called by Tymieniecka a “radical examination”. It occurs against the on-rushing current of life, when we sense ourselves no longer absorbed by our existence and solidarity with this existence breaks. Then, in the distance from familiarity with the world and the self, soul delineates a “radical examination”.⁵³ In the testimonies of poets, thinkers, philosophers and the religious we often find that the beginning of their itinerary is marked by a decisive moment in which everything that was familiar – convictions, tasks, projects underway, opportunities already expected, dear ideals, that seemed “natural” in the current order of things – suddenly appeared uncertain and arbitrary, lacking a foundation and a definitive reason. A question came to their mind: “and afterwards, what is there...?” and with this the irresistible desire “to examine the individual and universal condition of their personal life, a life apparently so well organized, so sure and untroubled...”⁵⁴

Tymieniecka points out that this dynamic of desire that arises spontaneously in the soul is not only of moral value. In the context of the phenomenology of life in which it happens, this desire causes a movement in the opposite direction in the course of the life of the entire being; it goes against the ongoing structures of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 198, note 4a.

⁴⁸ This vision of the soul shelters Tymieniecka’s phenomenology of life from both the danger of spiritualism and the risk of revisiting even though unwittingly some form of the matter-spirit dualism of Gnostic ancestry. Rather, here is a constant dynamic continuity between body / nature and soul / spirit, so that the entire human person in the company of all other human persons makes his journey towards the living God, bringing with him/her the entire cosmos.

⁴⁹ Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, 8.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Torjussen, Servan, Andersen Øyen, “An Interview”, 28-29.

⁵² Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, 8.

⁵³ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 65.

life, even while the desire itself emanates from a natural spontaneity. The movement of radical examination of the individual human soul causes a new phenomenon:

Now a self becomes detached and departs from the current [of the stream of life]. This self no longer identifies with its own acts; instead, it endures them. The self subjects all our paths and customary involvements to critical examination, and they are all found to be narrow, futile and banal.⁵⁵

What we can see is that the “vital virtualities of nature”, when they 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 of the living beings, in the words of the two Chilean neurophysiologists Umberto Maturana and Francisco Varela,⁵⁶ the “composition” of a more elevated “style” imposes itself⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸

The desire that drives the soul of every person to penetrate the depths of his/her natural existence indicates a need to find a mode of living in which something else would be expressed.⁵⁹ For this reason, the soul develops its second movement, termed “exalted existence,” with which it hurls itself into the analysis of something which would surpass the narrow confines of the life-stream, turning itself toward the infinite.

For every restriction with which everyday life hinders its impetus, the soul perceives that a new door opens on an open path which sparkles with attractive promises. This sets it in the motion of exalted existence and thrusts it into the analysis of ideal conditions. For this reason, says Tymieniecka,

The artists will embark on the pursuit of the ‘perfect beauty’; the scholar searches for the ‘ultimate truth’ of things; the jurist seeks justice; the educator strives for the ideal of the human being; the religious follows the ideal of divine.⁶⁰

When the soul uncovers ideals and vocations, it contemplates a path towards unreserved plenitude, but in reality, each time it takes one direction toward them following its need for passing beyond, the guiding thread “is going to break”.⁶¹ Justice, beauty, friendship, God, all these absolutes recognized as an expression of the soul’s yearning, reveal themselves as nothing else than “regulatory ideas” of the soul’s limited nature, a mere extension of man’s own “reach”, as Kant showed.

The contingency at the very heart of man is discovered. And thus is made the sad, strictly intimate and personal discovery of the finiteness of man.⁶²

But, Tymieniecka continues, “must one necessarily declare then in favor of existential nullity?”⁶³ Certainly, some have thought so, for example Goethe’s young Werther or Virgil’s Dido, but does the edge of desire truly encounter only emptiness? Is there truly nothing else when empirical passions are exhausted? Even Thérèse de Lisieux, who had chosen the divine as the *telos* of her existential striving, did not encounter it in the first phase of her search, and suffered from her incapacity to transcend her finiteness, “save for rare

55 Ibid.

56 Maturana and Varela, *Autopoiesis*. Humberto Maturana and his colleague Francisco Varela have undertaken the construction of a systematic theoretical biology which attempts to define living systems not as objects of observation and description, nor even as interacting systems, but as self-contained unities, as autonomous, self-referring and self-constructing closed systems – in their terms, autopoietic systems. This natural poiesis, or autopoiesis, according to Tymieniecka, can also blossom in the ontopoiesis of life, operated by the living “enaction” of the human subjectivity that “expands life into possible world of life” (*Creative Experience*, 6), beyond the limits of natural determinism.

57 Tymieniecka, *Creative Experience*, 384.

58 Tymieniecka, “The Golden Measure”, 15.

59 Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, 69.

60 Ibid., 72.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid., 72.

63 Ibid., 73.

moments”.⁶⁴

So the new question of the soul is: what are these rare moments? The answer is a series of rhetorical questions:

When our natural resources are exhausted and all spontaneity dried up, is this not the very moment when the screen of every objectivity is broken and the soul plunges again into its underground turmoil? Does it plunge where a ‘sacred river’ imperturbably and silently flows? Does an underground source exist? Does the complete analysis of our profound and personal being lead to a desert, to the death of the soul, to the nothingness? Or rather can the soul at the hour of depletion, having exhausted itself, plunge again into the life-giving waters of an underground stream? Is this sacred torrent not the one over which we struggle when directing our interior life through its precise stages and across their displacements?⁶⁵

In this way, the soul sets out on its third movement, termed “toward transcending,” in which the life of the spirit in the dimension of “inward sacredness” is inaugurated. Here the soul finds itself facing the question of its personal transnatural destiny. The profile of the progression of this destiny unveils itself to the soul “in the play (of necessity or of grace?) between the lived instants and the design proposed – it seems – by an unshakeable necessity”.⁶⁶ This design seems to be a system of reference for the individual lived states in which they spontaneously place themselves in the modes of acquiescence and of “passing beyond” our finitude.

The great turning points of destiny are revealed by specific facts, happening in the life of the individual soul. According to Tymieniecka, these facts are the so-called “instantaneous actions” through which “the life of the soul establishes ‘high tonality’, the conductor of destiny: each of these actions contains destiny or even prefigures destiny entirely”.⁶⁷

Finally, the third movement is accomplished by the discovery of “the sacred foundation, in union with the Witness”.⁶⁸ In fact, in the instantaneous actions, the soul realizes that throughout the thickness of its psychical level and the pulp of its interior work, the thread it has spun throughout its existence is manifesting and it suddenly even discovers that is not alone in discovering it: a “Unique Presence”, a “Unique Witness” is making its way in the soul, one which is absolutely distinct from the soul, as Other.⁶⁹

In opposition to our states of soul, the presence leaves us at once powerless while introducing a return to depths of soul already quiet. It attracts all our thoughtful attention and receives this attention as a living reabsorption. Far from being an imagined reabsorption in cosmic forces, it is a complete personal union, an interfusion in which distinction is infinitely affirmed through participation. It has as if (having finally found a ‘hold’ for its anchor), our soul – the demands of its transcendent impulse calmed – keeps silence, attentive to the ecstatic states it carries. The soul has finally began a full life, the reciprocal participation which inundates us through and through. It is so complete that there no longer remains anything in the world to desire, to care for or even to hope for!⁷⁰

Obviously, remarks Tymieniecka, it is communication in the sacred with another human soul that allows the soul to enter into the full circuit of its transnatural course. The appearance of the Unique Witness in the self-ciphering of the soul’s progress is its result.⁷¹

At this point Tymieniecka asks: is not this unique presence, this Unique Witness – which totally pervades our being, although the soul “ciphers” it as an absolutely other than itself – what we indicate with that Augustinian notion of the “divine,” of the “God within us and us outside ourselves”?⁷²

The need to answer this question gave rise to the volumes of “The Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life”, the second editorial series after “Logos and Life”, written by Tymieniecka as part of “Analecta

⁶⁴ St. Thérèse de Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*, 97-98.

⁶⁵ Tymieniecka, *The Three Movements*, 74.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 166-167.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 204, note 46.

⁷² Tymieniecka, “From the Sacred to the Divine”, 17.

Husserliana,” the Springer series she directed. Here, Tymieniecka not only faces the question of the divine, as in Book I: *The case of God in the New Enlightenment* (2009), but also even develops it in terms of Christian-Catholic confession, as in Book II: *Christo-Logos: Metaphysical Rhapsodies of Faith (Itinerarium mentis in deo)* (2012).

In conclusion, to use the words of Mother Henry in James Baldwin’s *Blues for Mr. Charlie*, also for Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, “It’s up to the life in you – the life in you. That knows where it comes from, that believes in God”.⁷³

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