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Truth

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I.
Views upon Truth and Language

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Truth – The Ontopoietic Vortex of Life

Although the definition of truth first proposed by Aristotle and maintained as the reference point for all succeeding views was situated in the intellectual sphere of rationality/logos in the human unfolding, its validity, that is, the validity of the proposition framing it, and its verification reaches far below the logical sphere of a statement. Truth's validity reverberates down from the intellectual sphere of the mind's rationality into the spheres of sense that sustain it, within the multiple spheres of the network, of sense in which; the logos of life projects its manifestation¹ through living beings and whole world of life. To grasp the full significance of notions of truth we cannot stop at any one perspective or sphere, whether the cognitive, intertextual, or pragmatic. To understand what "truth" means we should elucidate it in its origin and nature, that is, in its generative significance for the entire expanse of life and in its role within the logicoic schema of its dynamic manifestation. I propose to outline this in a succinct way in what follows. Truth will emerge as a crucial logicoic device, as the regulative vortex for the ontoipoietic balancing out of life's forces in their constructive course.

I. The Roots of Truth: The Natural "Reality" of Life

At the roots of the transcendental constitution of the lifeworld, Husserl saw the basic belief of the human being – belief in the natural world of life – as being prior to all the intentional differentiations of this world itself. I corroborate this notion of a basic existential trust in the constancy of the world of life by shifting the focus from the world to life. I see it as our basic trust in the constancy of life and of ourselves incorporating it. With this trust our entire life progresses from day to

day, from hour to hour, from instant to instant. It consists of our mute natural conviction of an indubitable *constant* background of our reality insofar as our life-individualizing process is simultaneously crystalizing the "outward" framework of our existence within the world and manifesting "inwardly" the entire spread of our vital existential and creative virtualities as they may unfold.

This conviction or belief differs essentially from any other type of what we call "belief." Each belief is suspended on a specific context, somewhat evident or presumed, from which it draws its significance and power of conviction. In contrast, the existential trust that is here in question consists in the existential quintessence of our very onto-poietic ingrownness into our own sphere of life's subsistence within which our individualizing process enmeshes us in a mutual interaction with and adaptation to circumambient forces, on the one hand, and the universal system of life, on the other, inasmuch as we crystalize its constitutive rules through our self-individualizing becoming. This amounts to a mute but most powerful self-awareness in life that is rooted in our onto-poietic ingrownness within the life context. This is the way in which I will understand the terms "existential trust" in what follows. This basic trust – or self-awareness in life – incorporates our specific centered and outward expanding vital/existential system of propensities as well as our being activated and potentially (virtually) partaking with all our individual powers in the entire context of the life stream. Thus this basic trust in life is simultaneously a trust in ourselves as well as in the life system crystalized in our living world. Since we are subject to misjudging situations, illusions about matters of fact, errors in observation, and drawing false conclusions, etc., it is upon the ground of that world and our life schema that we constantly check on the factual "real" status of all our concerns and it is over against this groundwork and its naturally presumed forthcoming expansion that this checking process proceeds. We constantly surmise certain states of fact to be owing to such and such, according to a natural scheme of things. Upon these tacit assumptions the course of human existence proceeds smoothly, but since circumstances – organic as well as vital, psychic, or societal – may change, and since the perception of things, of the affairs, processes, feelings, attitudes, commitments, etc. involved in everyday life are also subject to natural changes of all sorts, we are constantly checking whether things be "so," even if not attentively but with a doubting/assuming mechanism intrinsic to our trust in the world's constancy.

This "so" means that it falls into the natural scheme of things that we would expect to hold "true." The "truth" of things is, then, first, the moment intrinsic in our basic trust that things are as they give themselves to be in our instantaneous experience of them, and simultaneously, as they belong, and as they – concurrently – "should be" or are to be expected to be in accord with the entire schema in which our life is involved.

II. Identification, Comparison, Doubt, Adequation

Within basic trust in the unshakable presence of reality there lies the tacit re-cognition "at a glance" of the already experienced status of things, beings, facts, situations, etc. This "re-cognition" identifies, discriminates, establishes adequation between the originary sphere of experience and its "repetitive" occurrence. Here come two important points. First, this trust extends throughout the entire network of life with its innumerable entanglements of existential significance for living beings. Second, and what lies at the heart of our slowly unfolding argument, trust in the constancy of life, individual beings, and their world is not a prerogative of the specifically human being only. It extends down the evolutionary ladder to the entire animal kingdom relative to the different experiences or the "living" reactivity/receptivity of the different species of living beings. In different modalities there is a comparable "belief in the constancy of life, the constancy of the world, the constancy of each living being itself as it runs through the animal spheres of the manifestation of the logos. Even the simplest living creature does not start its life over again each day, but proceeds upon the re-cognition of the data of the previous day. For the less complex creatures there is a sense of the "fitness" between their organic/vital system of individual life, the system of life, and the given reality in front of them. (See my monograph "The Moral Sense in the Origin and Progress of the Social World," in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka and Calvin O. Schrag (eds.), *Foundations of Morality, Human Rights, and the Human Sciences*, Analecta Husserliana XV, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983.) More complex animals, who master a sensing apparatus, re-cognize, identify, and discriminate present data in repetitions of an originary re-cognition. They check on the external world to identify whether something be hay or fresh meat or a plastic bone. But it does not seem that they raise further questions, e.g.,

in just what way does their experience of today correspond to that of yesterday, or in what does this correspondence consist, etc. They do not search out the specifically human significance of life, nor the intellectual sphere of the logos of life's deployment.

Advancing spheres of sense accompany the complexity of structure that allows the animal to select its food and seek it, to recognize its enemies and attempt to avoid danger. These advances are introduced in a move of "hesitation," on which follows a more sophisticated mode of recognition and discrimination that allows for sensed and identifiable "doubt." In verifying the presence of the constant core of "reality," the vitally significant fear that already senses fitness or danger, what is to be expected instinctively, acquires a modality of psychological-intellectual recognition and identification, even an intrinsic psychological prototype of doubt. Doubt calling for verification of the state of affairs is present at every step of a pursuit. Doubt and verification is the intrinsic mechanism at hand for the seeking and selection of new ways to satisfy existential needs. With the highest animals, however, such as domestic animals, apes, there is doubt in the given data of life and the world, i.e., uncertainty as to whether the incoming data is what is to be expected or not, whether all is as it seems or appearances deceive. Then with us human beings there is full-blown doubt whether others' declarations of feeling are authentic and whether promises, agreements will be kept or not. This is a constant existential concern of individuals, societies, communities, nations, etc.

There is, indeed, along the entire evolutionary ladder extended by the logos of life an incessant play of "recognition-identification," "discrimination," "doubt," "verification," "assessment of adequation," etc.

III. Concern with "Truth" – the Balancing Device in the Logoic Dynamic System of the Manifestation of Life and of the World

The ontopoietic unfurling of life's subjacent workings in the innumerable projects of the logos' constructive impetus is by no means a smooth, unquestioned flow of generative, developmental, growth and decay sequences. On the contrary, each of the steps of all individual progress in the self-individualizing process is wrung out of challenging obstacles to be overcome by adapting to present conditions, preparing to meet new obstacles, and to advance according to outlined intentions....

In this turmoil there is located an active basic foothold of trust in the constancy of life and all that it entails. In fact, at each and every step there is an ongoing, ceaseless sequence of estimation, selection, adjustment. At the higher spheres, namely, that of *the intellectual logos of the specifically human mind*, there is the absolutely unavoidable use of judgment and decisions made upon it.

In sum there is a crucial, constructive logic device built within the development of each system in the advancing and interlocking, fusing, intertwining spheres of sense. At their frontiers along the individual routes of self-unfolding, there is carried on within the course of tacit sensing an either instinctive or intellectually formulated questioning of and checking on the status of everything, a quest after "truth." This questioning lies at the heart of our expectations, needs, wishes, tendencies, life situation, valuations, decision making, etc. The adequation of our expectations and the actual state of affairs we call, in general, "truth."

This reference to truth is tacit too. It is a built-in crucial device of the constructive logos for bringing together the matching moments of its advancing course, for bridging disruptive moments, for easing unbearable tensions between opposed tendencies, for adjusting the seemingly unadjustable, in short, to serve as the constant point of recourse for salvaging actions within the merciless turmoil of the stream in which the living being strives to fashion a consistent course. This is concern with "truth," that of the stream of life, which is ever ready to throw up a submerging rift.

In short, *the search for truth is the constructive device intrinsic to the logos'ontopoietic manifestation in life.*

IV. The Search for "Truth" in Our Self-Realization

It belongs to our onto-poietic, specifically human self-individualization that through the entire conundrum of our existential pursuit we direct our innermost – and not always clearly conscious – attention to "being ourselves." Whatever act, thought, emotion, judgment we perform, it is "our" act; it is through our acts that we "enact" our life and unfold our innermost self. Indeed, we identify ourselves with our acts by assuming their existential validity and also by feeling ourselves affirmed in them. Otherwise we deny to them this innermost personal adherence as self-

expressions by a judgmental assertion that we did them "only for convenience's sake," declaring that we really did not believe in such actions but did them for some other reason. Briefly, all our acts express a reference to truth, to ourselves, to our identity. Not all of them – as a matter of fact, extremely few – allow us to take a clear stand on this referential significance. We enact our existence with such a velocity, and amid such a conundrum of indispensable momentary decision making, that we are at a loss to answer "Where are we going?" and to know "What are we really achieving?" But we are always poised in a critical situation in our deliberations: "What do we really want?"; "What do we really feel?"; "What is our 'true opinion' about such and such a matter?"

This questioning, if pursued, extends over the entire realm of our psychic, intellectual, volitional, imaginative experience, reaching the unfathomable depth of our yearnings and dreams.

It is obvious that there can be no question of pursuing the truth of *direct* reference to the relevant data of our multisphered unfurling; that eludes us, withdrawing even further away when we seek for causes, reasons, motivations, influences, etc. Yet in order to go on with our life enactment we have to make – and we always are making – provisory estimates of all these on the assumed grounds of a given pursuit of ours; we also project provisional conclusions that we have to believe conform to our state of fundamental onto-poietic ingrownness in life and the world around and within us. Indeed, the conundrum of intertextual relations between and among the spheres of sense does not allow for any clear-cut evidential adequation leading to a basic existential experience of our onto-poietic status itself. And yet our lives are led over against that status, as is corroborated through the innumerable lines and segments of sense in our life enactment, in which we find a tacit confirmation of reality, since from the incipient moment of our becoming this basic trust becomes progressively incarnated in our growing innermost rationale.

In the swing of the human spirit we launch ourselves beyond the world's frontiers attempting to transcend it. The question of truth which was always running *sotto voce* through our life enactment as the "truth of ourselves," here, within the transcending elan leaves direct or extended reference to the world of life and assumes a specific life transcending turn about which we speak elsewhere.

V. The All-Pervading Quest after Balance/Constancy and Its Vortex

All of the spheres of rationality – vital, Dionysian, and Apollonian – partake in and are sustained by their reference to onto-poietic "reality," whatever this expression may stand for and however "far" away be the originary experiential evidence of the reality of life, the world, our root existence. As many as are the significant moments of life accumulated, as manifest themselves in innumerable modalities of the logos of life that carries them, so are the referential points of reality sharing these modalities differentiated and so are the essential forms of this relevance.

In the dynamisms of the logoc constructivism of sense in the ever more complex schemata that carry the progress of life in it? vital, societal-sharing, and institutional systems and through intellectual, judgmental, and creative aesthetic elevations, significant moments emerge across the spheres themselves that acquire specific sense in fusing, molding, interacting, crisscrossing the spheres and even singular senses already established in significant schemata.

Without reference, however weak, connecting with evidence of "reality" emphasized by the life system of the experiencing, acting, dreaming, creating person, the entire logoc system of human rational existence/life would float in the thin air and be a phantasmagoric play. The consistency of the onto-poietic individualizing course calls for the constancy of life's circuits. The world of existence and the living individual have to remain "the same." Indeed the display of logoc rationalities of the Dionysian and the Apollonian turns – that is, of all the human dimensions of life – relies on the incessant conscious or just mutely experienced identification, verification, and confirmation of references to the "real" as being basically crystalized and evidenced in the core of our existential self-experience of our human onto-poietic course. It is in this evidential core of our existential self-experience that lies the "truth value" of our constancy in the world and of the world itself. There it is that our onto-poietic relevancies to the system of life – and beyond that to the laws of the earth, our life maintaining planet, and of all the cosmos – are maintained. This relevancy for all the logoc spheres – or rational orders – of turbulent life is comparable to an umbilical cord.

VI. The Ontopoietic Vortex of Truth as the Guarantee for the Existential Constancy of the Dynamic Play of all the Spheres of the Logos of Life, Bringing them Together

Beginning with Parmenides and Plato, concern with truth has meant doubt and query into the truthfulness of reality as such. Plato's division of reality into two registers, that of the "true" and that of the merely "appearing," gave us the epistemologico-meta-physical perspective on truth. With Aristotle's concept of *adaequatio*, i.e., the conformity of a true proposition with its object, the concept of the truth was brought to its highest intellectual level, that of logic and its rules. Bacon, in contrast, conceives of truth in a pragmatic fashion, seeing its validity as being proved in the success of an operation/action. Tarski extended the truthfulness of a single proposition to its place within discourse, in which context it receives its confirmation.

All of these conceptions of the truth and all of the numerous others deriving from them held by contemporary thinkers (e.g., the conception of Quine, which holds that concepts in general emerge and develop following the practical interests of human life) express the different and yet intimately conjoined perspectives of the representational, intellectual, interactive, contextually interwordly, and utilitarian accomplishments and interests so crucial for the enactment of life. That is to say, the ontopoietic self-individualizing dynamic stream of life maintains its balancing powers within the turmoil of soliciting and rejecting forces through the logocentric device of truth seeking, which runs through the entire spread of the interactive mesh of the advancing living being with its circumambient conditions, thus crystalizing the life schemata.

In short, although the constant search for "truth" or adequation reaches its highest intellectual modality in the specifically human sphere of the cognitive logos, without which no course of individual – and a fortiori societal – enactment could be carried out, specifically human, cognitive, intellection being the clearest and strongest instrument of individual life enactment, this constant search for truth sustains the entire dynamic/constructive spread of the logos of life in its various spheres, using all the varied modalities of each.

Essentially, in pursuing the origins of the notion of truth within the ontopoietic deployment of life, we see it as the intrinsic device of the logos of life for its constructive enterprise of life's unfurling. It is of universal constructive significance. In its constant search for adequation,

it presides over the singular self-individualizing process of living beings. There it plays its essential universal role by working out – through the attunements of individual existential quests after the adequation of present, at hand conditions with the past as well as with the universal schema of life – an interactive, shared platform of constancy in which interactions are balanced with other living beings amid the disruptive pulls of life forces. This balancing effort projecting a relative constancy in life's dynamic progress has to be worked out continuously. It has to be pursued in all the spheres of the logos of life as well as in all their interrelations and in all their perspectives; it has to be ceaselessly on the move within its dynamic transformations, which involve, in principle, all these perspectives on life's enactment and their significance (intellective, pragmatic, aesthetic, creative, etc.). All of them are intergenerative in some or other way, to a greater or lesser degree.

As we may see, taking into due consideration this fundamental generative notion of truth as being immersed in all spheres of sense and being appropriately qualified by them, none of the partial perspectives may claim a preponderant validity or claim precedence over the others. Each of the above-mentioned conceptions of truth – and others – may hold a claim to only partial validity. And only together can they, since the}' express the three main concerns of human life involvement — the intellective/cognitive conception, the contextual/interrelational conception, and the pragmatic/directional conception – adequately respond to the essential life situations of the human being from whom the question and quest for "truth" proceeds. Each of them plays its specific role in life situations within the sphere of sense that is in question.

It is clear from our analyses that the elucidation of the question of "truth" within the entire field of the phenomenology of the onto-poiesis of life undercuts any hasty, tunnel-visioned temptation to relativize this notion by reducing it to one perspective on life enactment to the disregard of others.

Only the consideration of all conceptions of truth may do justice to the full significance of "truth" in its innumerable modalities of manifestation as they come together in the operation of the crucial iogic device balancing life.