

Mykhailo Minakov, Cand. Philos.
(National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine)

The Experience and The Problem of Descriptions: controversy of W. Roed and J. Dewey

In my report I shall discuss what kind of linguistic expressions should be used to express content of experience as such. What notions and names can we use to describe conditions that let us formulate obtained experience?

I shall differentiate scientific theory of experience and philosophical theory of experience. The first is mainly interested in certain experience that relates to certain separate science. The second approach needs to take into account two layers of the problem:

preconditions of possibility to experience something (including experience of experience); and aim, structure, methodological ground and framework of philosophical theory of experience, which does actually mean that in philosophy we have theory of experience and meta-theory.

Philosophy of experience should endeavor to study conditions of possibility to conceptualize and analyze experience, i.e. to become meta-theory of experience. So, basically: what are the limits and bounds of meta-theory of experience, and what categories should it use to consistent with its aim.

Wolfgang Roed, an outstanding Austrian philosopher and historian of philosophy, provides necessary arguments to for the admission that real meta-theory of experience is the 'transcendental philosophy'. Professor Roed states that by means of transcendental philosophy Kant expressed an idea of sameness of theoretical philosophy and theory of experience. 'Transcendental philosophy... takes theory of experience as its own topic. It reflects on theories of experience, explicates and highlights nature of their concepts, as well as discusses limits and modes of their significance.' (Roed, *Erfahrung und Reflexion*, 1991)- Prof. Roed connects transcendental philosophy with history of philosophy: fore in this case it will need to devote itself to historical analysis of philosophical approaches to experience from the antique times on.

But how transcendental approach can be united with historical thinking? There is an understanding shared by many that philosophical theories of experience implicate results and assumptions of the philosophical reflection of their age. An example of this presupposition we may find in lectures of John Dewey that were published as a book with title 'Reconstruction of Philosophy'. Here, Dewey insists that concept of experience is a philosophical construct that resembles expectations of philosophers. '[O]ld notion of experience was itself a product of experience — the only type of experience that was available at the moment for people. Now another concept of experience is possible since the quality of experience in which it can be experienced has gone through a number of considerable social and intellectual changes compared to experience of older times.

Notion of experience that Plato and Aristotle had is the notion of experience that the Greeks really had.' Dewey insists on dependence of notion of experience on orientation of philosopher or on historical context he lived in. This is actually why Plato and Aristotle were right when they did not recognize role of experience in defining universalities and method of finding them. This way the meaning of experience was reduced to concreteness and limitedness. However, later on in the New Age philosophy have got a new, an emancipative task: a task to ruin 'huge lifeless burden' of tradition that was dominating over the mankind. Having this in mind, philosophy had another role for experience. It was now a criterion to measure lifeless ideas and prejudices. If tradition is overcome, as the champions of Enlightenment thought, social structures and science would progress fast. Another shift happened in philosophy in late XIX century, when philosophy has been developing a new theory of experience. Progress of biology and psychology has considerably changed an understanding of processes of experience. It could be used, as Dewey thought, 'to propose methods and aims for development of new and better experience'. De facto, Dewey assumes that contemporary (for him) concept of experience is a tool to take over the human environment and to re-orient human behavior. His formula is as the following: to profoundly change human behavior one should change conditions. In this way 'experience becomes self-regulating'. One of results of this shift is a new correlation of empirical and over-empirical spheres: we may now talk of 'experimental intellect' that is the source of empirical propositions 'that could be applied in a constructive form for new tasks'.

The pragmatic approach in defining content of notions dictates certain logic of those ties and relations that unite this content with its pre-condition embodied in community of interprets. But these ties and relations cannot be of historical nature as it is stated by Dewey. 'Historization' of pragmatic dimension deletes validity and significance of philosophical and scientific notions: it would necessarily mean that whatever truth is stated now it could become false in future. Historization of pragmatic dimension of sense devalues its validity. It is a weak argument for philosophy that decision on validity of a sense should be postponed for indefinite future.

Karl-Otto Apel gives an answer to pragmatic problems. His transcendental pragmatism comes back to basic interpretation of meaning and experience: something is as something. This 'as' is the moment of mediation. This mediation is done through three dimensions: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic ones. The latter dimension deals with issues of what are conditions of our understanding of a meaning and reaching agreement on its interpretation. We cannot deny that ideal communicative community is the single most important condition of understanding on that level, while real historical community of interprets is only a derivative of it. If agree with this, we have now a formula to understand the structures of communication not only between and/or among subjects, but also among different communities and different epochs.

Wolfgang Roed comes to the same answer: he assumes that any positive statement of experience in philosophy reduces it till the level of theory of experience. Meta-level philosophy may keep only if it works with problems or problematic notions that we find due to comparison of different theories of experience. Meta-theory should refrain of positive statements on experience. Wolfgang Roed states that transcendental philosophy as an only possible consistent meta-theory of experience 'has a task to reflect on those assumptions that define experience of objects as possible, as well as define character of validity of these assumptions'[11]. This way meta-theory of experience does not support any theory as a true one. Meta-theory of experience considers theory of experience as its problem and thus it is based on problemativistic approach. Thus, professor Roed names his approach problemativism, saying that there are two ways to come to the same conclusion, meta-theory of experience could be grounded only on basis of refrain of any kind of theory of experience.

But as soon as we agree on this conclusion, its relation to problemativism provokes another complication: refusal of positive statement hinders potency of thinking on experience and even may lead to interruption of it. How fruitful can be problemativism? What heuristic consequences could it have? Wolfgang Roed was seemingly aware of this problem. He himself called this as 'heuristic vagueness' of problemativistic meta-theory of experience. He proposed to resolve this complication by repudiation of those propositions that include predicates of existence of subject and of an object. Professor Roed adheres to the strategy of abstinence of existence' predication until the need arises: a need to ground experience at least on a specter of existing thing. Otherwise the both — heuristic and scientific — constituents of experience could be lost. As a compromise with this need he mentions 'residuum' in experience. This vestige in experience reflects Kant's notion of multitude and Husserl's 'Residuum', which means that even in problemativistic approach a particle of theory of experience is still alive; thus, the meta-theory of experience loses its purity and consistency.

The heuristic vagueness of the problemativistic approaches could be addressed by reference to a fact that use of problematized notions gives an access to deep structures of experience without need to rely solely on empirical acts in cognition of experience.