

Logos of Light, Abyss of Being: The Soul's Ascent and Phenomenological Unfolding in Emerson and Tymieniecka

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Received: April 2025

Published: September 2025

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Citation:

Keramat Jahromi, Maral & Asadi Amjad, Fazel. The Logos of Light, Abyss of Being: The Soul's Ascent and Phenomenological Unfolding in Emerson and Tymieniecka. *Critical Language and Literary Studies*. Vol. 22, No.35, 2025. doi: <https://doi.org/10.48308/clls.2025.239680.1340>

Abstract

This paper investigates the convergence between Transcendentalist and phenomenological philosophies by placing the soul at the center of a shared theoretical horizon. It examines how the soul operates as a site of logoi sentence—a synthesis of metaphysical intuition and phenomenological creativity—by engaging Ralph Waldo Emerson's poetic metaphysics alongside Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's Phenomenology/Ontopoiesis of Life. While Emerson envisions the soul as an illuminating and intuitive force beyond rational cognition, Tymieniecka frames sentence as the onto-poietic unfolding of life through the Imaginatio Creatrix (Creative Consciousness). Despite emerging from distinct traditions, both thinkers conceive of the soul as a dynamic and creative force essential to being and becoming. Drawing on key studies, the paper traces Emerson's integration of Platonism, existentialism, and pragmatism, and highlights interpretive trends such as dialectical logic and comparative philosophical analysis. Scholars emphasize Emerson's metaphors of light, darkness, and fire to illustrate a dynamic metaphysical ontology that resonates with Tymieniecka's structured phenomenology. Methodologically, the paper adopts a hermeneutic-comparative approach, analyzing Emerson's Essays, Lectures, Poems, and Tymieniecka's *Analecta Husserliana* corpus. The analysis unfolds in five sections, addressing key motifs: sentient illumination, the dialectic of light and darkness, the poetic nature of the cosmos, the transformative virtual soul, and the creative primacy of intuition. Ultimately, the paper argues that Emerson articulates a poetic phenomenology that anticipates Tymieniecka's philosophical framework, offering a vision of the soul as the medium through which truth, creativity, and existential insight emerge in the unfolding of life.

Keywords: Imaginatio Creatrix (Creative Consciousness), Intuition, Logoi Sentence, Logos of Life, Phenomenology/Ontopoiesis of Life, Poetic metaphysics, Soul

Introduction

At the heart of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Transcendentalism lies a profound vision of the soul as a radiant and intuitive center of being—a metaphysical force that exceeds rational cognition and grounds the human spirit in a universe suffused with meaning. Emerson's thought, marked by poetic depth and spiritual resonance, conceives of the soul not merely as a faculty of mind but as the dynamic core of existence itself, where the dialectic of light and darkness unfolds to disclose truth, beauty, and transcen-

dence. In a seemingly different register, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's Phenomenology/Ontopoiesis of Life articulates a convergent vision: a phenomenological ontology in which sentence and the Imaginatio Creatrix drive the generative unfolding of life from within. Despite distinct terminologies and historical contexts, both thinkers place the soul at the center of a creative and revelatory process, positioning it as the origin of meaning, becoming, and existential illumination.

This study explores the soul as a site of *logoic sentience*—a convergence of metaphysical intuition and phenomenological creativity—by placing Emerson’s transcendental conception of the soul in dialogue with Tymieniecka’s *Phenomenology of Life*. It argues that Emerson’s poetic metaphysics not only resonates with but also anticipates key phenomenological concerns developed by Tymieniecka, including *ontopoiesis*, the *Imaginatio Creatrix*, and the inner Logos of Life. By framing this comparison as a new philosophical intervention, the research seeks to clarify how Emerson’s Transcendentalism, when re-contextualized through Tymieniecka’s lens, reveals a latent phenomenological depth often overlooked in existing scholarship. In doing so, the study contributes both to the history of ideas and to contemporary phenomenological discourse, offering an original account of how soul, creativity, and illumination intersect at the core of human experience. Rather than positioning Emerson merely as a historical figure, this inquiry proposes a shared theoretical horizon between American Transcendentalism and modern phenomenology, where the soul emerges as the lived medium of knowing, being, and becoming.

Methodologically, this study employs comparative philosophical analysis and close textual interpretation, drawing from both primary writings—Emerson’s *Essays*, *Lectures*, and *Poems* and Tymieniecka’s *Analecta Husserliana* corpus—and relevant phenomenological literature. The approach is hermeneutic and reflective, privileging internal conceptual coherence over external historical chronology. The study is structured into five sections: (1) *The Soul as Sentience* explores the convergence between Emerson’s metaphysical conception of the soul and Tymieniecka’s phenomenology of sentient logos, emphasizing their shared vision of inner illumination as the source of truth and being. (2) *Polarity of the Soul* examines Emerson’s dynamic ontology of light and darkness, showing how spiritual insight emerges through creative tensions that parallel Tymieniecka’s *ontopoietic* oppositions. (3) *The Soul’s Trans-Natural Becoming* analyzes Emerson’s view of the soul as an evolving, creative force central to the cosmos, aligning it with Tymieniecka’s *Imaginatio Creatrix* while highlighting Emerson’s emphasis on *poietic immediacy*. (4) *The Virtual Soul* discusses the soul as a divine and transformative impulse, comparing Emerson’s experiential spirituality with Tymieniecka’s structured ascent from rupture to transcendence. Finally, (5) *Toward a Poetics of Creative Consciousness* focuses on the centrality of in-

tuition and imagination in both thinkers, presenting Emerson’s prophetic poetics as a precursor to Tymieniecka’s phenomenological creativity and revealing their mutual affirmation of the soul as the primordial source of metaphysical insight and existential formation. The inquiry is guided by three central research questions:

How does Emerson conceptualize the soul as a phenomenological and metaphysical force that transcends rational cognition?

1. In what ways does Emerson’s vision of light and darkness function as a dialectical structure within his metaphysics of the soul?
2. How does Emerson’s poietic and intuitive understanding of the soul anticipate or resonate with phenomenological frameworks, particularly Tymieniecka’s *Imaginatio Creatrix* and the *Ontopoiesis of Life*?
3. Through these guiding questions, the study reveals a conceptual affinity between a phenomenological study of Emerson’s transcendental poetics and Tymieniecka’s phenomenological ontology, offering a fresh perspective on the soul as a luminous, creative, and ontologically central dimension of human existence.

Literature Review

Recent scholarship has begun to frame Emerson not just as a Transcendentalist, but as a deeply phenomenological thinker. Across a range of studies, there is a growing appreciation for how his vision of the soul blends intuition, creativity, and metaphysical insight—often through a poetic lens that resonates with multiple philosophical traditions, from Platonism and pragmatism to existentialism and metaphysical realism.

Many scholars highlight Emerson’s “Over-Soul” as more than a spiritual metaphor—it emerges as a key phenomenological concept. Walls (2021) and Guardiano (2021), for instance, see it as a bridge between the personal and the universal, while Urbas (2017) explores how causation plays a role in this metaphysical unfolding. Others, like Corrigan (2010), examine how Emerson treats consciousness as a dynamic process, even invoking *metempsychosis* to suggest the soul’s ongoing transformation. Davis (2019) adds an emotional layer, suggesting that Emerson’s longing for intersubjective connection reflects a deep, lived understanding of relational con-

sciousness. Nature also plays a central role. Simovic (2022) sees it as the key to self-realization, while Wood (1976) traces a dialectical structure in Emerson's nature-soul relationship—a movement from tension to synthesis that echoes phenomenological patterns of unfolding.

Among the few phenomenological readings of Emerson's work, two recent studies are especially relevant to the present inquiry. Amjad and Keramat (2023) explore the parallels between Suhrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy and Emerson's Transcendentalism, emphasizing intuition and inner light as phenomenological foundations of knowledge. Similarly, in 2025, the authors examine Emerson's integration of empirical and transcendental modes of knowing through the lens of phenomenology, highlighting this view of the soul as a site of intuitive and ontological insight. These studies provide crucial groundwork for the current paper, which extends the phenomenological analysis by engaging Emerson's metaphysical poetics in dialogue with Tymieniecka's *Phenomenology of Life*.

Taken together, these studies show that Emerson defies categorization. Moreover, the frequent use of comparative and interdisciplinary methods in Emerson studies indicates that his work resists reduction to any single philosophical tradition. His integration of spiritual, metaphysical, and scientific discourses positions him as a thinker whose ideas are highly relevant to contemporary *Phenomenology of Life*, particularly in relation to themes of embodiment, intentionality, and ontological becoming. Therefore, a phenomenological reading not only enriches our understanding of Emerson's intellectual heritage but also contributes to broader philosophical conversations on consciousness, creativity, and the meaning of life.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Concepts of a Comparative Study

This study is situated at the intersection of transcendentalist metaphysics and phenomenological ontology, proposing a shared conceptual horizon between Ralph Wado Emerson's notions of the soul and Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's *Phenomenology/ Ontopoiesis of Life*. At its center is the theorization of the soul as a dynamic matrix of *logoic sentience*—a living, creative principle mediating between intuition, reason, and onto-poietic becoming. Life's logoic intelligence and sentience are two sides of the same coin, one principle accessible through

direct intuition but interpreted differently. A Logos is a sentient logos, and sentience is a logoic sentience, which means that "The logos of life in action in seemingly fleeting moment introduces sentience, the sentience of the logos of life itself, which means sentience is the primal feature of the intentional correlated-ness of the constructive processes of life's unfolding" (Tymieniecka, *The Fullness of the Logos* 31). Besides, the process of onto-poietic becoming reveals how life articulates itself through layers of meaning, consciousness, and existential creativity. Human subjectivity participates in this dynamic by contributing to the trans-natural evolution of being and the cosmos.

In Emerson's metaphysical framework, the soul is not a mere faculty but the radiant core of being—a site of spontaneous insight and inner illumination. His epistemology privileges sentiment and intuition over discursive thought, presenting the soul as the ground of direct, affective access to truth. Here, light and darkness are not binary opposites but dialectical poles rendered intelligible through the soul's perceptual ascent. The soul, in this view, is the medium through which metaphysical synthesis and spiritual knowing unfold. Tymieniecka complements this vision by locating sentience within the onto-poietic unfolding of life. Her *Phenomenology of Life* introduces sentience as a pre-reflective, world-constituting force through which the *Logos* of existence emerges. *Sentience*, for Tymieniecka, is not reducible to cognition; it is the foundational energy of becoming, enabling the emergence of meaning, creativity, and continuity across nature, spirit, and cosmos. The *logoic sentience* forms the inner radiance of life itself—a metaphysical illumination akin to Emerson's soul.

Bringing these frameworks into dialogue, this study theorizes the soul as a phenomenological site where *intuition*, *ontopoiesis*, and *creative consciousness* converge. Both thinkers locate the origin of intelligibility not in abstract rationality but in the immanent structure of life, revealed through poetic vision and intuitive insight. Central to this synthesis is the faculty of *Imaginatio Creatrix*, which Tymieniecka defines as the generative principle of existential and metaphysical expression. Like Emerson's imaginative soul, it is through creative imagination that light and darkness, self and cosmos, are symbolically articulated and spiritually integrated. Thus, the soul, as *logoic sentience*, becomes the medium of life's poetic and sacred unfolding.

The Soul as Sentience: Emerson's Ontology and the Phenomenological Horizons of Tymieniecka

Ralph Waldo Emerson's conception of the soul can be phenomenologically described as an ascent from knowledge shrouded in semi-darkness toward illumination through full enlightenment—mirroring phenomenology's goal of moving from obscurity to clarity through reflection. When examined alongside Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's *Phenomenology of Life*, both thinkers reveal a shared concern with how inner consciousness discloses meaning. While they emphasize first-person reflection, they rarely explicate the precise mechanisms of intuition and insight, leaving interpretation to the reader. The contemplative self emerges as the condition for conscious life. Tymieniecka, expanding Husserl's legacy, insists on "the essential basic solidarity of the conscious life" (Tymieniecka 2011, 454). This ontological grounding resonates with Emerson's vision in *Self-Reliance*: "For the sense of being, which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them" (2014, 36). Both accounts converge in viewing the soul as an originative source of life and meaning.

While Emerson's notion of the "sense of being" serves as a recurrent premise for ontological revelation, Tymieniecka introduces greater complexity by arguing that the interior manifestation of the Logos is not a state stripped of its existential dimensions. Instead, she advocates for a return to ideational frameworks that retain a vital link with the full range of human experience. This culminates in her conception of sentience—a key expression of the Logos—which she describes as non-linear and pervasive: "Sentience is not a perceptual state that it is either conscious of or self-consciously aware of" (Tymieniecka 2009, 29). Rather, sentience acts as a proto-capacity of reason and intuition, a primary, self-evident faculty of life. As Louchakova-Schwartz puts it, this sentience is "uniformly spread throughout the realm of awareness, devoid of any purposeful route" (2013, 305).

In Emerson's Transcendentalism, sentiment is the soul's guiding force, superior to rational thought: "The soul always hears an admonition in such lines, let the subject be what it may. The sentiment they instill is of more value than any thought they may contain" (Emerson 2014, 26). He insists on trusting one's inner truth: "To believe your thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart

is true for all men" (26). Tymieniecka similarly portrays sentience as a "constructive sentience already at work" that fuses inner and outer consciousness (Tymieniecka 2011, 454), combining intuition and reason into "the intelligence of heart and mind combined". Emerson echoes this fusion: "[...] the effect of every action is measured by the depth of the sentiment from which it proceeds" (2014, 83). For both thinkers, sentience is the primal force shaping life's unfolding—what Emerson calls the "aboriginal abyss of real Being" (2014, 66).

In Tymieniecka's account, the logos arises within consciousness as a co-constituted field where subject and object emerge together in the broader web of life. Emerson captures this transcendence when he writes, "before the revelations of the soul, Time, Space, and Nature shrink away" (1960-1982, 189). Tymieniecka grounds this metaphysical vision in both scientific insight and onto-poietic processes, showing that the origins of the Logos are not only philosophical but empirical. Roger Sedarat notes a striking resemblance between Emerson's Over-Soul and Sufi mysticism, particularly in their shared emphasis on indivisible unity: "Emerson's Transcendentalism, best represented by his belief in the Over-Soul, proves so close to the Sufi mystic's relation to nature... that at times it seems to have anticipated it" (18). This unity aligns with Tymieniecka's "sentient-cognitive thread of logico sentience", which grounds our existential bond with all creation.

Besides, Sentience ignites the communion of the logico spread toward the expansion—as metamorphosis culminating in human experiences such as beauty, love, and other transcendental human experiences. For Emerson, beauty is intrinsically linked to creativity: "Beauty chased he everywhere, / In flame, in storm, in clouds of air. / He smote the lake to feed his eye" (2014, 11). Likewise, he posits love at the core of "domestic and civic relations", as well as our spiritual and emotional selves; love influences our actions, "senses", and "imagination", and is capable of inspiring "divine anger and enthusiasm" and "a revolution in mind and body" (Wayne 2010, 152). Ultimately, Tymieniecka sees the logos not as a teleological endpoint but as a principle continually realized through life's intuitive engagement: "we can understand the logos' ultimate constructive origins by outlining its intuitive life involvement and realization in concrete life evolution rather than by predicting its farthest constructive ends, like human awareness, or by assuming an external realm beyond

it” (Tymieniecka 2009, 95). This ontopoietic framework displaces traditional metaphysical absolutes with a life-anchored, intuitive sentience that governs consciousness, creativity, and the entire dynamic unfolding of being. **Polarity of the Soul: Emerson’s Ontology of Light and Darkness**

Any reference to light or darkness presupposes their intrinsic interrelation as both complementary and oppositional. Emerson identifies this dynamic as a universal principle of nature: “Polarity, or action and reaction, we meet in every part of nature; in darkness and light; in heat and cold; in the ebb and flow of waters; in male and female...” (2014, 53). This dialectic is not a contradiction but a constitutive duality wherein each element defines and animates the other. Light and darkness mutually condition meaning—neither is fully comprehensible in isolation. Their dialectic thus serves as a metaphysical and phenomenological structure for perception and understanding.

Framed within this duality, light and darkness emerge as the primal manifestations of *Imaginatio Creatrix*—the creative force shaping human existence. As Tymieniecka suggests, such elemental oppositions are foundational to life’s constitution, marking the genesis of the “human world of life” (Tymieniecka 2009, 95-99). Through their poietic tension, they pervade all dimensions—organic, psychic, societal, and spiritual—uniting life’s undercurrents with sentient experience, stimulating growth and articulating the inner realm of being.

Emerson’s imagination is steeped in a dialectic of light and soul, woven deeply into his language and thought. He often uses light as a symbol of revelation—both inner and outer. In one verse, he writes, : “I was a gem concealed/ me my burning ray revealed” (Emerson 1971-2013, 327). Here, light does not merely uncover; it ignites the latent truth within, reflecting the soul’s inward momentum toward revelation. For Emerson, the soul constitutes the ontological root of meaning and understanding. As AlQaisi notes, because the soul resides nearest to human essence, it becomes the medium through which humans encounter not only themselves but the nature of being itself (2016, 449). Yet Emerson does not reduce these insights to rigid spiritual laws or fixed “testimonies”. Instead, such illuminations emerge organically from the soul’s engagement with experience. They illuminate the subtle depths of inner life. As he puts it: “The soul raised over passion beholds

identity and eternal causation, perceives the self-existence of Truth and Right...” (Emerson 2014, 39). This calm is not the endpoint of knowledge but the soul’s affirmation of alignment with a deeper, ongoing truth.

Thus, the soul functions as a conduit for the Logos in the human world. It not only radiates the light of understanding but draws forth into visibility the deepest elements of human aspiration, conviction, and self-realization. Emerson insists that the soul is not reducible to cognitive faculties or organic functions. Instead, it is the animating light behind all operations of the human being: “All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light”(139-140). In this light, the dialectic of light and darkness operates not only on a metaphysical or naturalistic level but also as an inner phenomenological rhythm. It is central to the poietic processes of becoming, perception, and revelation—guiding both the creative acts of the mind and the spiritual evolution of the soul.

Emerson and the Soul’s Trans-Natural Becoming: A Phenomenology of Creative Life

As Emerson observes, “Life invests itself with inevitable conditions”, suggesting that the Human Condition comprises evolving dimensions of the soul that empower individuals to shape meaning and transform human relationships (Emerson 2014, 58). Viewed through the lens of Husserlian phenomenology, the soul emerges as “the special system of functional circuits” of the person, transcending the reductive boundaries of modern psychology. In Tymieniecka’s metaphysical reconfiguration, the soul is revitalized as both the body’s animator and the spirit’s vitalizer, grounded in the living human being as a creative origin and “a new existential locus” (Tymieniecka 1988, 6).

Within Tymieniecka’s phenomenology, the passionate soul actively engages with the full spectrum of meanings embedded in natural life. It serves as the locus of the ontopoietic matrix wherein processes of generation, unfolding, and individuality occur. Yet these generative currents “stay in readiness” within the soul, awaiting integration into the full orchestration of the Human Condition (Tymieniecka 1988, 10). This readiness is affectively charged, flowing through what Tymieniecka calls “the subliminal

soil”, where experiential threads are dynamically interwoven.

Emerson poetically echoes this ontopoietic trans- fusion in his *Spiritual Laws*, asserting: “But only that soul can be my friend which I encounter on the line of my own march... native of the same celestial latitude, repeats in its own all my experience (Emerson 2014, 81). Here, the soul is not a fixed entity but a dynamic force in harmony with the unfolding cosmos. This idea resonates with Tymieniecka’s view of the soul as the site of the “trans-formator climax of the unfolding of living types”, perceptible through the phenomenological lens focused on the *Poiesis of Life*. With the advent of the *Imaginatio Creatrix*, this gaze exposes the threshold between the vital and the creative- what Tymieniecka identifies as the human phase of ontopoietic evolution (Verducci 2018, 9). Therefore, the affirmation of a creative matrix for human growth arises, one that surpasses rational structures and breaks through “the straitjacket of intellectual significance” (Tymieniecka 1988, 7), opening space for the poetic, the moral, and the vital to shape human becoming.

For Emerson, the soul is the generative center through which all the virtualities of life emerge into the cosmos. As he writes in the *Poet*: “The Universe is the externalization of the soul. Wherever the life is, that bursts into appearance around it” (2014, 195). This creative emergence reflects a synchronization of functional relations enabling being’s unfolding. He further affirms that “the soul is not twin-born but the only begotten...of a fatal and universal power, admitting no co-life” (229). The soul thus operates as the conductor of life’s metaphysical circuit, while the “web of events” forms “the flowing robe in which she is clothed” (142). Tymieniecka similarly understands the soul as driven by an intrinsic life-affirming force that initiates and sustains the human condition. However, she acknowledges that this impulse reverses and dissolves “in the anti-logos” (Tymieniecka 1988, 8)—marking the enigmatic closure of the soul’s ontopoietic arc.

The Virtual Soul: Emersonian Desire, Divine Impulse, and the Poiesis of Transcendence

In *The Three Movements of the Soul*, Tymieniecka outlines a phenomenology that maps the soul’s passage from engagement with the physical and social world, through spiritual ascent, to the trans-natural realm. This trajectory marks a shift from classical phenomenology’s focus on intentionality to an ex-

ploration of the source of spiritual experience itself. Tymieniecka envisions 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” (Tymieniecka 1988, 8). This reorientation parallels Emerson’s understanding of divine revelation as an inner event of soul-manifestation. He writes: “We distinguish the announcements of the soul, its manifestations of its own nature, by the term Revelation... [as] an influx of the divine mind into our mind” (Emerson 2014, 145). For both thinkers, revelation arises not from without but from the soul’s intrinsic, life-creative movement.

Tymieniecka identifies the soul’s initial transformation as a movement of “radical examination”, a rupture from natural immersion in life’s flow. This existential awakening begins when “our solidarity with this existence breaks”, resulting in a crisis of orientation in which the soul no longer identifies with its actions but instead endures them. It enters a liminal space between self and world, initiating a profound interrogation of existence (Tymieniecka 1988, 51). As she explains: “Now a self becomes detached and departs from the current [of the stream of life]. This self no longer identifies with its 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” (65). This rupture echoes the mystical tension in Emerson’s verse: “They reckon ill who leave me out/ When me they fly, I am the wings/I am the doubter and the doubt/And I the hymn the Brahmin sings”(Emerson 1960-1982, 22). For Emerson, such detachment marks the essence of poetic power: “The power to detach and to magnify by detaching is the essence of rhetoric in the hands of the orator and the poet” (Emerson 2014, 181). Both thinkers, therefore, link existential separation with deeper expressive and transformative insight.

From this point, Tymieniecka explains that the “vital virtualities of nature” undergo an ontopoietic transformation, evolving into a “constructive advance” of life- a form of autopoiesis that culminates in a uniquely human style of being (Tymieniecka 1988, 384). This style, described as the “firstness” of existential creativity, is actualized in the personal uniqueness of the human subject (Kronegger and Tymieniecka 2013, 15). The soul, animated by a yearning to transcend the habitual structures of daily life, enters a second movement: “exalted exis-

tence". This phase aligns with the Sufi motif of journeying inward—from the “outer man to the man of light”(Corbin 1994 , 69). At this elevated juncture, the soul begins to sense the infinite within the finite, discovering “a different door” that opens toward an illuminated path (Verducci 2018 , 636). It is along this path that individuals strive toward ideals: beauty, truth, justice, human flourishing , and the divine—each a manifestation of the soul’s creative ascent beyond the constraints of empirical life.

Emerson celebrates this pursuit of the divine , emphasizing intuitive experience over doctrinal knowledge, akin to “the Sufi mystic’s reliance on inner experience...for divine wisdom” (Sedarat 2019 , 32). He writes: “The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure, that it is profane to seek to interpose helps. It must be that when God speaketh he should communicate, not one thing, but all things; should fill the world with his voice; should scatter forth light, nature, time, souls, from the center of the present thought...”(Emerson 1960-1982 , 124). Yet this movement toward plenitude is not linear. Emerson insists that “Truth is the summit of being; justice is the application of it to affairs. All individual natures stand in a scale, according to the purity of this element in them” (Emerson 2014 , 237). These ideals—truth , justice, beauty—are expressions of the soul’s inner longing to transcend the “guiding thread” of habitual life. This longing culminates in the soul’s third movement: *transcending*, the soul’s entry into the sanctified inner realm of spiritual life.

Tymieniecka describes the soul’s moment of realization as an encounter with the Unique Witness—a wholly other presence—through which the self becomes aware of its transcendent ground (Verducci 2018 , 637). She clarifies that this is not a “re-absorption in cosmic forces”, but a personal, dynamic interfusion where the soul, silenced by its transcendental longing, becomes attuned to an “ecstatic resonance within” (Tymieniecka 1988 , 167). Emerson articulates a resonant moment of inward union: “Truth is the highest event in nature, since it then does not give somewhat from itself, but it gives itself ... or, in proportion to that truth he receives, it takes him to itself” (Emerson 2014 , 145). Tymieniecka affirms that this encounter reveals the divine as the Unique Witness—both immanent and wholly other (Tymieniecka 2012b , 17). This state parallels the Sufi concept of the innermost domain, the “emerald vision”(Corbin 1994 , 84), where identity flows between self and divine.

Thus, the soul’s journey through Tymieniecka’s three movements articulates a phenomenology of spiritual development, where Emerson’s transcendental insights and mystical metaphysics converge. Through radical examination, exalted existence, and transcendence, the soul becomes a dynamic force of ontopoietic creation, ever in search of its divine source and fulfillment.

Emersonian Intuition and Tymieniecka’s Imaginatio Creatrix: Toward a Poetics of Creative Consciousness

After decades immersed in phenomenology, Tymieniecka sought to demonstrate that the very structure of life is anchored in “geo-cosmic dynamism” (Tymieniecka 1988, 12), a force that spans the heavens, the earth, and all that lies between. This ontopoietic dynamism invites humans to consciously attune themselves to the sacred, spiritual, and cosmic rhythms that shape existence. Emerson echoes this unfolding of human participation in life’s totality: “All our progress is an unfolding, like the vegetable bud. You have first an instinct, then an opinion, then a knowledge...” (Emerson 2014, 169). Though rich in spiritual semantic, Tymieniecka clarifies that her vision is not theological. She distinguishes her work from theology, which she describes as “the theory-speculative, intellectual—of the data of revelation” (Torjussen et al. 2008, 29). Hence, her openness to the transition from phenomenological awareness to spiritual insight reveals a kinship with a conformity between metaphysics and religion, suggesting that the soul’s philosophical journey may trace the arc of the sacred.

Tymieniecka builds on Husserl’s notion of consciousness as a unified structure encompassing both psychological and spiritual aspects of the soul. Emerson offers a parallel vision, portraying moments of direct divine encounter: “By the necessity of our constitution a certain enthusiasm attends the individual’s consciousness of that divine presence ... from an ecstasy and trance and prophetic inspiration” (Emerson 2014, 145). Although Tymieniecka credits Husserl with overcoming Cartesian dualism and restoring the unity of conscious life- particularly by reintegrating the body and emotions- she critiques his tendency to constrain the soul within rational and sense-bestowing faculties (Tymieniecka 1988, 3-4; 2012a, 23). This constraint, she argues, restricts the soul’s expressive freedom by bringing it too closely to intentionality. Emerson similarly resists such restrictions, seeking a more expansive view of the soul.

He asserts that “the sense of being, which in calm hours rises ... is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them and proceeds obviously from the same source...” (Emerson 2014, 36). Both thinkers thus envision the soul as unified with the totality of existence.

Emerson’s philosophy foregrounds the soul’s spontaneous creativity as an inner force that surpasses intellect or will. In *Self-Reliance*, he states, “The mind that grows could not predict the times, the means, the mode of that spontaneity. God enters by a private door into every individual” (Emerson 2014, 168). This spontaneity, rooted in intuition rather than reason, forms the metaphysical core of Emerson’s thought and anticipates Tymieniecka’s Phenomenology of Life, wherein the *Imaginatio Creatrix* becomes central to the unfolding of life and the intelligibility of the cosmos. Emerson expands this view in *Art*, describing the soul’s creativity as “progressive”, manifesting in both “useful and the fine arts” (203–204). For him, art is not mere imitation but a “fairer creation”, a symbolic transfiguration of nature into expressions of universal truth. This creative power—“the executive power to separate, and to enlarge by detaching”—signals the soul’s alignment with a greater creative force. Art, Emerson writes, reveals the “aboriginal power”, a universal and spiritual force that “restores to us the most forthright states of mind” (204). Tymieniecka similarly sees creativity as the essential principle through which life reveals its generative structure.

Tymieniecka, building on and challenging Husserl’s framework, pushes beyond the boundaries of constitutive intentionality into what she calls the “pre-predicative” zone—a realm where meaning arises outside the grasp of discursive intellect. She describes this threshold as “the breaking point of intentionality that marks the border between meaning—bestowing agent of the intellect and the zone of pre-predicative...” (Tymieniecka 2012c, 15). This emphasis on intuitive meaning echoes Emerson’s insights. In *The Poet*, he affirms the imagination’s liberating power: “If the imagination intoxicates the poet, it is not inactive in other men... The use of symbols has a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men” (Emerson 2014, 203). Here, Emerson affirms the universal character of imagination as the soul’s inherent capacity to symbolize, transform, and elevate the world beyond the given. This imaginative force, while poetic, is also metaphysical, linking human expression to the deeper processes of life.

Tymieniecka’s *Imaginatio Creatrix* designates creativity as both the foundational source and orienting force of human existence. She claims that “creative activity...has the privileged access to the inner workings of the constructive progress” spanning nature, humanity, and the life-world (Tymieniecka 1978, 182). In her view, creativity is not confined to aesthetics or intellect; it constitutes the very structure of existence. While classical phenomenology aligns consciousness with lived experience, Tymieniecka introduces an additional creative capacity: “the creative function... conjoined with the constitutive function and yet autonomous to it” (Tymieniecka 2006, 5). Like Emerson, she rejects any notion of a passive soul, affirming that “the soul is never blind ... always guided by the creative urge” (26–27). Thus, the soul becomes a synthesizing nexus that unifies and directs experience. Without creativity, this process would lack coherence and purpose. Creativity, then, is not a secondary trait, but an ontopoietic force intrinsic to life itself. Emerson echoes this view, seeing creativity as the life-force of the “Over-Soul”. Tymieniecka contends that reason is merely “a specific modality of human creative genius”, grounded in the “forces...constructive rules... and proficiencies of bios, life, and the cosmos” (Tymieniecka 2000, 189). Their shared vision makes creativity not an afterthought of consciousness, but its ontological essence.

Tymieniecka redefines the hierarchy of human

faculties by asserting that “the highest role moves from intellect to *Imaginatio Creatrix*, and sensory perception cedes supremacy to the will” (Tymieniecka 1997, 11). Emerson anticipates this shift in his reflections on intuition and inspiration: “Long prior to the age of reflection is the thinking of the mind. Out of darkness, it came insensibly into the marvelous light of to-day” (Emerson 2014, 168). This unbidden yet authentic emergence mirrors Tymieniecka’s claim that philosophical insight arises not from reason but from “our spontaneous intuitions—in a zig-zag pattern” (Tymieniecka 2010, 9). Jakob von Uexküll’s work further clarifies Tymieniecka’s distinction between animal instinct and human imagination. While animals exhibit an instinctual fit between need and environment (Uexküll 1926, 79), humans display “a sui generis predisposition to be dissatisfied with mere acquiescence to the status quo”, which Tymieniecka identifies as “the surging of a *sua sponte* fulgurating force” (Tymieniecka 1978, 16). Emerson captures this transformative impulse in the soul’s capacity, through art and imagination, to

unveil new realities and renew perception.

Tymieniecka thus calls for a new field of philosophical inquiry—one that abandons objectivity as mere givenness and instead seeks to uncover the origin of all constitutive processes. This new meta-physical heuristic, she writes, emphasizes not “constitutive intentionality but the constructive advance of life which carries it... not the givenness of the world but the ‘poetic of life’” (Tymieniecka 1987, 3). It is this “poetic of life” that Emerson captures in his lyrical affirmation of the soul’s creative essence, and that Tymieniecka expands into a full philosophical system—one in which the human being is both the agent and the unfolding expression of the cosmos.

The following comparative table synthesizes the principal dimensions of the soul, sentience, light/darkness dialectics, and creative transcendence as articulated in Emerson’s transcendentalist philosophy and Tymieniecka’s *Phenomenology of Life*. It is intended to provide a visual encapsulation of the core conceptual parallels and divergences discussed throughout the preceding sections:

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of the Soul, Sentience, and Creative Consciousness in Emerson and Tymieniecka

Dimension	Ralph Waldo Emerson	Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka
Core Concept of the Soul	Soul as radiant, intuitive force and metaphysical center of being	Soul as sentient locus in the onto-poiesis of life
Epistemology	Intuition and sentiment over rationality; inner truth as self-evident	Sentience as pre-reflective, life-constituting energy; intuition as foundational
Light and Darkness Dialectic	Dynamic polarity revealing metaphysical truths; symbolic of spiritual unfolding	Elemental polarity within the Poiesis of life; foundational to the creative unfolding of existence
Creative Principle	Soul as poetic, intuitive imagination; vehicle of revelation	Imaginatio Creatrix as generative principle of existential articulation
Phenomenological Relevance	Anticipates phenomenological themes through poetic metaphysics	Systematic phenomenological ontology grounded in lived, creative consciousness
Metaphysical Structure	Transcendental unity of soul, nature, and cosmos	Co-constitution of subject and world through logoic sentience
Mode of Revelation	Poetic insight, symbolic illumination, inward revelation	Ontopoietic emergence through sentient life and imaginative articulation
Role of Nature	Nature as mirror of the soul and medium of spiritual realization	Nature as a field of onto-poietic processes interwoven with the soul's sentient activity
Transcendence	Soul transcends time, space, and individuality to affirm unity with the divine	Transcendence achieved through life's creative and intuitive evolution
Spiritual/Emotional Dimensions	Love, beauty, and passion as pathways to metaphysical truth	Sentience includes affective and passionate energies as constitutive of life's unfolding
Ontology of Becoming	Soul as evolving, creative force moving beyond static being	Life as continuous onto-poietic process; becoming as essential modality of existence
Inner Logos	Soul as inner light guiding moral and metaphysical insight	Logoic sentience as the internal thread weaving consciousness, meaning, and reality
Medium of Truth	Soul is the radiant center of being and knowing	Sentience is the primal matrix through which truth emerges phenomenologically
Imaginative Mode	Prophetic poetics as mode of ontological expression	Phenomenological imagination (Imaginatio Creatrix) as structuring principle of reality
Theoretical Legacy	Rooted in American Transcendentalism; bridges metaphysics, poetics, and proto-phenomenology	Develops Husserlian and existential phenomenology into a life-based ontology of consciousness

Conclusion

This study brings to light the profound significance of Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy of the soul, not merely as a literary or spiritual theme, but as a vital contribution to phenomenological thought. Emerson envisions the soul as the very essence of human being—a radiant, creative force that shapes reality through intuition, imagination, and moral insight. Rejecting reductionist or mechanical views of the self, he presents the soul as a site of immediate experience, where inner light and darkness coexist and generate transformation.

Emerson's metaphysical poetics emphasize that the soul is not a function or faculty but the source of all becoming—intimately tied to nature, light, space and divinity. It is through the soul that life gains depth, beauty, and direction. His metaphors—light as divine impulse, the soul as fire, life as unfolding—express a dynamic vision of existence that resonates deeply with Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's Phenomenology of Life. While Tymieniecka elaborates a complex ontology of sentient becoming, Emerson provides a poetic phenomenology grounded in spontaneity, intuition, and aesthetic revelation. Through reading Emerson's works phenomenologically, the differences and similarities between him and Tymieniecka come to light, revealing their shared belief in the soul as a generative center of ontopoietic creativity. Yet Emerson's unique emphasis on poietic immediacy and imagination positions his thought as a counterpoint to systematic philosophy—an invitation to embrace the mystery and vitality of lived experience.

The significance of this inquiry lies in restoring Emerson's soul-centered vision to contemporary philosophical discourse. His works offer a spiritual ontology that honors the complexity of human consciousness while affirming its capacity for beauty, truth, and transcendence. In a world increasingly dominated by abstraction and rationalism, Emerson's thought serves as a vital reminder that the soul remains a central compass—a luminous core from which genuine knowledge, creativity, and meaning emerge.

Funding: There is no funding support.

Authors' Contribution: The authors have written the article in a complete collaboration.

Conflict of Interests: This research does not conflict with personal and/or organizational interests.

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