

“TO COMMUNICATE WITH A GNAT”: EXPERIENCE
AND COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT
OF LIFE-WORLD

1. EXPERIENCE

Once upon a time, in the wide spaces of the Universe, in a lonely corner of the solar systems, there was a small planet on which some clever animals had invented cognition. It was the most pretentious and ludicrous moment in the whole history of the world, and, yet, it was only a moment. Nature managed to draw its breath for several times only, before the planet petrified and the clever animals had to die ...

True, this fable only partly reflects the fact of how pitiful, how sad and how fleeting the human intellect is as against Nature. Ages had passed on without intellect being there; and nothing will change when the intellect is no longer. For this intellect has no higher mission over and above the life of the humans. Because it is human intellect, and only its creator and holder is pathetic about it – as if the whole world is pivoting around him. Yet, if we could communicate with a gnat, we would discover that even this small creature floats in the air with a similar pathos and feels itself the flying centre of the Universe¹.

This lengthy citation from Nietzsche chimes in with the theme of the present Congress, so tersely and fittingly – as always – formulated by A-T. Tymieniecka. It is evident that Nietzsche does not seek for any specific ways of how to communicate with a gnat. All that he does is this – he draws attention to the limits of the human intellect, to the boundaries marked by the signs signifying the existence of different worlds and attesting their rights. The existence of another world is marked by borders, signs, horizons; these are elements forming our life-world – that life-world which is penetrated by the gnat, when we experience its sting or are annoyed by monotonous drone. At the same time our intellect knows no limits, and this may be considered its only limitation when it thinks itself more powerful than life. For life is not only intellect; it manifests itself in manifold ways and reminds of itself even in the most prosaic manner – by toothache, for example. Milan Kundera, a Czech writer living in France, may well be justified for speaking in an ironic manner about the idealistic qualities of the *cogito ergo sum* formula – such a thing can be asserted – he says – only by a person who has never experienced toothache. Pain, joy, hope, suffering

and other forms of experience are the numerous ways whereby human existence is actualized and which, being highly individual, form the bases of our shared life-world. Experience as opposed to intelligible noumenal order shows itself forth and shines in the phenomenal and marks the immediacy of the existence.

Most of the classical philosophical approaches have striven to separate the intelligible order of things from the phenomenal manifestations, or – as in the case of the empiricist tradition – to check the truth of the predicative assertions by way of verificationist procedures. Phenomenology, on the other hand, concentrates on the undifferentiated unity of the actual experience, in which there is no demarcation between the noumenal and the phenomenal and where the human consciousness is a universal self-referential system and where experience is experience of the self: “Each one of us bears in himself the warrant of his absolute existence”². Husserlian philosophy may best be understood as a rigorous description of experience, because we never experience consciousness as pure seeing, hearing, feeling, wanting and so on. We always see something, hear something, we feel in a certain way and we want something particular. “Consciousness – writes Ferguson – is to be understood as lived experience (acts), rather as a detachable contents”³. Or, as formulated by Husserl:

Dazed by the confusion between object and mental content, one forgets, that the objects of which we are conscious, are not simply in consciousness as in a box, so that they can be merely found in it and snatched at in it; but that they are first constituted as being what they are for us, in varying forms of objective intuition⁴.

Thus, things do not enter into the subjective sphere as if from outside it, rather – they appear in the very subjective process as meanings or senses. The concept of experience entered into the 20th century philosophy mainly through the positivistic linguistic and pragmatic tradition. It is understandable therefore, that any attempt to develop this theme requires to be referred to this approach. Husserl in his work *Experience and Judgment* seems to accept the framework of the empiricist tradition, and strives to correlate the experience with judgement. Yet, in distinction from the linguistic tradition, he commits his project to “phenomenological elucidation of the origin of judgement and only then proceeds to investigate phenomenological genealogy of logic in general”⁵.

On top of that – in contradistinction from the above-mentioned tradition, where experience and judgement are considered as separate structures in the sense that experience validates (or invalidates) the truth of the judgement, Husserl speaks about the judgement of experience, which is revealed by self-evidence. This type of predicativity is connected with the predicative experience. The predicative givenness as self-evidence of experience is the