

The Phenomenology of Moral Agency in the Ethics of

K. E. Løgstrup

Simon Thornton

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Department of Philosophy

University of Essex

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Dedicated to the memory of John Thornton, my father (1952-2017).

Abstract

Many philosophers hold that moral agency is defined by an agent's capacity for rational reflection and self-governance. It is only through the exercise of such capacities, these philosophers contend, that one's actions can be judged to be of distinctively *moral* value. The moral phenomenology of the Danish philosopher and theologian K. E. Løgstrup (1905-1981), currently enjoying a revival of interest amongst Anglo-American moral philosophers, is an exception to this view. Under the auspices of his signature theory of the 'sovereign expressions of life,' Løgstrup provides a rich moral phenomenology aimed at establishing the ethical value of 'spontaneous,' non-deliberative actions, such as those exemplified in the showing of trust and acts of mercy. In this thesis, my aim is to investigate what mode of moral agency, if any, is compatible with Løgstrup's phenomenology of the sovereign expressions of life. I argue that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is compatible with a distinctive *medio-passive* mode of agency. According to this conception of moral agency, the subject's agency is constituted not through her capacity to stand back and make a judgment on how to act, but rather in the way the subject comports herself in relation to situations and encounters that are experienced first-personally as overwhelming and encompassing. I will proceed by providing detailed analyses of the core aspects of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology and his theory of the sovereign expressions of life. In the process, I will elucidate the decisive influence that thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther and Søren Kierkegaard had on Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics. Thus, in this thesis my aim is to contribute both to Løgstrup scholarship and to central on-going debates in moral philosophy and the philosophy of action.

Preface: Løgstrup and the Phenomenology of Moral Agency

0.1. St. Kevin and the Problem of Moral Agency

And then there was St Kevin and the blackbird.
The saint is kneeling, arms stretched out, inside
His cell, but the cell is narrow, so

One turned-up palm is out the window, stiff
As a crossbeam, when a blackbird lands
And lays in it and settles down to nest.

Kevin feels the warm eggs, the small breast, the tucked
Neat head and claws and, finding himself linked
Into the network of eternal life,

Is moved to pity: now he must hold his hand
Like a branch out in the sun and rain for weeks
Until the young are hatched and fledged and flown.

*

And since the whole thing's imagined anyhow,
Imagine being Kevin. Which is he?
Self-forgetful or in agony all the time

From the neck on down through his hurting forearms?
Are his fingers sleeping? Does he still feel his knees?
Or has the shut-eyed blank of underearth

Crept up through him? Is there distance in his head?
Alone and mirrored clear in love's deep river,
'To labour and not to seek reward,' he prays,

A prayer his body makes entirely
 For he has forgotten self, forgotten bird
 And on the riverbank forgotten the river's name.
 (Heaney 1998: 410-11)

Seamus Heaney's meditation on the traditional story of St. Kevin and the blackbird presents a powerful image: an ascetic monk who, upon becoming the nesting place for a blackbird and her chicks, maintains prayerful posture for weeks on end, through rain and beating sun. St. Kevin is moved by pity; his actions, in the language of the Christian tradition from which the story is drawn, are expressive of *agapic* love. That is, a love of God for man and of man for God, extended to a love of all creation.¹ Heaney meditates on St. Kevin's posture, wondering: is his pose effortful and deliberate? Or is he self-forgetful; a conduit 'mirrored clear in love's deep river?' Is St. Kevin's posture *active*? Is it a posture he is *trying* to keep, for the sake of the blackbird and for the sake of God? Or, is he *passive*? Has he been overcome by some beatific peace and dissolved into 'the network of eternal life'?

These are not idle questions. *Agapic* love is a regulative ideal in Christian ethics. And, more generally, the image of spontaneous other-regarding care serves as a powerful ethical ideal across many cultures and moral philosophies: selflessness and altruism are often seen to be of superior ethical value to ratiocinative and calculated action. And this estimation attaches to the mundane just as much as it does to the

¹ Cf. Augustine's canonical definition: 'All the commandments of God, then, are embraced in love, of which the apostle says: 'now the end of the commandment is charity, out of pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned' [1 Tim 15]. [...] But whatever is done either through fear of punishment or from some other carnal motive, and has not for its principle that love which the spirit of God sheds abroad the heart, is not done as it ought to be done, however it may appear to men. For this love embraces both the love of God and the love of our neighbour [...]. And this applies both to present and future. We love God now by faith, then we shall love him through sight' (Augustine 1996: 139-140).

extraordinary; to one's spontaneous showing of trust to a stranger just as to St. Kevin's sanctified self-sacrifice. Importantly, Heaney's question is not *why agapic* love is so highly esteemed – although this is itself an interesting and worthy question – but rather *how* such love is manifest. This latter question presents a powerful philosophical puzzle. For, *agapic* love and its secular counterparts occupy a curious status when considered *as* actions or the products of an agent. Consider, again, St. Kevin's pose. On the one hand, it seems that St. Kevin's keeping himself in stasis is something he *did* – and something he did *for a good reason*, namely, out of love for creation. And yet, on the other hand, St. Kevin appears to be curiously passive in his posture; he was, firstly, *moved* to pity – it is not something he *chose*. Moreover, he was *self-forgetful* to the point where even the motivating reason of *love* had been forgotten. Importantly, this passivity and selflessness, this sense of being overwhelmed or encompassed by the needs of another seems to be constitutive of what we think of when we think of *agapic* or selfless actions. Yet, how, if at all, can we capture this puzzling and delicate class of action in terms of a conception of moral agency?

This question has no doubt been taken up by countless theologians and philosophers. However, it is to the little-known Danish philosopher and theologian Knud Eljer Løgstrup (1905-1981) that I turn to in this thesis. In his later philosophy, under the auspices of his theory of the sovereign expressions of life, Løgstrup has provided a rich and expansive – if unfinished – phenomenology of spontaneous moral acts; of the possibility of *agapic* love. Does Løgstrup's moral phenomenology have the resources to respond to Heaney's queries?

0.2. *Introducing Løgstrup as a Phenomenologist and a Theologian*

Opening this thesis with a poem is not a matter of mere ornamentation: it is motivated by Løgstrup's own approach to moral philosophy. Løgstrup's writings are

replete with lengthy discussions of novels and imaginative fiction. In fact, appealing to literary examples in elucidating his ideas was something of a methodological principle for Løgstrup. As David Bugge notes, Løgstrup

saw literature as having an advantage or even precedence over psychology, philosophy, and theology. Whereas these disciplines much too often tend to become reductive, abstract, or even contrived, literature remains complex and concrete. (Bugge 2017: 216)

More generally, Løgstrup's 'homiletic attention to the moral and religious significance of everyday experiences' (Dews 2017: 104) is one of the most striking aspects of his philosophy. And it marks him out as a resolutely *phenomenological* philosopher, in the broadest sense of that term. That is to say, Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics is fastidious in its attempt to remain within the concrete complexity of human life. And it is through his attempts to accommodate and disclose ethical life in all its complexity, rather than attempting to construct a systematic moral theory, that his appreciation of problems such as those raised in light of the story of St. Kevin can be found.

Beyond this, however, a central interpretive claim of this study is that Løgstrup is a *phenomenologist* in a more substantive sense as well. Løgstrup was decisively influenced by the phenomenological tradition that emerged in the wake of Edmund Husserl. In particular, he was greatly influenced by the work of Martin Heidegger and Hans Lipps, under whom he studied during the first half of the 1930s. The definition of phenomenology according to this tradition goes beyond rich descriptions of what experiences are like, and is defined by an attempt to account for the basic structures or the 'essence' of human experience and understanding from the first-person perspective. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty puts it:

Phenomenology is the study of essences, and it holds that all problems amount to defining essences, such as the essence of perception or the essence of consciousness. And yet phenomenology is also a philosophy that places

essences back within existence and thinks that the only way to understand man and the world is by beginning from their “facticity.” Although it is a transcendental philosophy that suspends the affirmations of the natural attitude in order to understand them, it is also a philosophy for which the world is always “already there” prior to reflection – like an inalienable presence – and whose entire effort is to rediscover this naïve contact with the world in order to finally raise it to a philosophical status. (Merleau-Ponty 2012: lxx)

Løgstrup often refers to his method as being phenomenological, and in a late lecture he provides a definition of phenomenology that broadly accords with Merleau-Ponty’s.² However, Løgstrup’s approach is on the whole marked by an absence of any explicit methodological considerations. Thus, an important task taken up in this study is to make some of the methodological commitments underlying Løgstrup’s writings explicit, where this will help in clarifying some of his more obscure claims.

In suggesting that, methodologically, Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology follows the kind of existential analysis spearheaded by Heidegger’s existential phenomenology, we can appreciate a fundamental respect in which Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology constitutes an innovative and unique intervention into the tradition of phenomenology. A long standing problem facing those who sympathize with Heidegger’s existential analytic, for instance, concerns the ambivalence Heidegger expressed towards the concerns of practical philosophy within his analyses. As Jean-Luc Nancy has observed, this has led many to ‘deny that there is any ethical dimension to Heidegger’s thinking, basing their claims on his own objection to ethics as a ‘discipline,’ on the corresponding absence of ‘moral philosophy’ in his work, and on his refusal of any moral interpretation of the analytic of *Dasein*’ (Nancy 2002: 65). Indeed, one need not search far in Heidegger’s writings to get the impression that he

² Cf. ‘[Phenomenology] precisely consists in bringing into the light of day the understanding of human nature and relations in the world that lie hidden in pre-philosophical knowledge. The philosophizing person is therefore not merely interested, but involved. It is one’s own knowledge and one’s own possibilities and one’s own world, which one occupies oneself with in order to reveal one’s own nature and the world’s character. The philosopher has always already understood the world, his own life and his life with the other’ (FP: 117).

was largely dismissive of the domain of practical philosophy, which he viewed as an ‘ontical’ or epiphenomenal matter rather than something ‘ontological,’ that is, something fundamental to Dasein’s mode of being.³ While some commentators, such as Nancy himself, dispute this assessment, Løgstrup takes Heidegger at his word.⁴ But rather than simply resigning himself to Heidegger’s word, Løgstrup seeks to provide an ontological account of what he takes to be the basic structures of ethical experience which, whilst taking certain key methodological insights from Heidegger’s existential phenomenology, departs from Heidegger in other respects. Principally, Løgstrup’s departure from Heidegger emerges out of his analysis of the ‘facticity’ of human interdependence and its primordial ethical significance. It is in this relation that we can best understand Løgstrup’s avowed claim to be doing *ontological ethics*, or so I will claim.

There is a further reason why Heaney’s poem provides an fitting way in to Løgstrup’s way of thinking about ethics: its religious setting. In addition to being a philosopher, Løgstrup was also a theologian: he held the position of professor of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion in the faculty of Theology at the University of Aarhus. As with his approach to philosophy, Løgstrup was resolute in his opposition to systematic approaches to theology. In his article ‘Systematisk Teologi,’ for

³ Cf. Heidegger (2001): ‘Not only...does an understanding of Being belong to Dasein, but this understanding develops or decays along with whatever kind of Being Dasein may possess at the time; accordingly, there are many ways in which it has been interpreted, and these are all at Dasein’s disposal. Dasein’s ways of behaviour, its capacities, powers, possibilities, and vicissitudes, have been studied with varying extent in philosophical psychology, in anthropology, ethics, and ‘political science’, in poetry, biography, and the writing of history, each in a different fashion. But the question remains whether these interpretations of Dasein have been carried through with a primordial existentiality comparable to whatever existentiell primordiality they may have possessed. Neither of these excludes the other but they do not necessarily go together. Existentiell interpretation can demand an existential analytic, if indeed we conceive of philosophical cognition as something possible and necessary. Only when the basic structures of Dasein have been adequately worked out with explicit orientation towards the problem of Being itself, will what we have hitherto gained in interpreting Dasein get its existential justification’ (SZ: 16).

⁴ Cf. KHE: 51.

instance, he is highly critical of the theological language of the then prominent theologian Karl Barth and his followers. He writes:

[I]n German systematic theology they now and then speak a totally mad workman jargon: *Deus absconditus* and *deus relevatus* are theological ‘entities’ which are to be manipulated correctly, the crucifixion of Jesus is the theological ‘theory’ of knowledge etc. – Kierkegaard defined the artistic as the reduplication of the content in the form, so, to put it mildly, this intolerable language is inartistic. (Løgstrup, cited in Bugge 2017: 221)

In contrast to the systematic theology of Barth and others, Løgstrup’s theology emerges out of his detailed phenomenological analyses of human existence - which Løgstrup believes, according to his enigmatic slogan, ‘suggest a religious interpretation’ (M1: 90). Thus, in Løgstrup’s thinking, the religious and the philosophical tend to be closely intertwined: no sharp line is drawn between these two domains of enquiry.⁵

Viewed in one way, this ambiguity might mean that neither the theologian nor the philosopher will be satisfied with Løgstrup’s phenomenology: from a theological perspective, Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology must look like an attempt to secularize Christianity. And from a philosophical perspective, some of Løgstrup’s more obviously Lutheran commitments, such as his claims that human beings are inherently wicked and that life is a gift, may appear rather hard to justify philosophically. Yet, viewed in a different way, Løgstrup’s embracing of the ambiguity of the religious with respect to the ‘strictly human’ can be seen to be remarkably

⁵ Cf. Løgstrup’s response to a criticism concerning his approach to the ‘human’ and the ‘Christian’ spheres: ‘I believe that ontological, and also fundamentally ontological, problems belong within philosophy, just as they belong within theology. [...] And let me add yet another consideration. I utterly fail to see how it should be “demeaning” for a philosopher to let himself to be inspired by theologians. I cannot see anything wrong in an existential philosopher being inspired by Kierkegaard...or by Luther and Augustine...If what Hillerdal claims is true, namely, that existential philosophy is, to a great extent, very suitable as an interpretation of Luther’s teachings concerning the things already demanded by “the natural law,” then certainly it indicates that this philosophy is philosophically right – provided, that is, that the law Luther speaks of is indeed natural (universal)’ (BED: 14).

prescient in a world that is increasingly being referred to as ‘post-secular.’⁶ Indeed, in this regard, Løgstrup’s phenomenology is comparable with the proponents of what has been latterly dubbed the ‘theological turn’ in French phenomenology, such as Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry and others, who have all sought to re-configure traditional theological notions and problems in phenomenological terms.⁷

At the core of Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology is a claim. A primitive normative claim made on the self by the other just in virtue of the other’s living vulnerability. This is the claim disclosed by the proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth, namely, in the commandment of *agapic* love: to love one’s neighbour as oneself. And Løgstrup’s mature philosophical project, spanning over some 30 years, can without much exaggeration be said to consist of an ‘attempt to give a definition in strictly human terms of the relationship to the other person which is contained within the religious proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth’ (ED: 1). The difficulty that attends this project - at least from Løgstrup’s perspective - is that, addressed to the will, the commandment to *agapic* love is an impossible, unfulfillable demand: conceived of as something one *ought* to do or as a principle or rule that one is *duty-bound* to act on, *agapic* love becomes distorted; it becomes *ersatz*, introverted and reflective rather than authentic, spontaneous and other-regarding. We might say that the utter self-sacrifice required by *agapic* love cannot be achieved through the exertion of the will, for *through its very exertion* the will always already precludes the possibility of utter self-sacrifice.

A traditional theistic response to this kind of worry would be to appeal to some form of theological voluntarism, perhaps suggesting that *agapic* love can be realized

⁶ See, e.g., Habermas (2008); and Caputo (2001) §2.

⁷ See Janicaud (2000) for a helpful - if resolutely critical - overview of the theological turn.

– but only by God, who can work *through* us and set our own wills to one side. Yet, Løgstrup’s phenomenological method precludes theistic presuppositions of this kind. Thus, in his later philosophy, Løgstrup develops his signature theory of the sovereign expressions of life as a phenomenological response to the question concerning how *agapic* love can be realized in our relations with others. The sovereign expressions of life, comprising phenomena such as trust, mercy and openness of speech, designate modes of relating to others that manifest *agapic* love. According to Løgstrup they precede the will and they are pre-moral; they designate modes of immediate and spontaneous responsiveness to the needs of the other.

Yet, for all its phenomenological perspicuity, Løgstrup’s theory remained incomplete at the time of his death. As a result, some of Løgstrup’s formulations are often imprecise and, in places, contradictory. This is particularly evident when it comes to questions of whether and how human agency is involved in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life. In some places, his position looks to be highly deterministic: evoking aspects of Luther’s doctrine of justification, he presents the sovereign expressions of life as phenomena which overwhelm and overmaster the agent. In other places, he allows that the sovereign expressions of life involve a decision by the agent. In yet others, he characterizes the relation between the agent and the sovereign expressions of life and the agent as one of the agent’s surrendering. Given these ambiguities, a central task of this thesis is to develop and elucidate one possible way of interpreting Løgstrup’s theory of the sovereign expressions of life that both preserves the important contribution Løgstrup makes to our understanding of ethical spontaneity – *viz.* the possibility of *agapic* love as manifest in good works – whilst showing how this contribution is compatible with a plausible conception of moral agency. More specifically, in this thesis, I will argue that Løgstrup’s phenomenology of the sovereign expressions of life is compatible with what I shall

call, following the work of Béatrice Han-Pile, a *medio-passive* mode of moral agency. In prosecuting this argument, I will be making contributions to two areas of philosophical research. Firstly, I will be contributing to the nascent English language reception of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology and, secondly, I will be contributing to contemporary debates concerning the nature and constitution of moral agency.

0.3. *Chapter Outline*

I begin in chapter one by animating what I shall call *the problem of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics*. Outlining first a standard view of moral agency which enjoys acceptance across a wide variety of different moral theories, I go on to provide a preliminary sketch of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. The upshot of this preliminary sketch is that, on the one hand, Løgstrup's moral phenomenology captures an important dimension of ethical life. Yet, on the other hand, Løgstrup's moral phenomenology looks to be flatly incompatible with the standard view of moral agency. Given this incompatibility, the following dilemmatic worry presses. If Løgstrup's putative phenomenology of ethical comportment is incompatible with moral agency, then the overall plausibility of his phenomenology is cast into doubt. Conversely, if Løgstrup's moral phenomenology captures an important dimension of ethical life, then the seeming failure of the standard view of moral agency to be able to account for it potentially proves the standard view to be lacking. In the face of this looming dilemma, I present two strategies for defusing the apparent incompatibility between Løgstrup's moral phenomenology and the standard view of moral agency. The first comes from a broadly Kantian perspective, the second from a broadly Aristotelian perspective. I conclude, however, with the suggestion that, ultimately, neither defusing strategy will prove successful.

In chapter two, I begin by providing a reconstruction of Løgstrup's conception of trust understood as a sovereign expression of life. Based on this, I develop an

argument as to why the Kantian defusing strategy is unsuccessful, where, in so doing, I enrich and add detail to the preliminary sketch of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology provided in chapter one. Here my focus is on elucidating Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life. More specifically, I argue that whilst the Kantian defusing strategy constitutively involves that the moral agent regulates an incentive for action according to the agent's second-order commitment to the right, Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life emphasizes the *immediacy* of the encounter with the other, whereby one's responsiveness to the other and their needs is not regulated by any second-order commitments of the agent. This observation, of course, leads to the following worry. How can *immediacy* be compatible with moral agency? Surely moral agency presupposes some form of mediating second-order awareness on the part of the agent of the good making properties of any given primary incentive? In responding to this worry, I propose a reading of the immediacy of the sovereign expressions of life along the lines of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. More specifically, I suggest that the sovereign expressions of life can fruitfully be construed as *hermeneutic conditions* where, by contrast to second-order commitments to the good, the sovereign expressions of life are best seen as existential conditions constitutive of the way the other shows up to us *as* another living being who makes a primitive normative claim on us just in virtue of their living vulnerability.

In concluding the second chapter, I note a potential further worry in providing a positive response to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics. Namely, that by construing the sovereign expressions of life as hermeneutic conditions, the possible compatibility of the sovereign expressions of life with a plausible conception of moral agency now appears even more remote: the sovereign expressions of life now appear to be features of our existence in relation to which we are completely passive and, thus, they seem to fall outside of the domain of moral agency. In chapter three, I return

to the Aristotelian defusing strategy as potentially providing a way of overcoming this worry. On an Aristotelian defusing strategy, the sovereign expressions of life are re-configured as virtues that can be cultivated and developed, where this then provides a model of moral agency that looks *prima facie* to be compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. The main burden of this chapter is to show why, given the Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics, the Aristotelian defusing strategy is deeply incompatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. In a word, this is because, on Løgstrup's view, the human being is inherently wicked and is incapable of improving itself through practices of virtuous striving and self cultivation. Rather, for Løgstrup, the human being is radically dependent on factors out of its control for the possibility of realizing the sovereign expressions of life and their works. Yet, with this additional aspect of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology in hand, the chances that Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life can be seen to be compatible with a plausible conception of moral agency appears greatly diminished. In investigating this issue further, I adopt a heuristic strategy: I consider two attempts to provide conceptions of moral agency that are compatible with the Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's thought, where I argue that whilst both of these attempts mark important advances in our understanding of Løgstrup – particularly with respect to the question of moral agency - they are ultimately unsatisfying. Through my discussions here, my aim is to clarify the Lutheran dimension of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology with a view to opening up the conceptual space for providing a positive answer to the question of moral agency.

In chapter four, I will offer my positive response to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics. Building on the findings of the previous two chapters, I argue that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is compatible with a medio-passive conception

of moral agency. In prosecuting this argument, I begin by suggesting that Løgstrup's understanding of the constitution of agency can be elucidated in terms of his critical appropriation of Kierkegaard's conception of the self. The key move here is to claim that the self *qua* agent on Løgstrup's view is *relational* rather than 'substantivist.' That is, the self is constituted *modally* in the way it relates to the other, either through self-assertion or through the sovereign expressions of life. On this reading, the self can constitute itself in a mis-relation to itself, where it takes itself to be sovereign over its existence and the existence of the other. Or, conversely, the self can be constituted as an agent in a transparent relation to its fundamentally interdependent existence. It is only in this latter case, where the self comes into identity with the sovereign expressions of life in its encounter with the other, that the sovereign expressions of life can be realized in good works. Next, I argue that, whilst the constitution of moral agency in this latter case is not the product of the will or the agent's choice, it is not something that simply *happens* to the self either; it does not fit neatly into the binary of activity/passivity that underwrites the standard conception of moral agency. Rather, my suggestion will be that the constitution of the self in Løgstrup's ethics can be seen to be compatible with a *medio-passive* mode of agency, whereby the self, in its encounter with the other, integrates its experience of interdependence and passivity in that encounter *in* the way it responds to the other and their situation. Drawing on Løgstrup's terminology, I characterize this medio-passive mode of moral agency in terms of *surrender*.

In the fifth and final chapter, I conclude by defending my medio-passive account of Løgstrupian moral agency against some likely criticisms. One type of criticism considered here concerns the *plausibility* of my account of Løgstrupian moral agency *as* an account of moral agency, where I offer a defence of its plausibility through illustration. Coming from the opposing side, a second type of criticism I consider

concerns the *genuine distinctiveness* of my account of Løgstrupian moral agency to the standard view. This second type of criticism has two prongs. Firstly, it concerns whether my account of Løgstrupian moral agency remains faithful to the distinctiveness of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. And secondly, it concerns whether – if faithful to Løgstrup's moral phenomenology – my account shows Løgstrup to have made a distinctive contribution to our understanding of what it is to be a moral agent. I frame these latter criticisms in terms of a *Levinasian-style objection* and an *Adornian-style objection*, thus, performing a secondary task of bringing Løgstrup's moral philosophy into dialogue with two relevant comparators, Emmanuel Levinas and Theodor Adorno, respectively.

Whilst the chief aim of this thesis is to develop a plausible conception of moral agency that is compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, my hope is that it can also be read in another way. Chapters two to five all include extensive comparative discussions of Løgstrup's philosophy in relation to his philosophical and theological influences and relevant comparators. Chapter two examines the influence of Heidegger on Løgstrup's so called 'ontological ethics;' chapter three looks at the Lutheran themes and presuppositions present in Løgstrup's work; chapter four considers Løgstrup's fraught and often polemical relation to Kierkegaard's philosophy and theology and chapter five brings Løgstrup into dialogue with Levinas and Adorno. By framing my chapters in this way, my intention has been to situate Løgstrup within more familiar contexts, where the hope is that in so doing I will not only illuminate the tradition within which Løgstrup was working but also the ways in which his thinking is innovative and genuinely distinctive.

1. Løgstrup's Ethics and the Question of Moral Agency

The purpose of this chapter is to raise the following question with respect to Løgstrup's ethical philosophy. What conception of moral agency, if any, is compatible with Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment? In animating this question, I will firstly define what I shall refer to as the standard view of moral agency, that is, a thin definition of the core features of moral agency accepted across a wide variety of different moral theories (1.1). Next, I will offer a preliminary sketch of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology aimed, minimally, at establishing its plausibility. Here I will focus on Løgstrup's illuminating reconstruction and analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan (1.2). Based on this sketch, it will emerge that *prima facie* Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment is incompatible with the standard view of moral agency. This result will then be used to animate the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics (1.3). Put in the form of an inconsistent triad, the issue is this. (i) Any plausible account of moral action must include an account of moral agency. (ii) Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment appears plausible as an account of moral action. (iii) But Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment looks to be incompatible with standard accounts of moral agency. Therefore, taking (i) to be axiomatic, either (ii) Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is false or (iii) the standard view of moral agency is wanting. Thus, the question of moral agency: what conception of moral agency, if any, is compatible with Løgstrup's ethical philosophy? In the final section (1.4.), I will canvass two strategies which attempt to defuse the question of moral agency by suggesting that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology can in fact be seen to be compatible with the standard conception of moral agency. In further chapters

(§§2-3), however, I shall argue that these defusing strategies fail to do justice to the radical and genuine challenge that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology presents to the standard view of moral agency.

1.1. *The Standard View of Moral Agency*

Agency is sometimes conceived of as the capacity to perform intentional or goal-directed actions.¹ On this conception, agency can be attributed to non-human animals, humans and even groups in cases of so-called 'shared' or 'collective' agency. *Moral* agency, by contrast, is typically thought to involve more demanding criteria. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one such criterion is moral insight or moral awareness. That is to say, that some conception, knowledge or awareness of the good or the right, whether conceived of in agent-neutral or agent-relative terms, is a necessary and constitutive condition for moral agency to obtain. Furthermore, for an event to count as an instance of moral *agency*, it is thought that the agent's moral insight must play a role in the intentional actions performed by the agent. That is, in order for an event to count as a moral action, the agent's moral insight must be incorporated into the performance of that action by the agent in some way. There is wide-spread disagreement amongst moral philosophers concerning the details of how moral insight is incorporated into action by the agent and I do not wish to diminish the very real issues at stake in these debates. Nonetheless, I believe it is possible to identify two thinly defined features that provide the core of a wide variety of different accounts of moral agency. These are: (F¹) Self-Regulation and (F²) Self-Governance. I will discuss each in turn.

¹ For two classic statements see Elizabeth Anscombe (2000), who defines intentional action as '...ones to which a certain sense of the question 'why?' has application' (Anscombe 2000: §6), and Donald Davidson who proposes the following definition of agency: 'A man is the agent of an act if what he does can be described under an aspect that makes it intentional' (Davidson 1980: 46).

The term self-regulation aims to capture the sense in which a moral agent is said to evaluate, approve of, endorse, commit to *etc.* a desire, motivation, mental state, incentive or reason according to his or her moral insight. That is, F¹ aims to capture what we might term the *cognitive* dimension of moral agency. By way of illustration, take two variants of F¹ representative of two dominant approaches to moral philosophy, Humean and Kantian.

In Humean moral psychology, self-regulation (F¹) is sometimes conceived of in terms of a species of meta-cognition whereby the agent approves of or disapproves of occurrent mental states according to the agent's moral insight. As Julia Driver puts it,

Moral agency, as opposed to mere or simple agency, is the agency that underlies distinctly moral action. This is understood in contrast to other sorts of agency. So, for example, what I term “mere” agency is the sort of agency that one sees in animal behaviour as well as a good deal of human behaviour. This is the result of features of psychology such as beliefs and desires, motives, intentions. However, mere agency is not regulated fully in the same way as moral agency. I may regulate mere agency in the following way: I desire an ice cream cone, and believe that I can get one at the local supermarket. It turns out that the local supermarket has stopped selling ice cream cones. Once I find this out, I change my plans. That's a kind of regulation in which agency is sensitive to new information...However, the sort of self-regulation involved in distinctly moral agency involves approval or disapproval of the mental states themselves. And the approval/disapproval is of a distinctly moral sort – rather than, say, aesthetic. (Driver 2014: 124)

On this broadly Humean view, self-regulation is viewed as a distinctly moral mode of meta-cognition in which an agent approves or disapproves of an occurrent mental state according to their moral insight. Importantly for Humeans such as Driver, self-regulation need not involve conscious deliberation; it can also be more (although not *wholly*) ‘automatic,’ as with the adjustments of one's attitudes ‘*via* cues that we get from others we are interacting with. A frown, a lifted eyebrow, a sceptical sound...’ (Driver 2014: 126).

By contrast, on the synthesised Kantian-Aristotelian view presented by Christine Korsgaard, self-regulation is seen to be almost co-extensive with the deliberative stance:

The view which I take Kant and Aristotle to share is this: when human beings act, we are not driven or directly caused to act by desire, passion, inclination, or instinct. Some incentive, to use Kant's language, presents a certain course of action to us as eligible – it suggests to us that we might undertake a certain course of action to realize a certain end. But reason gives us the capacity to stand back, form a view of this course of action as a whole, and make a judgment about its goodness. This isn't a judgment about whether it is useful. It is a judgment about its goodness considered as an *action*, not as a mere production. (Korsgaard 2008: 192)

Here, self-regulation is described in terms of the agent's taking up a reflective, deliberative stance in relation to an incentive for action in order to evaluate its goodness, where the implication is that for Korsgaard more 'automatic' self-regulation would not count as moral in the required sense. Despite these differences there is a central point of convergence between these two competing conceptions of self-regulation which justifies the following definition.

(Def) F¹: Self-Regulation = the evaluation of one's desires, mental states, motivations or incentives according to one's moral insight.

F¹ alone, however, is not a sufficient condition for moral agency to obtain. Whilst F¹ provides a sense in which moral agency is distinctively *moral*, it does not account for the sense in which moral agency is *conative*, *efficacious* or, more broadly, *agential* – even though this conative dimension may be implicit in some descriptions of F¹. Thus, F¹ is often combined with some variant of (F²) Self-Governance, where this term stands for what has been 'characterised by turns as *autonomy*, *reflective self-control*, *guidance by the agent*, *direction by the agent*, *rational control*, *agential authority*, and so forth' (Katsafanas 2011: 222). That is, the term self-governance designates a mode of activity constitutive of moral agency whereby the agent can be seen to actively bring about or perform actions on the basis of F¹.

Two canonical iterations of F^2 can be found in the philosophies of Aristotle and Kant, respectively. Aristotle conceives of moral agency as constituted in part by the capacity for *voluntary* action. That is, briefly, a moral agent is seen to be the cause or origin of an action in the sense that the action she performs or the behaviour she expresses conforms to her reasoned judgment.² And, though he takes the idea in a different direction, F^2 is even more readily associated with Kant, for whom moral agency involves the agent's capacity to act on the basis of a law she gives to herself.³

In contemporary debates, commentators coming from a broadly Kant-inspired perspective such as R. Jay Wallace, Michael Bratman, J. David Velleman, Joseph Raz and, of course, Korsgaard herself advocate for strong variants of F^2 .⁴ Thus, for instance, Wallace writes that

Rational agency is distinctively responsive to the agent's acknowledgement of reasons, in the basic sense of considerations that speak for and against the alternatives for actions that are available. Furthermore, it is natural to suppose that this kind of responsiveness to reasons is possible only for creatures who possess certain unusual volitional powers, beyond the bare susceptibility to beliefs and desires necessary for the kind of rudimentary agency of which the higher animals are arguably capable. (Wallace 2004: 141)

And Velleman argues that

The agent is moved to his action, not only by his original motive for it, but also by his desire to act on that original motive, because of its superior rational force. This latter contribution to the agent's behaviour is the contribution of an attitude that performs the functions definitive of agency; it is therefore, functionally speaking, the agent's contribution to the causal order. (Velleman 2000: 141)

Both Wallace and Velleman, then, advocate a strong variant of F^2 in which the moral agent is seen to hold the capacity to exert a high degree of active control in the performance of her actions. Moreover, in the above quoted passages, one can clearly see how F^1 and F^2 combine in the constitution of moral agency: the agent's

² See e.g. Broadie, S., 1991: §3 and Raffoul, F., 2010: §1.

³ See Kant, I., 2008: e.g. 4:432-433 and e.g. Allison, H., 1993: §5.

⁴ See Wallace (2004); Bratman (2007); Velleman (2000); Raz (1999) and Korsgaard (2008).

acknowledgement or approval of reasons, desires or incentives for action as being normative (F¹) is integrated into the agent's performance of an action through the agent's self-governing or autonomous 'volitional powers' (F²).⁵

Similarly, Philippa Foot, who propounds a naturalistic neo-Aristotelian account of ethical life, also appears to adhere to a variant of F²:

[T]o speak of a good person is to speak of an individual not in respect of his body, or of faculties such as sight and memory, but as concerns his rational will [Fn. As an approximation, we may say 'will as controllable by reason'].
(Foot 2001: 14)

Here, Foot contends that when we appraise others according to moral predicates, what we are appraising is not – or should not be – their accidental attributes, but rather their exercising of their rational will. Clearly, there exist significant differences between Foot's own view of the nature and ground of F² and Kant's, but she nonetheless agrees with him that some variant of F² is a central feature of our lives as moral agents.

The capacity for self-governance is sometimes interpreted as bringing with it a sense that in acting on the basis of F¹, human agents are not only self-consciously 'taking control' of their beliefs and actions, so to speak, but they are also 'constituting' the selves they strive to be and the practical identities they inhabit in a distinctly normative way. Christine Korsgaard, for instance, claims that

The capacity for normative self-government brings with it another distinctively human attribute, normative self-conception, perhaps more than anything else the thing that makes being human both an adventure and a curse. For an action is a movement attributable to an agent as its author, and

⁵ The terms 'normative' and 'normativity' are incredibly protean. For the sake of simplicity, and given the context of my discussion, I follow Korsgaard's (1996) use of the terms to denote the moral authority or bindingness of a reason (in the case of Korsgaard) or another person (as we shall see is the case for Løgstrup) for action. Thinkers such as Stephen Crowell (2013) and Sacha Golob (2014) use the terms to describe the 'rules' constitutive of the concept of an object or activity which provide standards against which a given object or activity can be judged. On this view, for instance, the 'rules' governing the concept of being a teacher provide normative standards against which a teacher can be judged. I do not primarily have this latter meaning in mind when I use the terms 'normative' and 'normativity' in the present study.

that means that whenever you choose an action – whenever you take control of your own movements – you are constituting yourself as the author of that action, and so you are deciding who to be. (Korsgaard 2009: xi)

This sort of view resonates strongly with neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, where great emphasis is placed on the importance of character formation and virtuous self-cultivation. As we shall see below, Alasdair MacIntyre propounds a view of this sort.⁶

Philosopher's inspired by Hume's moral psychology are typically more ambivalent about the scope and power of F^2 . Yet, even these more parsimonious accounts of moral agency often maintain a variant of F^2 – albeit in a weaker form. Thus, Harry Frankfurt, for example, employs the compatibilist notion of 'second-order volition' to denote the capacity of the moral agent to identify herself with a first-order desire, which in exemplary cases governs whether or not that first-order desire is efficacious.⁷ And even the so-called 'morality critic,' Bernard Williams, allows for some version of F^2 , as is evident when he writes that:

A clear example of practical reasoning is that leading to the conclusion that one has reason to φ because φ -ing would be the most convenient, economical, pleasant, etc. way of satisfying some element of S [one's motivational set], and this of course is controlled by other elements in S , if not necessarily in a very clear or determinate way. But there are much wider possibilities for deliberations...As a result of such processes an agent can come to see that he has reason to do something which he did not see he had reason to do at all. In this way, the deliberative process can add new actions for which there are internal reasons, just as it can add new internal reasons for given actions. The

⁶ Another way of construing this thought is as the supposition natural to us moderns that 'we 'have' or are 'a self' [and] that human agency is essentially defined as 'the self' (Taylor 1989: 177). Naturally, there are differences in how this thought is fleshed out. Some argue, directly, that 'to speak of a self...is to speak of an *agent*, that is, some principle of activity and volition' (Zahavi 2005: 100). On this view, then, the self, insofar as it names a foundational 'principle of volition,' is a precondition for the possibility of moral action (see e.g. Heinrich (1994)). Others, such as MacIntyre, conceive of the relation between the self and agency in 'narrativist' terms, whereby the term 'self' designates 'an enduring agent with a determinate past and an open-ended future' (Zahavi 2005: 18). According to this view, the self emerges as a referent within the narratives and stories we tell ourselves in rendering our actions intelligible. Thus, the self is a requirement for *intelligible* actions, where this, of course, has implications for the possibility of rational moral action. Of course, some deny that there is such a thing as a self, perhaps suggesting with Daniel Dennett that the self is an illusion, and thereby throw into question any relation of requirement between the self and agency (c.f. Zahavi 2005: pp. 110-112). As we shall see in §4, how Løgstrup conceives of the self and its relation to agency will be of critical importance in answering the question of moral agency.

⁷ See Frankfurt, H., 2007: §2.

deliberative process can also subtract elements from \mathcal{S} . (Williams 1981: 104-5)

Whilst Williams disagrees with thinkers such as Korsgaard as concerns issues such as the source of normativity and the nature of practical reasoning, he appears to agree that some form of self-governance – i.e. the agent's capacity to actively contribute to the performance of actions in light of her moral insight – is a constitutive feature of moral agency.

With these examples of three dominant approaches to F^2 in hand, we can venture the following definition:

(Def) F^2 : Self-Governance = The capacity for the agent to actively bring him or herself into identity with his or her moral insight in the performance of actions.

These two features, F^1 and F^2 , form the core of what I am calling the standard conception of moral agency, or, for short, moral agency¹. In other words, they are features often taken to be necessary and sufficient conditions for the constitution of moral agency.

Naturally, there are exceptions to the standard view.⁸ But it nonetheless forms a dominant view in the domain of practical philosophy. And we might think that this is the case with good reason. After all, it is natural to suppose that some of our basic moral concepts depend on some combination of F^1 and F^2 for their intelligibility. Take just one example: responsibility. As the above-cited passage from Foot suggests, our everyday practice of holding others responsible seems to rely on an implicit

⁸ Here we might think, for example, of incompatibilists such as P. F. Strawson (2008) or of certain passages in Nietzsche which appear to suggest that agency is an illusion. Cf. 'We laugh at him who steps out of his room at the moment when the sun steps out of its room, and then says, '*I will* that the sun shall rise'; and at him who cannot stop a wheel, and says: '*I will* that it shall roll'; and at him who is thrown down in wrestling, and says: 'here I lie, but *I will* lie here!' But, all laughter aside, are we ourselves ever acting any differently whenever we employ the expression: '*I will*' (Nietzsche 1997: §124).

commitment to the truth of moral agency¹, namely, that we moral agents have the capacity to govern the actions we perform in light of our moral evaluation and endorsement of occurrent desires, mental states, incentives or motivations for action.⁹ For Foot, like many others, it is with respect to this capacity that we typically distinguish between spheres of life that are legitimately open to moral praise and censure, and spheres of life that are not.

1.2. *A Preliminary Sketch of Løgstrup's Phenomenology of Ethical Comportment*

In this section, my aim will be to provide a preliminary sketch of Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment such as can serve as a minimally plausible position against which I can raise the question of moral agency (in 1.3.). I shall begin with the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is seen by Løgstrup as a paradigm of ethical action. The parable is a didactic story told by Jesus and recorded in Luke 10: 25-37 in which Jesus eludes to the nature of *agapic* love as demanded by God's law. In it we learn of a Jewish traveller attacked by robbers while on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Left to languish by the side of the road, he is passed first by a priest, and then by a Levite who pay him no heed. Finally, he is approached by a Samaritan, a traditional enemy of the Jews. The Samaritan has mercy on the injured traveller, administering aid, providing transportation, food and shelter to the traveller at his own expense. In a word, the Samaritan's merciful actions exemplify *agapic* love; they show what it is to love one's neighbour.¹⁰

⁹ Another, more contentious, example would be the principle 'Ought Implies Can.' That is, the practice of making and accepting moral and social demands is often thought to imply that the agent subject to the demand has the active capacity to meet those demands. As we shall see, Løgstrup's conception of the ethical demand contravenes this principle. For an interesting challenge to this principle relevant to Løgstrup's ethics see Martin (2009; 2017).

¹⁰ N. B. In Løgstrup's native Danish, the Good Samaritan is known as the merciful Samaritan (*den barmhjertige Samaritan*).

Løgstrup repeatedly appeals to this parable in his later writings as a paradigm case of spontaneous ethical action or ‘good works’ (BED: 76; 144-5).¹¹ And I take this appeal to be uncontroversial; after all, in a certain sense, the parable of the Good Samaritan is *supposed* to represent a paradigm of ethical action. The issue here, then, is not *whether* the parable of the Good Samaritan is plausible as a paradigm of ethical action, but *how* Løgstrup interprets the parable and whether his phenomenology of it is plausible.

In his most sustained discussion of the parable, Løgstrup disambiguates the core of his own phenomenological approach to the Good Samaritan’s showing of mercy by contrasting it with what he calls the ‘ethics of custom’ [*sædelighed/Sittlichkeit*] and the ‘ethics of duty’ [*moral/Moralität*], respectively.¹² This key passage is worth quoting in full:

Hegel and Kierkegaard are incorrect in thinking that once the ethics of the community has been undermined, the existence of the good or the recognition of it are conditional on the human capacities for abstraction, for thinking in generalities, for relating to the idea, with a relational duplication of the spirit being required for the attainment of the ethical. In any given situation, before duty can begin to be relevant, the spontaneous expression of life – trust, mercy, sincerity, and so on – is called forth. Not that it is a matter of engaging with

¹¹ Although I do not want to prejudice Løgstrup’s use of the term spontaneity at this early stage in my discussion, it is nonetheless important to block a potential misunderstanding right away. When Løgstrup uses the term spontaneity [*spontanitet*] he *does not* mean a volitional capacity to freely give oneself the law, as with Kant. Løgstrup’s use of the term spontaneity, however, is protean and we will only be able to grasp it when we have a more comprehensive picture of Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology in view.

¹² Bjørn Rabjerg (forthcoming) has noted that Løgstrup’s analysis encourages a terminological distinction between ethics and morality in which ethics would denote a pre-cultural standard and morality, a cultural set of norms. Løgstrup himself, however, does not consistently follow this terminological distinction. In contrast to Rabjerg, I have chosen not to impose his proposed terminological distinction in my interpretation of Løgstrup. This is because there is a complicating factor at play, namely, Løgstrup’s important discussion of *sædelighed*, i.e. *Sittlichkeit*, and *moral*, i.e. *Moralität*, discussed here. As the translator of Løgstrup’s text has noted, ‘Løgstrup uses the Danish terms *moral* and *moralisk* to refer indiscriminately to both traditional and reflective morality’ (BED: 81 fn. 4). Furthermore, in the English translation the term ‘ethics’ is used both in rendering *sædelighed* as well as rendering the primitive normativity contained within the sovereign expressions of life. Because of these complications, rather than making a strict terminological distinction between ‘morality’ and ‘ethics,’ I allow the varying contexts in which these terms come up give definition to their usage.

the expression of life, as though it were *that* we needed to relate to. So doing would be tantamount to turning it into a duty with the duplication to which duty gives rise, as Hegel and Kierkegaard correctly observe. No, the call to us is to engage with the situation – through the corresponding sovereign expression of life. As the story comes down to us, it was not a question of the Good Samaritan engaging with his own mercifulness in his exercise of it as his duty; rather, in his mercifulness, he took charge of the man who had been set upon and lay wounded by the roadside. What occupied the Samaritan's thoughts (if we simply take the story as it stands) were the needs of the victim and how best to help him. We are told nothing of the Samaritan's relating to his own mercifulness in a recognition that it was something he was duty-bound to show. (BED: 75-76)

Much of what is discussed in this passage will only become fully intelligible as we proceed: I will discuss the sovereign expressions of life in detail in chapter two, and Løgstrup's interpretation of Kierkegaard will be considered in chapter four, for instance. However, a central claim can be parsed from this passage already.

Løgstrup situates his discussion of the parable within the context of the well-worn enlightenment narrative of our emergence from a circumscribed pre-enlightenment world. In the pre-enlightened world, so the story goes, the individual agent was bound by customs and norms solely in virtue of their traditional authority. The enlightenment breakthrough, however, dared the agent to use her own understanding, her own practical rationality, to work out her moral duties. Employing the language of Hegel, Løgstrup avers that the enlightenment breakthrough inaugurated an 'age of reflection' (BED: 75) in which moral agency came to be thought of as a matter of engaging one's capacity for rational reflection, rather than merely as a matter of rote conformity to custom and traditional authority.

Løgstrup invokes the parable of the Good Samaritan here as a challenge to a central assumption built in to this narrative.¹³ Namely, that once the yoke of

¹³ With respect to his critical stance on the enlightenment, Løgstrup's position is comparable to those of Theodor Adorno and Alasdair MacIntyre (See §5 and §3, respectively, for further discussion). Cf. Fabian Freyenhagen's (2013) discussion of Adorno: '...in pre-modern times, people did not need to consider the categorical imperative to know what they should morally do – the circumscribed universe in which they lived assigned each person a station in life with clear duties (and even if there

traditional authority has been shrugged off, the recognition of the good constitutive of moral action is revealed to require a particular kind of second-order reflection. We find Løgstrup almost satirizing this view with his caricature of the ‘Kantian Samaritan’ who, upon encountering the injured traveller – whose needs are in a sense obvious – ‘pauses to consider mercy as a duty’ (BED: 76) rather than ‘taking charge’ of the injured traveller. Against this enlightenment narrative, Løgstrup claims that some ‘ethical contexts,’ such as the Samaritan’s encounter of the injured traveller,

are not well illuminated if one contents oneself with a concentration on the tension between the radical ethical demand and juridical, moral, and conventional norms: between the abstract, undetermined self and the ethics of custom. A third phenomenon has a part to play: the sovereign expressions of life. (BED: 75)

In other words, Løgstrup is claiming that the binary putatively characteristic of enlightenment thought – that is, the binary between rote conformity to social norms and the reflective moral agent of enlightenment – is unsatisfactory. And Løgstrup sees the parable of the Good Samaritan as illustrating the need for a more nuanced conception of ethical life and moral agency. More generally, Løgstrup can be seen to be rebuking a dominant tendency he sees in modern European philosophy of characterizing moral agency in either overly abstract, formal terms or else, in a relativizing mode, dismissing the self’s agency as mere adherence to the public norms of ‘the crowd.’¹⁴

was doubt in a particular case, there was a clear arbitration mechanism in matters of morality – for example asking the local priest). It is our modern social world that both makes it more pressing to have a mechanism for finding out what to do (for it is no longer self-evident within this world) and makes such mechanisms – including the categorical imperative but presumably also consequentialist tests – even more impossible to use, for this world has become so vast and complex in its working that it has become harder to identify causal factors and likely consequences as well as to apportion individual responsibility’ (Freyenhagen 2013: 113-4). Cf. MacIntyre (2007a) §§4-6.

¹⁴ Commenting on Kierkegaard in his Berlin lectures, for instance, Løgstrup writes that ‘an opposition that one always confronts in engaging with Kierkegaard’s work, and which appears to permeate his thought completely, expresses itself in the alternatives of either living as an individual or going under in the crowd [...] in [the crowd] a decision in the proper sense can never be made. The decision, which is essentially only to be found in the individual, is looked for outside the self, in the opinion of the social environment, in public opinion, in village gossip. Or, in other words, man cannot here ever act

By contrast, the core of Løgstrup's phenomenology of the parable of the Good Samaritan rests in the deceptively simple claim that the Good Samaritan's merciful responsiveness to the needs of the injured traveller reflected a form of *pre-cultural, non-reflective* spontaneous responsiveness to the needs of the traveller. The Samaritan's mercifulness is, for Løgstrup, irreducible to either to conformity to traditional authority and custom (recall, the injured traveller was a traditional enemy of the Samaritan) or to abstract moral reflection (on Løgstrup's interpretation, the Samaritan simply got on with the task at hand, rather than reflecting on the right and the good).

More specifically, Løgstrup goes on to characterize the spontaneous responsiveness of the Good Samaritan's showing of mercy as 'pre-moral' (BED: 77). What he means by this puzzling locution is not that the Samaritan's showing of mercy fell outside of the domain of ethics. Indeed, a paragraph before invoking the term 'pre-moral,' he implies that the Samaritan's showing of mercy represents 'morality in the best sense of the word' (BED: 76).¹⁵ The spontaneity 'accruing' (BED: 80) to the Samaritan's showing of mercy is pre-moral in the sense that the Samaritan's merciful responsiveness to the situation of the injured traveller was not the product of a distinctly moral sort of meta-cognition or a self-regulating deliberative process whereby, for instance, the Samaritan is seen to have represented 'mercy' to himself as a worthy motivation for action. Rather, mercy was elicited purely by the situation and circumstances of the injured traveller: The Good Samaritan's merciful comportment

in an ethical sense. For action in a real sense, *sensu eminenti*...is the inner action of the decision' (KHE: 9-11).

¹⁵ Moreover, in later texts he claims that sovereign expressions of life such as mercy are 'inherently ethical' (BED: 135) in that they are 'ethically descriptive phenomena' (BED: 114), that is, they are phenomena that cannot be described in a 'value-indifferent mode;' 'the conception of them as good...cannot be detached from their descriptions' (*ibid.*).

to the injured traveller was not mediated or regulated by the thought that ‘mercy’ is a morally appropriate disposition or incentive in the given context.

Clearly, one upshot of this claim is that Løgstrup’s phenomenology of the parable of the Good Samaritan contrasts sharply with the feature of moral agency I have labelled F¹: on Løgstrup’s view, the Samaritan’s actions were not regulated by a distinctly moral kind of meta-cognition or rational deliberation; they were spontaneous. Indeed, a central claim of underlying Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology is that phenomena such as mercy cannot withstand being treated as normative reasons for action that the agent takes up or acts on in light of their normative force: to treat mercy in this way will result in *ersatz* or inauthentic versions of the genuine phenomena.¹⁶

Moreover, in this description we can also begin to see how Løgstrup’s phenomenology of the parable of the Good Samaritan contrasts with F². As we shall see in more detail as we proceed, an important aspect of Løgstrup’s phenomenology of ethical comportment consists in the claim that in cases such as the Good Samaritan’s, the agent’s freedom is not expressed in terms of a freedom for self-governance; a freedom to bring oneself in line with one’s moral insight through the

¹⁶ Cf. ‘[B]y calling mercy spontaneous, we mean that acts of mercy are elicited solely by the condition or situation in which the other finds himself, without the merciful agent deriving any benefit from his deeds, not for himself nor for any third party or institution. Mercy is spontaneous because the least interruption, the least calculation, the least dilution of it in the service of something else destroys it entirely...Its radicalness consists not in any masterly feat but simply in the fact that the least ulterior motive is excluded. If the sovereign expression of life is wanting, it does not mean that we must abandon the outcome of agency to which it was directed. That can still be aimed at, except that, with the attitude of mind falling short, it is now aimed at as an outcome demanded’ (BED: 85). John D. Caputo has captured the core intuition lying behind the kind of thought Løgstrup is articulating here well in relation to love, writing that ‘if a man asks a woman (I am quite open to other permutations of this formula) “do you love me?” and if, after a long and awkward pause and considerable deliberation, she replies with wrinkled brow, “well, up to a certain point, under certain conditions, to a certain extent,” then we can be sure that whatever it is she feels for this poor fellow it is not love and this relationship is not going to work out. For if love is the measure, the only measure of love is love without measure (Augustine again). One of the ideas behind “love” is that it represents a giving without holding back, an “unconditional” commitment, which marks love with a certain Excess’ (Caputo 2001: 4).

performance of actions. Rather, on Løgstrup's view, the Samaritan was 'overwhelmed' (BED: 68) by mercy and, thus, his capacity for autonomous self-governance was incapacitated, so to speak. That is, on Løgstrup's interpretation, the Samaritan's showing of mercy is not expressive of his capacity for self-governance, but, conversely, of his having been overtaken by the mercy called for in the interpersonal encounter.

Intuitively, I take this point to be phenomenologically compelling considering the class of phenomena Løgstrup is interested in. It is natural to suppose that merciful actions, loving actions, trusting actions *etc.* are not governed by the self to the same degree that, say, dutiful actions are. Martha Nussbaum has captured an intuition of this kind acutely in her writings on emotion. In *Upheavals of Thought*, she writes of

their [i.e. the emotions'] urgency and heat; their tendency to take over the personality and move it to action with overwhelming force; their connection with important attachments, in terms of which a person defines her life; the person's sense of passivity before them; their apparently adversarial relation to "rationality" in the sense of cool calculation or cost-benefit analysis; their close connections with one another, as hope alternates uneasily with fear, as a single event transforms hope into grief, as grief, looking about for a cause, expresses itself in anger, as all these can be the vehicles of an underlying love. (Nussbaum 2001: 22)

Now, we must be cautious in drawing a direct analogy between Løgstrup's sovereign expressions of life, such as mercy, and affective phenomena such as emotions or even moral sentiments.¹⁷ However, it is nonetheless instructive to compare Løgstrup's phenomenology of the Good Samaritan's mercifulness with

¹⁷ There is a risk that in interpreting the sovereign expressions of life in such a way as to present them as emotions, one ends up portraying Løgstrup as a kind of moral sentimentalist. The nature of Løgstrup's divergence from moral sentimentalism is principally methodological. Thus, we will only come to see the nature and extent of this divergence as we move on to consider Løgstrup's methodology in more detail in the next chapter. Yet, in order to block any potential misunderstanding, it is worth noting Stokes's insightful comment that 'what Løgstrup claims to offer is nothing less than an account of the wellspring of ethics, grounded in certain experiences that present themselves as normatively compelling prior to and independently of our evaluations of them. Løgstrup seeks to locate a normative experiential substratum for ethical discourse, but one that is phenomenologically self-validating (unlike the "moral sentiments" of Hutcheson and Hume, whose normativity can be affirmed only through theoretical evaluation)' (Stokes 2017: 275).

Nussbaum's descriptions here. The key points of convergence are that Nussbaum's emotions and Løgstrup's expressions of life *overwhelm* the self; they render the self seemingly passive to a significant degree and disable the agent's capacity for "rationality" in the sense of cool calculation.' The difference is that Løgstrup, in his phenomenology of the parable of the Good Samaritan, is concerned to disclose a distinct class of immediate and spontaneous ethical actions (good works) that are driven not by social norms, moral principles or sentiments, but rather by a primitive normativity inherent in the structure of interpersonal interaction.

With this preliminary sketch in hand, we can already begin to see the extent to which Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment differs from the standard conception of moral agency. On Løgstrup's interpretation, the Good Samaritan's responsiveness to the situation of the injured traveller is not well described in terms of self-regulation (F¹) and self-governance (F²), but is rather expressive of a spontaneous and self-forgetful responsiveness to a primitive normative claim. In order to sharpen these points of contrast and to increase the plausibility of Løgstrup's position, I will illustrate what I take Løgstrup's basic position to be by way of an example.

Consider the following scene from Vasily Grossman's harrowing novel about the battle of Stalingrad, *Life and Fate*:

Some German prisoners were carrying out Russian corpses from the cellar of a two-storey building that had once been the headquarters of the Gestapo. In spite of the cold, a group of women, boys and old men were standing beside the sentry watching the Germans lay out the corpses on the frozen earth. [...] On the stretcher lay the corpse of an adolescent girl. Her body was shrivelled and dried up; only her blonde hair kept its warm life and colour, falling in disorder round the terrible blackened face of a dead bird. The crowd gave a quiet gasp.

The squat woman let out a shrill cry. Her voice cut through the cold air like a blade. 'My child! My child! My golden child!'

[...]

The woman got to her feet and strode towards the officer. Everyone was struck by the way she kept her eyes fixed on him and yet at the same time managed to find a brick that wasn't part of a great frozen heap – a brick that even her poor hand could pick up, her poor weak hand that had been deformed by years of labour, that had been scalded by boiling water, icy water and lye.

[...]

The woman could no longer see anything except the face of the German with the handkerchief round his mouth. Not understanding what was happening to her, governed by a power she had just now seemed to control, she felt in the pocket of her jacket for a piece of bread that had been given to her the evening before by a soldier. She held it out to the German and said: 'There, have something to eat.'

Afterwards, she was unable to understand what happened to her, why she had done this. Her life was to be full of moments of humiliation, helplessness and anger, full of petty cruelties that made her lie awake at night, full of brooding resentment.

[...]

At one such moment, lying in her bed, full of bitterness, she was to remember that winter morning outside the cellar and think: 'I was a fool then, and I'm still a fool now. (Grossman 1985: 803-6)

This scene exemplifies mercy in a way that parallels the parable of the Good Samaritan in certain key respects. Firstly, its context is an interaction between enemies, a Nazi soldier and a Soviet mother whose daughter had presumably been killed at the hands of the Nazis. And, secondly, it portrays an ethical act in the sense that the Soviet mother treats the Nazi soldier not *as* a Nazi soldier, an enemy and a monster, but rather *as* a neighbour.

Beyond these initial points, from a Løgstrupian perspective this scene captures a mode of responsiveness to the plight of another, that is, a form of ethical responsiveness, which cannot be easily accommodated by the standard conception of moral agency. Firstly, the Soviet Mother's actions do not appear to have been regulated or mediated by her moral insight. In fact, she thought herself a fool for acting as she did: giving bread to the Nazi soldier was not something she felt duty-bound to do, nor was she moved by a distinctly moral form of meta-cognition to help the pitiful soldier. And her self-sacrifice certainly did not accord with the social or

cultural norms of her *milieu*. Rather, from a Løgstrupian perspective, the Soviet Mother's responsiveness to the Nazi soldier was pre-moral and spontaneous; it was not regulated by the Soviet Mother's moral insight about what she ought to do or what would be good and right (as *per* F¹) - and yet it was expressive of an elemental ethical responsiveness to the suffering of others, namely, mercy.

Furthermore, the scene from *Life and Fate* illustrates Løgstrup's contestation of F². Consider in this relation Grossman's description of the moment that the Soviet mother reached for the bread in her pocket. He writes that she did not understand what was happening to her and that she was 'governed by a power she had just now seemed to control.' That is, the Soviet mother did not have autonomous self-control at the moment where she reached for the bread in her pocket; it is not something she *chose* to do or *controlled* in any straightforward way. We might say that the mercifulness out of which the Soviet mother acted *governed* her just as much as – perhaps even more than - she governed it. This kind of observation is of critical importance in Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, as we shall see in further chapters: as concerns situations such as the Soviet mother's, the agent typically does not exercise the kind of self-governing control as described in F². Hence, a central claim that emerges in his moral phenomenology is that concerning merciful actions it is the *phenomenon* (i.e. mercy) that is 'sovereign' and not the agent who realizes them.

In this section I have sought to preliminarily establish two things: (1) that Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment is at least minimally plausible, i.e. that his interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan to some extent rings true and (2) that his phenomenology of moral comportment, as exemplified by his interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan, appears *prima facie* incompatible with moral agency¹. I have suggested that Løgstrup's phenomenology of the parable

of the Good Samaritan aims to capture a mode of primitive and immediate ethical responsiveness – *viz.* mercifulness – that precludes *both* F¹, in the sense that, on Løgstrup’s view, the Samaritan’s mercifulness was not regulated by his moral insight, *and* F², in the sense that, according to Løgstrup, the Samaritan’s actions were not expressive of autonomous self-governance, but rather of being overtaken by the ethical task at hand. In clarifying these points by appealing to an illustration external to Løgstrup’s thinking, I hope to have increased the initial plausibility of Løgstrup’s phenomenology of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Thus, we can make the following claim:

(Claim) Løgstrup presents a plausible phenomenology of moral comportment that is *prima facie* incompatible with moral agency¹.¹⁸

In the next section, I will use this claim to animate the question of moral agency for Løgstrup’s ethics.

1.3. *The Question of Moral Agency for Løgstrup’s Ethics*

In this section, my aim is to animate what I shall call the question of moral agency for Løgstrup’s ethics, namely, (Q¹) what conception of moral agency, if any, is compatible with Løgstrup’s ethics? I will begin by disambiguating Q¹ from two other closely related questions; (Q²) the normative question and (Q³) the problem of free will. Then I will establish that Løgstrup is committed to providing a positive response to Q¹, before suggesting that, given the apparent incompatibility of his moral phenomenology with moral agency¹, Løgstrup confronts a dilemma precisely in providing a positive response to Q¹.

¹⁸ It is important to stress that Løgstrup does not *deny* that moral agency¹ might accurately describe a mode of moral agency. Indeed, he appears to affirm it (BED: 77-79). Rather, he is denying that moral agency¹ exhaustively accounts for moral action; specifically, he denies that moral agency¹ can account for spontaneous ethical action.

Firstly, disambiguation. In this thesis I am interested in establishing whether there is an account of the constitutive conditions and fundamental structures of moral agency that is compatible with Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment, as sketched in 1.2. We have already encountered some potential difficulties in disambiguating this question from other, broader questions. We have seen, for instance, that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology centres around his articulation of a distinctive normative foundation for morality, *viz.* the sovereign expressions of life. Therefore, it is necessary to be absolutely clear about what question I am trying to answer in the thesis and what questions I am not trying to answer.

Firstly, then, I am not trying to answer what Korsgaard has dubbed 'the normative question:'

(Q²) '[W]hat *justifies* the claims morality makes on us' (Korsgaard 1996: 9-10)?

That is, I am not attempting to show that Løgstrup's appeal to phenomena such as mercy, love, trust *etc.* provides a justification for the normativity of morality in the face of sceptical worries. Nor am I defending Løgstrup's claims that the sovereign expressions of life constitute the source of normativity. This does not mean that I uncritically accept Løgstrup's claims on this issue; however, I am bracketing questions concerning the sources of normativity in order to focus on the question of agency.

Secondly, I am not trying to answer the problem of free will:

(Q³) Is it possible to reconcile an element of freedom within a causally determined natural world?

The need to disambiguate Q¹ from Q³ arises from the issues surrounding Løgstrup's commitment to certain aspects of Luther's theology, which I address in §3. More specifically, we shall see that Løgstrup appears to be committed to a version of Luther's claim that the will is not free with respect to its justification or salvation,

where this places a constraining condition on the will's capacity to bring about 'good works' (i.e. spontaneous ethical action (BED: 69)), such as the merciful action exemplified by the Good Samaritan, through its own efforts. However, what is at stake in Løgstrup's discussions here is not primarily the question as to whether the will is free or determined, but rather questions of human nature and our capacity for normative self-governance. In a word, the problem that animates this part of Løgstrup's ethic is: is the self wholly wicked? And, if so, what possibilities remain for moral action? Given the peculiarity of this kind of question to the modern, secular mind and the importance of Løgstrup's conclusions with respect to it for his moral philosophy, I do attempt in §3 to render Løgstrup's claims concerning the wickedness of the self intelligible. However, this work is ancillary to answering Q¹, which iterates the chief problem of this study:

(Q¹) What plausible conception of moral agency, if any, is compatible with Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment?

Q¹ naturally arises from my preliminary sketch of Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment in 1.2. There we saw what Løgstrup takes to be a paradigm of ethical action, *viz.* the merciful action of the Good Samaritan. But we also saw that his phenomenology of the Good Samaritan's mercifulness appears incompatible with moral agency¹. Q¹ arises from the following premise:

(Premise¹) Moral actions presuppose a moral agent or, what is the same, moral agency.

The thought here is simple: in order for something to count as a moral action it must be the product of a moral agent. If Løgstrup's position is that good works are not the product of moral agency, then his position immediately risks incoherence. So, the first step in animating Q¹ involves showing that Løgstrup is committed to Premise¹.

Evidence for this can be found in the article ‘Ethics and Ontology’ (1960), where Løgstrup stakes out his own ‘ontological’ approach to ethical theory in contrast to deontological and teleological moral theories. The key passage is this:

For Kant only the purely formal determination of the will by reason is unconditioned; otherwise the will is conditioned by inclinations such as in natural causality. Kant cannot see the third possibility, namely determining the will that is neither purely formal (as is that of reason) nor through natural causation (as is that of inclinations), but is rather material and at the same time obligatory because it arises from the basic givens of existence. (ED: 289-90)

Again, Kant is his target. For our purposes, however, the significance of this passage lies in the fact that it reflects Løgstrup’s commitment to providing a distinctive account of moral agency, that is, an account of the constitutive structures of moral action, as part of his ‘ontological ethics.’ It is worth noting that Løgstrup’s discussion here parallels his discussion of the enlightenment narrative, discussed in 1.2. In both cases, Løgstrup frames his philosophical task as articulating a sphere of agency which differs from deflationary moral theories which reduce moral agency to either rote conformity to social norms or psychological determinism (ED: 266¹⁹) on the one hand, and from moral theories which cast the moral agent as the sovereign, autonomous master of her moral actions on the other. He is, in short, searching for a ‘third possibility’ for accounting for moral action.

Moreover, there is evidence throughout Løgstrup’s discussions of the sovereign expressions of life that strongly suggest he is committed to Premise¹. Take, for instance, Løgstrup’s assertion in *Norm og spontaneitet* that ‘the expression of life does not determine the behaviour or dictate the action, and it does not preclude

¹⁹ The ‘teleological ethics’ he has in view in ‘Ethics and Ontology’ is the following: ‘Often teleological ethics is explained in terms of psychological desires. That means: in our attempts at understanding what is distinctive about ethical existence, we must respect what science, and in this connection, psychology, says about human beings. It reports that human existence is built on a number of desires: our entire active life arises from these desires and is moved by them. A human being acts thanks to his or her desires as sure as having desires implies wanting to satisfy them’ (ED: 266).

rational reflection or judgment. On the contrary, it demands them' (BED: 132). And his claim in *Opgør med Kierkegaard* that:

Once a person is under [the] sway [of, e.g. jealousy], agency [*handlingen*] is driven by contingencies. Action is reactive, not sovereign. The individual is simply a function of the situation, whereas in what concerns the sovereign expressions of life *the situation is a function of the agent*: we turn the situation round through trust, through mercy, through openness. (BED: 53, my emphasis)

These passages strongly suggest that Løgstrup views the realization of the sovereign expressions of life in spontaneous action in terms of *agency* rather than in terms of determined behaviour, where it is then reasonable to infer that Løgstrup is committed to Premise¹.

However, what is less clear is in what *way* sovereign expressions of life such as mercy are related to agency for Løgstrup. Or, in other words, on Løgstrup's view what contribution does moral agency make in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and the performance of good works? We have seen in 1.2. that his phenomenology of moral comportment is *prima facie* incompatible with the core features of moral agency¹. Thus, the contribution of the moral agent to the performance of a moral action on Løgstrup's view *prima facie* cannot be accounted for in terms of F¹ and F² in some combination. An immediate query, thus, presents itself: is there any conceptual space in Løgstrup's moral phenomenology for a plausible conception of moral agency?

In order to animate this dimension of Q¹, I will add a further premise:

(Premise²) All plausible conceptions of moral agency must adhere to the core features of moral agency¹.

Clearly, Premise², while being suggested by my discussion in 1.1., would be hard to fully defend. I invoke it here to play a heuristic function. For what it helps us

to see is that if Løgstrup is committed to Premise¹ but his moral phenomenology is incompatible with Premise² he confronts a dilemma:

(Dilemma) Either Løgstrup's paradigmatic case of ethical action presupposes moral agency¹, in which case his phenomenology is false, or his phenomenology is correct but as a consequence his paradigmatic case of ethical action turns out not to be *ethical* action but 'mere' or simple action.

We can add colour to this dilemma by turning to a well-known discussion of moral action found in Korsgaard (2008). In this discussion, Korsgaard contrasts two cases of action. In the first case a Lioness protects her cubs from a marauding male Lion. In the second, a boy called Jack travels to Chicago in order to be with his ailing mother. The first case is taken by Korsgaard to represent 'mere,' that is, non-moral, action, where the second case represents moral action. Now, while Korsgaard accepts that both the actions of the Lioness and the actions of Jack can be seen as 'good' third-personally in the sense that they reflect the proper functioning of the form of life to which they belong, she argues that only Jack's action is good in the further, deeper sense that justifies calling it moral action. This is because, for Korsgaard, Jack was 'motivated by the idea that [his] motives [were] good,' where 'this is just a way of saying that [moral] action is action that is *self-consciously* motivated, action whose motivation is essentially conscious of its own appropriateness.' She adds: 'It is this property – *consciousness of its own appropriateness* – that the Lioness's motivation lacks' (Korsgaard 2008: 214).

Admittedly, Korsgaard's line of argumentation here is controversial and does not enjoy the kind of broad assent that moral agency¹ does. Nevertheless, it represents a dominant view, and one which helps add colour to the above stated dilemma. Since, from what we have seen of Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment so far, it is clear that he would reject Korsgaard's analysis of Jack's actions as an explanation

of the Good Samaritan's merciful actions. Yet, in so doing, a burden of proof falls on Løgstrup to show what then distinguishes the Good Samaritan's merciful actions as *moral* actions rather than 'mere' non-moral actions, such as the Lioness's instinctual behaviour. Bluntly, given Premise¹, the dilemma concerns whether Løgstrup can explain why the Good Samaritan's merciful actions were moral actions without appealing to moral agency¹.

Ultimately, I will resolve the dilemma by denying Premise² and arguing that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is compatible with what, following the work of Béatrice Han-Pile, I shall call a *medio-passive* mode of agency. Thus, I will provide a positive answer to Q¹ by suggesting that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is compatible with a plausible conception of moral agency, albeit one that differs significantly from moral agency¹. However, before doing so I will canvass two strategies for defusing the dilemma which grasp the first horn of the dilemma, namely, that Løgstrup's paradigmatic case of moral agency presupposes or should presuppose moral agency¹, but in ways that purport to do minimal damage to Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. In the following chapters (§§2-3), however, I will argue that these two defusing strategies are problematic.

1.4. *Two Strategies for Defusing the Dilemma Raised by the Question of Moral Agency for Løgstrup's Ethics*

1.4.1. *A Kantian Defusing Strategy*

Throughout our discussion in 1.2., we saw that Løgstrup often uses Kant's ethics as a foil for elucidating his own moral phenomenology. This is no more evident than where he contrasts his own account of the Good Samaritan with a character that he dubs the 'Kantian Samaritan:'

[W]e can easily amplify the story and imagine that the Samaritan was tempted in the same way as were the priest and the Levite and, eschewing engagement with the situation, needed to overcome his resistance by letting the duty to duty enter as a fresh and necessary motive. In the deliberations prompted by the temptation to pass by and leave the assault victim to his fate, the Kantian Samaritan pauses to consider mercy as a duty, which may result in conveying the assault victim to the inn and tending his wounds not from mercy but from duty... [This] is morality as a substitute... (BED: 76)²⁰

The contrast Løgstrup is seeking to leverage between the Good Samaritan and the Kantian Samaritan concerns F¹. And the thought is that if the Good Samaritan's mercifulness was mediated or regulated by his conception of the right, where this provided mercifulness – considered as a motivation – with its normativity, then the merciful action performed by the Samaritan would no longer be performed out of mercy but rather out of duty. And this, Løgstrup argues, amounts to an 'introversion' of the initial merciful motivation in the sense that the Samaritan is no longer focused on the injured traveller and their needs, but on his own dutifulness.

In his paper, "Duty and Virtue are Moral Introversions:" On Løgstrup's Critique of Morality,' Robert Stern challenges Løgstrup's line of argumentation here.²¹ Ultimately, the aim of Stern's paper is to argue that 'sympathetically viewed, both Løgstrup's Good Samaritan and Kant's dutiful Samaritan will end up being characterized in much the same manner, so that Løgstrup has failed to show that there is some ethical element missing in the latter that is present in the former' (Stern 2015: 227). In the present context, however, I am not so much interested in the veracity of Løgstrup's claim that the Kantian Samaritan is somehow ethically 'inferior' to the Good Samaritan. Rather, I am interested in the implications of Stern's argument as it

²⁰ The locution 'duty to duty' employed by Løgstrup here is an allusion to Hegel and his criticism of the formalism of Kant's moral philosophy. See e.g. Hegel 2008: §§133-5.

²¹ It is important to note that Stern's interpretation of Kant differs dramatically from Korsgaard's. The difference, at root, turns on the fact that whereas Korsgaard interprets Kant to be a moral constructivist, which would leave him more vulnerable to Løgstrup's criticisms, Stern interprets Kant to be offering a 'hybrid' theory, which integrates an element of realism when it comes to the right and an element of anti-realism when it comes to obligation. It is on the basis of this interpretation of Kant that Stern brokers a rapprochement between Kant and Løgstrup.

concerns the consistency of Løgstrup's putative rejection of F¹ in his moral phenomenology. For what Stern's argument suggests is that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology can be seen to be in fact compatible with a Kantian variant of F¹, so long as we don't build any caricatures of Kant into this view.

Stern begins, then, by dismissing Løgstrup's claim that on the Kantian view, duty acts as a 'substitute' motivation for the Kantian Samaritan *in place* of the needs of the injured traveller, where the Kantian Samaritan then supposedly acts 'not in order to save them, but in order to have performed his duty.' By contrast, Stern argues that on a more nuanced Kantian view

[A]t the primary level, the dutiful agent need not act from duty as a motive, perhaps because they are motivated to act by some feeling such as mercifulness (Herman, Baron), or because they are simply motivated by the suffering of the victim (Stratton-Lake); nonetheless, they only treat this feeling or state of affairs as reason giving insofar as they take it to be in line with duty or what is right for them to do, where therefore duty functions as a secondary motive, regulating the primary one. (Stern 2015: 228)

Thus, Stern suggests that Løgstrup is wrong to think that the Kantian Samaritan is *primarily* motivated by duty rather than the needs of the traveller. This need only be the case if Kant held primary and secondary motivations to be mutually exclusive; but Stern claims he did not. Rather, it is consistent with a Kantian view to think that both the Good Samaritan and the Kantian Samaritan alike can be seen to be motivated by the needs of the traveller at the primary level, where the secondary level performs the function of treating the primary motivation as normatively reason giving.

However, a genuine difference between the two conceptions might still obtain as concerns the very existence of a *secondary* level of motivation, where on Stern's interpretation of the Kantian Samaritan it is only in light of a second-order commitment to the right that the needs of the other show up as normatively reason

giving. Løgstrup's likely rejoinder here would be that it is in fact precisely this appeal to a secondary level of motivation that he has in mind with his characterization of the Kantian Samaritan and how he differs from the Good Samaritan. Anticipating this rejoinder, Stern argues that while Løgstrup is clearly suspicious of a certain kind of second-order activity on the part of the Samaritan, namely, a kind that 'introverts' the situation by making it about one's duty rather than the injured traveller, he does not appear to be opposed to second-order activity *per se*. After all, even on Løgstrup's own account, the Samaritan is committed to the *good* of the injured traveller – he is not merely a 'moral automaton,' causally moved by the situation.²² In support of this view, recall the above-cited passage where Løgstrup suggests that 'the expression of life does not determine the behaviour or dictate the action, and it does not preclude rational reflection or judgment. On the contrary, it demands them' (BED: 132). This passage could be seen to allow for a kind of second-order commitment to the good as being central to moral action. Indeed, if Løgstrup were to deny even this kind of morally-inflected reflection, it would become hard to see in what sense the Samaritan's actions were *ethical* actions at all, as distinct from the instinctual non-moral behaviour of Korsgaard's Lioness.

Stern, thus, appears to be on both philosophically and interpretatively sturdy ground when he suggests that so long as one does not caricature Kant's view, the claim that the motivational structure of Løgstrup's Good Samaritan differs substantively from a suitably nuanced version of the Kantian Samaritan appears to

²² Cf. 'The expression of life is what kindles deliberations of the imagination and the intellect about what to do' (BED: 72) and 'Neither the unconditionality of the expression of life nor the "ought" of the norm renders reflection and argument superfluous. The expression of life gives rise to actions, and just as unconditional as the expression of life is, so conditional on the given situation and circumstances are the actions to which it gives rise. And just as conditional as the action is on the situation and its circumstances, so numerous will the reflections and arguments required in the given situation be for anyone seeking to determine the right action. In one situation the right course of action is obvious, in another it is almost impossible to determine, and in between lie a wide range of situations that are more or less clear' (BED: 130-1).

dissolve: since the Kantian Samaritan's commitment to the right can now be seen to operate in much the same manner as Løgstrup's Good Samaritan's focus on the good of the injured traveller. The upshot of this is, of course, that it reveals Løgstrup's moral phenomenology to in fact be *compatible* with F¹ – and even that it might yet be compatible with a suitably nuanced Kantian version of moral agency¹.

Nothing in this argument, however, addresses the seeming incompatibility of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology with F². Yet, an implication of Stern's argument is that this seeming incompatibility might now be seen to reflect a contingent difference between the respective 'motivational stories' of the Good Samaritan and the Kantian Samaritan rather than a difference in the *kind* of moral agency underpinning each figure. That is, the real difference between the Good Samaritan and the Kantian Samaritan is that the Kantian Samaritan was tempted by a heteronomous inclination to pass the traveller by, whereas the Good Samaritan was not. Hence, the Kantian Samaritan was, therefore, required to exert his rational will in order to bring his actions in line with the right. Stern goes on to note that the fact that both Løgstrup and Kant identify this difference as being morally significant perhaps yields yet more common ground between Løgstrup's and Kant's ethical views. For just as Løgstrup invokes the two contrasting Samaritans in order to show the ethical failings of the Kantian Samaritan in contrast to the exemplary actions of the Good Samaritan,

Kant had his own grounds for treating the dutiful [i.e. Kantian] agent as less than ethically ideal in certain crucial respects: for, the fact that duty and obligation figure so centrally in our moral lives is for Kant the result of our ethical limitations and the ethical inadequacy of our natures, much as it is for Løgstrup. To this extent, therefore, both may be said to share the Lutheran view that the law exists not for the righteous, but only for the unrighteous. (Stern 2015: 235)

That is, both see the need for willed self-governance and self-control (F²) as being symptomatic of our ethical limitations where, in contrast, the paradigmatic and undivided activity of the Good Samaritan did not need to exert such self-control.

In sum, then, Stern's argument challenges Løgstrup's putative rejection of F¹. Once the caricatured Kantian variant of F¹ is dismissed, it appears that Løgstrup, like Kant, is committed to a variant of F¹. And admitting this would help Løgstrup get out of the problem of moral agency since it would provide a criterion by which moral action could be distinguished from 'mere' action. Of course, there remains a lingering difference between the two thinkers concerning the possibility of realizing paradigmatic moral actions which may show the two thinkers to be talking at cross purposes as concerns the issue of moral agency. Namely, that whereas for Stern's Kant the regulative ideal of a perfect coincidence of inclination and duty is the preserve of the holy will alone and is not a real possibility for human agents, Løgstrup's interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan, and his theory of the sovereign expressions of life which it illustrates, aims at establishing precisely the 'reality' of the kind of undivided, immediate other-regarding action that the commandment of neighbour love calls for.²³ I will not discuss the implications of this difference here (see §2). However, identifying this lingering difference brings me neatly to the second defusing strategy.

1.4.2. *An Aristotelian Defusing Strategy*

As well as being critical of an ethics of duty, Løgstrup was also critical of virtue ethics – for much the same reason:

When we turn an act into a duty we discount the motivation that consists in our being gripped by the objective of the action. We no longer count on our caring enough to get the thing done. The same applies to virtue, in that the motivation for which it is the disposition, namely, the thought and the sense

²³ Cf. 'Kant draws a distinction between the holy will and a will such as ours throughout his ethical writings, and in his lectures on ethics. The actual difference he points to is in essence a simple one, and obviously relates to standard theological conceptions of our 'fallen' nature: whereas a divine will acts only in line with the good, and has no inclinations to do otherwise, we have immoral desires and inclinations, that mean we find ourselves drawn to adopt immoral courses of action. As Kant puts it: 'The dispositions [*Gesinnungen*] of the deity are morally good, and those of man are not. The dispositions or subjective morality of the divine are therefore coincident with objective morality', but ours are not' (Stern 2015: 16).

of the rightness of the action, is a substitute for an engagement in what will be achieved through one's action, which is the only natural and genuine motive. Just as duty is a substitute motive, virtue is a substitute disposition. (BED: 78)

In contravention to this, Alasdair MacIntyre has provided some arguments intended to show not only that certain key features of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology can be made compatible with MacIntyre's brand of Thomist-Aristotelian virtue ethics, but that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology *needs* to be integrated into an ethical framework such as MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian framework on pain of incoherence. In contrast to the Stern's Kantian defusing strategy, then, which sought to foster a rapprochement between a suitably nuanced conception of the Kantian agent and Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy aims to integrate some key features of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology into a Thomist-Aristotelian conception of moral agency while jettisoning some of Løgstrup's seemingly less plausible claims - without thereby compromising the richness of that phenomenology.²⁴ Moreover, in contrast to Stern's Kant, MacIntyre, like Løgstrup, is cautiously optimistic about the possibility of paradigmatic moral action for human agents.

I will consider MacIntyre's engagement with Løgstrup in some detail in §3. Thus, in this section my aim is to provide a basic outline of the direction in which MacIntyre seeks to take Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. MacIntyre's approach to Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is, in essence, simple. He appreciates Løgstrup's

²⁴ MacIntyre is fully aware that the respective traditions out of which his ethical philosophy and Løgstrup's ethical philosophy developed are in certain respects undeniably incompatible. Cf. 'The concepts central to that Thomistic moral philosophy are those of the common good and the natural law. The concept central to Løgstrup's thought is that of the singularity of the ethical demand. And on a first scrutiny – indeed even on a second or a third – if what Løgstrup says about the ethical demand is true, then the Thomistic concepts are nothing but sources of illusion, while, if what the Thomists assert is true, then what Løgstrup offers is a distorted and perverse account of the claims of morality' (MacIntyre 2010: 1-2). I discuss the nature and importance of this deep incompatibility to the question of moral agency in §3.

emphasis on spontaneous ethical action, such as that exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan. However, he is deeply critical of Løgstrup's dismissive attitude towards the value of moral reflection and virtuous self-development when it comes to the constitution of such action. Specifically, MacIntyre claims that Løgstrup has a 'misconception of the virtues [and] the part played by the virtues in those actions that exemplify...spontaneity' (MacIntyre 2007: 153).²⁵ MacIntyre's suggestion is that when Løgstrup's misconceptions of the virtues are placed to one side, Løgstrup's phenomenology of good works can in fact be seen to be compatible with a Thomist-Aristotelian brand of virtue ethics – and, indeed, it is only when viewed in this way that Løgstrup's phenomenology of good works is intelligible as an account of ethical action.

A central argument MacIntyre deploys in support of this view rests on a putative difference between Løgstrup's and Aquinas's respective assessments of the ethical value of spontaneity:

[W]ith regard to spontaneity there are two fundamental differences between Aquinas and Løgstrup. Where Løgstrup seems to identify spontaneity as itself a good, Aquinas requires us to distinguish between the spontaneity of the good and the spontaneity of the bad. And where Løgstrup treats spontaneity as something that presents itself spontaneously, Aquinas suggests to us that spontaneity of the good has to be acquired through learning. (MacIntyre 2007: 160)

MacIntyre challenges both of Løgstrup's premises here. He argues, firstly, that it is absurd to blankly assert that spontaneity is inherently good and that reflection is inherently bad, for there are many examples of spontaneous responsiveness to others that we would hardly consider to be morally praiseworthy:

²⁵ In particular, MacIntyre accuses Løgstrup of eliding the difference between virtues and character traits: 'What then is the mark of a virtue? A virtue is a disposition to act in accordance with the judgments of reason, that is, to act so as to achieve that immediate end or good which in this or that situation is ordered to our ultimate good. Virtues differ both from skills and character traits, such as reliability and perseverance, precisely in that they are habits directed towards the good. They are not neutral powers, equally available for the pursuit of either goods or bads' (MacIntyre 2007: 153).

for instance, ‘...the joyful malice of *Schadenfreude* or the witty and hurtful sneer that is voiced spontaneously and issues equally spontaneously in unreflective and unconstrained words and deeds’ (MacIntyre 2007: 159).²⁶ Secondly, and more significantly for our present purposes, MacIntyre suggests that given the moral ambiguity of spontaneity, the spontaneous mercifulness showed by the Good Samaritan can only be intelligible as a form of *ethical* action if that mercifulness is seen to be the product of cultivation of and habituation to right reason. If the Samaritan’s spontaneous mercifulness was not informed by right reason then it simply was not the product of moral agency, but rather instinct or impulse. That is, spontaneous ethical actions (good works) are only intelligible as such on the presupposition of virtuous self-development: ethical spontaneity is only intelligible as *learned* spontaneity.

MacIntyre, thus, turns to Aquinas in suggesting that any coherent account of good works must include some account moral agency that gives a central place to learning and habituation. On this conception of moral agency, the individual, through self-cultivating activity, can progress from primitive incontinence, through to continence where the agent ‘knows by the exercise of her or his reason what it is right to do, but desires, even strongly desires to do otherwise...’ (MacIntyre 2007: 15), and finally they may arrive at virtue. At this final stage, the virtuous individual

[has] through habituation and reflection so reordered their desires and so developed their capacity for judgment in accordance with right reason that they are undivided in their inclination to act rightly. They know how to act on many types of occasions without immediately prior deliberation. Confronted by such situations they respond wholeheartedly and spontaneously. (MacIntyre 2007: 159)

²⁶ Presumably, by extension, MacIntyre holds that there are many instances of deliberated responsiveness to others that are morally praiseworthy, particularly in morally delicate situations.

Thus, in contrast to the Kantian view, MacIntyre stands in agreement with Løgstrup in affirming the possibility of spontaneous ethical action. However, he argues that this possibility is only coherent on the presupposition of a certain construal of F^2 , *viz.* self-cultivation.

MacIntyre's argument, then, puts pressure on Løgstrup's apparent rejection of F^2 in the following way. Whilst Løgstrup himself would certainly reject the Thomist-Aristotelian appropriation of his thought undertaken by MacIntyre, MacIntyre argues that once some of Løgstrup's misconceptions of the Thomist-Aristotelian view have been taken into account, this appropriating strategy presents a way out of some looming incoherences in Løgstrup's own view – whilst preserving its major insights. Specifically, MacIntyre suggests that ethical spontaneity can best be rendered intelligible in terms of moral agency when viewed in the context of a Thomist-Aristotelian framework. Viewed in this way, the Good Samaritan's spontaneous showing of mercy can be seen to be an instance of *ethical* action insofar as it is the product of the Samaritan's self-governing cultivation according to right reason, rather than merely instinctual or impulsive behaviour. Importantly, this does not take anything away from the spontaneity of the Samaritan's mercifulness itself, rather it simply provides a moral framework within which our positive assessments of the moral value of that spontaneous mercifulness are rendered intelligible.

1.5. *Conclusion*

I began this chapter by offering a definition of what I call the standard view of moral agency, in which moral agency is said to be constituted by some combination of F^1 and F^2 . Next, I offered a preliminary sketch of Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment, from this it emerged that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology appears to be incompatible with the standard view of moral agency. Based on this

observation I raised the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics. In the final section, I canvassed two strategies for defusing the question of moral agency, the first strategy put pressure on Løgstrup's putative rejection of F¹ in his moral phenomenology and the second strategy put pressure on the coherence of Løgstrup's rejection of F² in his moral phenomenology. Both strategies proposed amendments to Løgstrup's phenomenology which, whilst purportedly retaining the core of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, resolved the issues that led to the question of moral agency. Ostensibly, if these defusing strategies go through, this discussion has led to a positive outcome both for Løgstrup, in that they provide resources for underwriting the plausibility and coherence of his moral phenomenology, and for proponents of the standard view of moral agency, in that they can now gain from the riches of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. Yet, this happy conclusion is only warranted if the manner in which the two defusing strategies integrate Løgstrup's moral phenomenology within the standard view of moral agency do not distort his phenomenology in significant ways. One of the tasks of the following two chapters will be to show that, on closer inspection, the two defusing strategies canvassed here do indeed distort important aspects of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. However, a second task of the following two chapters will be to show that even so it nonetheless remains possible to provide a positive answer to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics.

2. Ontological Ethics: The Hermeneutics of Trust

Starting from his 1968 work *Opgør med Kierkegaard*, Knud Eljer Løgstrup began developing what would become his signature theory of the sovereign expressions of life. He developed this theory chiefly with a view to providing a phenomenological account of good works, such as those exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the sovereign expressions of life. Central to this analysis will be an attempt to elucidate Løgstrup's claim that the sovereign expressions of life are defined by their immediacy. For our purposes, this claim is of principal importance because it exacerbates the following worry concerning the compatibility of Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment, as codified in his theory of the sovereign expressions of life, with a plausible conception of moral agency: (1) moral agency constitutively involves a second-order insight into or awareness of the goodness or rightness of an occurrent motivation for action. I labelled this core feature of moral agency F^1 in the previous chapter. (2) Løgstrup's emphasis on immediacy in characterizing the sovereign expressions of life precludes such moral insight. Therefore, (3) the good works accounted for by Løgstrup with his theory of sovereign expressions of life precludes moral agency. In a word, the worry is that, by accounting for paradigmatic moral action in terms of immediacy, Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment precludes moral agency, where his position then looks to be incoherent.

One strategy for assuaging this worry is to attack the second premise specified above. Another, bolder, strategy would be to attack the first premise. The argument I will prosecute in this chapter, however, lies between these two strategies. Namely, I will look to the phenomenological method underpinning Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life in arguing that whilst Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign

expressions of life does preclude the kinds of second-order moral insight subsumed under F¹, this does not mean it precludes moral awareness on the part of the person performing that action *per se*. Rather, I will explore and explicate an alternative way of construing moral awareness that, being responsive to the phenomenological underpinnings of Løgstrup's ethics, is well placed to meet the twin criteria of exegetical and philosophical plausibility. I shall call this the *phenomenological* defusing strategy.

I will proceed as follows. Firstly, in keeping with Løgstrup's phenomena-driven approach to philosophy, I will introduce the sovereign expressions of life *via* a reconstruction of Løgstrup's phenomenology of basic trust, as developed in *The Ethical Demand* (2.1). As a result, the worry concerning the compatibility of the characteristically immediate sovereign expressions of life with moral agency will be thrown into sharp relief. Thus, next, in 2.2., I will re-consider a strategy for defusing this worry by denying that Løgstrup, in his theory of the expressions of life, is rigorous in his commitment to immediacy and, thus, that his theory is in fact compatible with some variant of F¹. Here, I will use Kantian defusing strategy canvassed in chapter one as a model for this line of interpretation. Ultimately, however, I will argue that this strategy is interpretatively problematic. Finally, in 2.3., I will bring Løgstrup's moral phenomenology into dialogue with Martin Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. Based on this comparative analysis, I will argue for an interpretation of the sovereign expressions of life along the lines of a broadly Heideggerian existential analytic, where they can be fruitfully construed as hermeneutic conditions. On this interpretation, it is possible to resolve the worry over the immediacy of spontaneous ethical action in a way that aligns with Løgstrup's avowed 'ontological ethics.' Thus, I will conclude that Løgstrup's emphasis on immediacy in his theory of the expressions of life, whilst precluding a certain

conception of second-order moral insight, does not necessarily preclude moral awareness as such.

2.1. *Trust as a Sovereign Expression of Life: A Reconstruction*

Any comprehensive study of Løgstrup's ethics must include an assessment of his theory of the sovereign expressions of life [*suveræne/spontan livsytringer*].¹ First developed in his polemical 1968 work, *Opgør med Kierkegaard*, partly as a response to a perceived shortcoming of *The Ethical Demand*, Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life became the centrepiece of his ethical philosophy for the rest of his career.² Yet, as Kees van Kooten Niekerk has observed, it is not easy to get a good

¹ As has been noted in the literature, the Danish *ytring* is a cognate of the English *utterance*. According to Søren Holm, this generates 'translation problems because 'ytring' in Danish has connotations of both verbal and nonverbal communication,' whereas in English 'utterance' has a predominantly (if not exclusively) verbal connotation (Holm 2009: 28). Notwithstanding these difficulties, Holm has translated *spontan livsytringer* in one place as 'spontaneous utterances of life' (*ibid.*). Russell Dees, by contrast, renders the term as sovereign or spontaneous *life-manifestations* (Dees 1995: ix, *passim.*), presumably to capture the sense in which the *livsytringer* manifest themselves in our conduct and behaviour. Throughout this thesis, however, I have opted for Dew's and Flegal's rendering of the term as sovereign *expressions* of life - not only because it has become the more or less standard translation, but also because it seems to best capture the various resonances of the term. For instance, it captures both the verbal and performative connotations of the original in the sense that the word 'expression' in English can refer both to a physical posture and to a turn of phrase. Furthermore, it aligns Løgstrup's vocabulary with the parlance of *Lebensphilosophie*, which was a formative influence on Løgstrup's thinking (Cf. Niekerk 2007: pp. 63-65): the thought that life expresses itself was a central theme of *Lebensphilosophie*, as Hans-Georg Gadamer has pointed out with reference to a leading proponent of *Lebensphilosophie*, Wilhelm Dilthey: '...Husserl's demonstration of the ideality of significance was the result of purely *logical* investigations. What Dilthey makes of it is something quite different. For him significance is not a logical concept, but is to be understood as an expression [*Ausdruck*] of *life*.' (Gadamer 2004: 229). It is interesting to note that, in the German translation, *livsytringer* is rendered (by Løgstrup's wife, no less) as *Daseinsäußerung* (see NS: 6 *et passim.*) which, along with the familiar associations of *expression* and *utterance*, also has an historical association with 'self-emptying,' at least when applied to God (see e.g. W. A. Suchting 1991 xxxiv). This latter association seems fitting (if maybe fortuitous), since it captures a - vaguely mystical - sense in which the expressions of life are phenomenal manifestations of life's 'self'-emptying or -outpouring.

² Cf. 'In an article from 1967, the Danish theologian Ole Jensen has drawn attention to a peculiar ambiguity in *The Ethical Demand*. According to Jensen, Løgstrup on the one hand connects the ethical demand with trust as a fact and speaks of "the realities of trust and love," which manifest the goodness of life" (Løgstrup 1997, 141). On the other hand, however, he states that he operates with natural love as an "imaginary entity," because actually we know only "a natural love to which we have given our own self's selfish form." Similarly, there is no unadulterated trust because we "hold ourselves in reserve instead of surrendering ourselves" (*ibid.*, 138-139)...Løgstrup subscribes to Jensen's criticism and claims unambiguously that trust and natural love are realities in human life' (Niekerk 2007a: xiv). See §3 for further discussion of this point.

grip on Løgstrup's account of the sovereign expressions of life. This is partly due to the fact that, in *Opgør med Kierkegaard*, Løgstrup's discussion of the expressions of life 'is embedded in a discussion with Kierkegaard in which Løgstrup controverts the latter's view of Christian belief,' and thus 'the understanding of some passages...presupposes a certain familiarity with Kierkegaard' (Niekerk 2007a: xiv). More generally, however, the difficulty of grasping Løgstrup's account of the expressions of life stems from the incompleteness and fragmentariness of his theory:

Løgstrup kept on developing and modifying [his] conception of [the sovereign expressions of life] until his death. He did not construct a consistent theory. Rather, he offers us a manifold of specific analyses, which do not always match and sometimes even contradict one another. (Niekerk 2017: 187)

Notwithstanding these immediate interpretive difficulties, two initial observations can be made about Løgstrup's theory of the expressions of life without controversy. Firstly, we can make a purely descriptive observation that the set of phenomena comprised by the theory of the sovereign expressions of life includes – but is not exhausted by – phenomena such as trust (M1: 89), mercy (BED: 76), openness of speech (M2: 110), sincerity (BED: 115), hope (M1: 295), frankness (M1: 89), sympathy (M1: 89), compassion (BED: 125), fidelity (BED: 117) and forgiveness (M1: 281). Secondly, and more substantively, we can infer that with his theory of the expressions of life Løgstrup is attempting to account for the possibility of spontaneous ethical action or good works, such as those exemplified by the parable of the Good Samaritan. Beyond these initial observations, however, providing an exegesis of the sovereign expressions of life quickly becomes a delicate matter. Thus, in the spirit of interpretive fidelity, I will commence my interpretation by reconstructing Løgstrup's analysis of trust from *The Ethical Demand*.³ Not only is trust the expression of life to

³ There is an obvious chronological issue that presents itself here, namely, that Løgstrup's discussion of trust in *The Ethical Demand* pre-dates the development of his theory of expressions of life by some twelve years. In justifying my interpretive decision here, I submit the following points for consideration. Firstly, and purely pragmatically, no sovereign expression of life received nearly as

which Løgstrup devoted the greatest phenomenological attention, thus providing us with the most comprehensive insight into Løgstrup's understanding of the phenomena subsumed under the category of sovereign expressions of life, but also, as we shall see, trust highlights the worry over immediacy particularly well.

Trust [*tillid*] plays a leading role in *The Ethical Demand*. It is seen by Løgstrup to be expressive of the fundamental 'fact' [*kendsgerning*] of human interdependence, which constitutes the source or origin [*udspringer*] of the 'silent' [*tavse*] demand. In this relation, Løgstrup portrays trust as 'basic' [*fundamentale*] to human existence, in the sense that 'it is part of what it means to be human' and that 'human life could hardly exist if it were otherwise' (ED: 8). He avers:

We would simply not be able to live; our life would be impaired and wither away if we were in advance to distrust one another, if we were to suspect the other of thievery and falsehood from the very outset (ED: 8-9).⁴

Passages such as these have led commentators such as Stephen Darwall to construe sovereign expressions of life such as trust as 'forms of mutual responsiveness' that 'bring us into a common life' (Darwall 2017: 41). On this reading, we might think of the sovereign expressions of life as collectively forming a tacit 'background' that,

much phenomenological attention from Løgstrup as did trust. Therefore, Løgstrup's analysis of trust provides us with the best resource for understanding the phenomenology involved in his theory of the expressions of life. Secondly, I think there is good reason to think of the relation between *The Ethical Demand* and the later works as one of development and refinement rather than as a sharp break. In this relation, consider the fact that in his 'Rejoinder' (1961), Løgstrup defends his analysis of trust in *The Ethical Demand* (BED: pp. 2-8). The only significant shifts in his thinking suggested in that text concern his claim concerning the understanding of life as a gift (BED: pp.10-14) and, in a separate text, his affirmation of the reality of the sovereign expressions of life (BED: 69). I deal with these issues separately. It is also important to note that there are wide ranging differences between the various phenomena that comprise the sovereign expressions of life: openness of speech, for instance, is very different from mercifulness. However, I take it to be one of Løgstrup's aims in developing his theory of the sovereign expressions of life to claim that the phenomena that comprise the sovereign expressions of life share some core features. My discussion of trust here aims to bring out some of those core features.

⁴ Løgstrup admits that in 'special circumstances' such as those where a 'general climate of informing on each other' prevails trust may be 'destroyed.' For instance, during the German occupation of Denmark, where Løgstrup 'worked as a courier for the resistance and made his house available for wireless transmissions to England' which rendered him 'liable to torture and death' (MacIntyre 2010: 3). However, he clearly thinks that such circumstances reflect an 'impaired' and 'withered' form of life – and plausibly so.

in the first instance, enables our human form of sociality. Indeed, Løgstrup's comments to the effect that 'the expressions of life are what normally sustain all human interaction' (BED: 84) and that 'the spontaneous expressions of life exist to allow our coexistence and communal life to endure and develop' (BED: 128) seem to support this reading. Viewed from a different perspective, Robert Stern has suggested that Løgstrup's comments here point towards the conclusion that trust holds a weak transcendental status, in the sense that our form of life 'would be impossible if people in general could not be trusted to speak the truth,' for example (Stern 2017a: 280).⁵ Thus, on first blush, the place trust and the other expressions of life have in Løgstrup's architectonic of ethical life appears to be as transcendental background conditions for the possibility of ethical life.

As Stern himself notes, however, difficulties attend this line of interpretation.⁶ I want to set these difficulties to one side for the time being. For immediately after the passage from *The Ethical Demand* just quoted, Løgstrup lays out a substantive set of descriptions of trust: 'To trust,' he writes, 'is to lay oneself open' (ED: 9). It is, in other words, to surrender oneself to the other, to let oneself be exposed and vulnerable to the other (ED: 9). Or, to 'go out of oneself' and to place something of one's life into the hands of the other person' (ED: 16). Løgstrup admits that such definitions are

⁵ Although Stern does problematize a straightforwardly transcendental conception of trust as being compatible with Løgstrup's phenomenology (see fn. 6), what he doesn't mention in his discussion is that Løgstrup denies that that trust operates as an *a priori* transcendental condition, traditionally construed (see BED: 39-45). This makes matters more complex since it is clear that for Løgstrup trust and the sovereign expressions of life more generally are construed as being *a priori* in some sense, where in what follows I will suggest that the notion of hermeneutic condition can capture this sense.

⁶ Cf. '...the problem with taking [a transcendental priority] to be the core of Løgstrup's priority thesis is that it would seem to commit him to a predictive rather than affective conception for trust...for the transcendental claim would appear to ground trust in something other than the role our dependence has in motivating the other person, and instead ground it in what we take to be the way in which life operates...' (Stern 2017a: 282). Below, I express reservations about whether Løgstrup can be seen to be committed to an affective form of trust, however, Stern's point here holds nevertheless.

‘metaphorical and subject to misunderstanding’ (ED: 16), yet he does offer a somewhat more tangible definition of trust amidst his descriptions:

[T]o trust is to let the other person emerge through words, deeds, and conduct [rather than] to hinder this instead by our suspicion and by the picture we have formed of him or her... (ED: 14)

At root, Løgstrup’s thought here appears to be this. The other persons I encounter in my everyday navigation of the world, whether they happen to be well known to me or perfect strangers, are always to a significant degree *other than* the particular conception I happen to have of them – regardless of how well-informed and multifaceted that conception may be. So, just as the homeless drug addict I pass on the street is not reducible to his homelessness and addiction – and the various prejudices and stereotypes such descriptions often trigger – neither are my friends and family reducible to the character traits and habits I have, through long experience, observed in them. Rather, there is an irreducible otherness to the other person, in the sense that their existence cannot be fully subsumed under propositional statements. Hannah Arendt has rendered a similar thought succinctly:

The manifestation of who the speaker and doer unexchangeably is, though it is plainly visible, retains a curious intangibility that confounds all efforts toward unequivocal verbal expression. The moment we want to say *who* somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying *what* he is; we get entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a “character” in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us. (Arendt 1958: 181)

In its primitive form, then, for Løgstrup trust is the phenomena in virtue of which the other’s otherness can ‘emerge’ to me through her ‘new words, new deeds, and new conduct’ (ED: 14), where these words, deeds and conduct (potentially) provoke the constant (and in principle infinite) revision of our previously held conceptions of the other – and even in some cases ‘erasing’ them entirely (ED: 13).

That is, to trust is to allow for ‘the ongoing renewal of life’ (ED: 14) in ways that transcend our finite representational resources.

Viewed in a certain light, Løgstrup’s thinking here appears to be in step with some of the foremost thinkers of his age. For instance, apart from Arendt, we might think of Emmanuel Levinas, for whom the other is exterior to the horizon of intelligibility – or ‘totality’ – of the ‘Same’ – or representational intentionality – in an ethically important way.⁷ We might also think of Theodor Adorno’s criticism of ‘identity thinking,’ glossed by Fabian Freyenhagen as

the thought that any subsumption under concepts, even the most apt one, misses something about its object and if this mismatch is not reflected upon, then thought does injustice to the object. (Freyenhagen 2013: 43)

That is to say, just as for Levinas and Adorno, for whom thinking on the exteriority of the Other (Levinas) or the ‘non-identical’ or ‘non-conceptual’ more generally (Adorno) was seen to be a matter of ethical and political urgency, Løgstrup too appears to have been concerned in his definition of trust to place a fundamental and radical relation to otherness at the heart of his ethical enquiry.⁸

⁷ Cf. e.g. ‘The ontological event accomplished by philosophy consists in suppressing or transmuting the alterity of all that is Other, in universalizing the immanence of the Same (*le Même*) or of Freedom, in effacing the boundaries, and in expelling the violence of Being (*Être*). The knowing I is the melting pot of such a transmutation. It is the Same par excellence. When the Other enters into the horizon of knowledge, it already renounces alterity...The Other (*l’Autre*) thus presents itself as human Other (*Autrui*); it shows a face and opens the dimension of *height*, that is to say, it *infinitely* overflows the bounds of knowledge...the Other lays him- or herself bare to the total negation of murder but forbids it through the original language of his defenceless eyes’ (Levinas 1996: 11-12).

⁸ The comparable dimension of Løgstrup’s thought is well captured in his discussion of a story by the writer Jørgen Nielsen, in which the protagonist, Nima Collman, plots to murder his wife. Ultimately, Collman cannot go through with his plan, and he confesses all to his wife. Løgstrup describes the moment in which Collman realizes he cannot go through with his plan as follows: ‘When Nima Collman no longer in fantasy, reflection and planning but in deed must assault the life of another human being, he is filled with a horror which he had not for a moment contemplated. It does not happen that, when the actual deed is at hand, he finds sympathy for his wife or that some of his former love renews itself or that the amicable feelings which have returned to him achieve power over his mind. No, it is nothing of this nature which brings on his sudden reversal. What occurs does not belong to the human-civil sphere. It is life itself, the life of another human being which rises up in its inviolability. It is a powerless inviolability, because Nima Collman is still able to murder his wife. Rather, it is inviolable, because he cannot do it without committing sacrilege and annihilating himself. Life’s own inviolability makes itself felt in his horror, in his complete spiritual breakdown’ (M1 85).

Yet, based on what we have seen of Løgstrupian trust so far, we have been given no real sense of the ethical import of the trust relation comparable to the analyses provided by Levinas, for instance, concerning the ethical demandingness of the encounter with the Other. Indeed, based on what we have seen so far, Løgstrupian trust, insofar as it is a background condition, might initially appear to refer to a purely neutral state of thinking ‘nothing in particular’ (Lagerspetz 1998: 25), as Olli Lagerspetz puts it in his Løgstrup-inspired monograph, whereby ‘my unreflective trust is shown – to others – in the fact that I do not think I am trusting’ (*ibid.* 30).⁹ Trust in this basic sense, then, could be seen as denoting an unimpeded mode of relating to others that is in principle definable in purely negative terms: as an absence of ‘reservation’ and ‘spiritual reticence’ (ED: 16), ‘aloofness’ and ‘guardedness’ (BED: 79), where such impediments would be a sign of a ‘deficient’ (ED: 18 fn. 5) *mistrustful* mode of relating to others. However, a conceptual worry attends such a construal of trust. Namely, that on such a thin definition of trust, the conceptual distinctiveness of trust as a phenomenon risks being lost. For instance, as Lars Hertzberg has noted, would it not be just as – if not more – accurate to label the neutral state described here

What is being emphasised here is the way in which, for Løgstrup, the simultaneous vulnerability and inviolability of another living being forms the *material* but *obligating* basis of ethical life. One might speculate that the experience of the rise of Nazism (and totalitarianism more generally), and the evil it represented, which so indelibly marked the thinking of all three philosophers, coupled with a common interest in eschatology (Løgstrup) and messianism (Levinas and Adorno) perhaps serve as common sources for the similarities of their respective philosophical projects. I will develop these comparisons further in §5.

⁹ Along with Løgstrup, Wittgenstein is an important source for Lagerspetz. In particular, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein asserts that ‘I really want to say that a language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say “can trust something”)’ (Wittgenstein 197: 9 §509). In the context of Wittgenstein’s notes, what this assertion can be taken to mean is that the form of life we inhabit, the kind of language-game we play, necessitates that many features of that form of life ‘stand fast’ for us; that is to say, in order to inhabit a form of life at all, we cannot ‘doubt everything;’ some aspects of that form of life *must* remain, in a sense, indubitable. In relation to trust, then, we can see the Wittgenstinian flavour of Lagerspetz’s conception of trust presented here; in order for us to have the kinds of friendships we do, our friends must ‘stand fast’ for us, i.e. they must be trusted. And the way in which they are trusted is that certain thoughts do not occur to us with reference to that friend – and our behaviour expresses this. In a sense, this Wittgenstinian notion of trust chimes with the theological notion of trust, discussed below.

as an ‘absence of distrust’ (Hertzberg 1998: 316) rather than trust proper?¹⁰ Given this, it is hard to see how trust in this thin, background sense could fulfil the ethically significant role allotted to it by Løgstrup in his phenomenology of ethical life, *viz.* the source of the ethical demand.

It is significant, then, that in the paragraphs after Løgstrup proposes this initial definition of trust, he goes on to characterize a ‘silent’ or tacit demand he views to be implicit in it:¹¹

In its basic sense trust is essential to every conversation. In conversation as such we deliver ourselves over into the hands of another. This is evident in the fact that in the very act of addressing a person we make a certain demand of him. This demand is not merely for a response to what we say. And the self-surrender is not essentially a matter of what is said: its content or importance or even intimate character. What happens is that simply in addressing the other, irrespective of the content of what we say, a certain note is struck through which we, as it were, step out of ourselves in order to exist in the speech relationship. For this reason the point of the demand – though unarticulated – is that the speaker is accepted. (ED: 14–15)

Here, Løgstrup adds a significant feature to his definition of trust. Namely, that the ‘self-surrender’ it involves makes a certain *demand* on the trustee, *viz.* a silent demand for acceptance. Indeed, in the pages that follow, Løgstrup ramps up the severity of the demand that ‘grows out’ of trust to include the ‘protection of the life’

¹⁰ Cf. Stern (2017a): ‘To see the space for this possibility, consider the child who asks me for the first time on a long car journey: ‘Are we there yet?’. If young enough, and if this really is the first time it has happened, and if generally our relations have given her no cause to question me up to this point, it could be argued that it just doesn’t even occur to her that I might say anything other than the truth, so she is not taking it that my dependence on her figures in my thinking about her in a way that we have said is fundamental to the trusting attitude: she just takes it for granted that I will answer her correctly. It could thus be said that while she clearly doesn’t distrust me, she actually doesn’t trust me either, but is in some state prior to both, where the distinction has not even yet arisen’ (281).

¹¹ It is here that interpretive issues concerning my reading of Løgstrup’s *corpus* as being a continuous body of work arise. For, in his later work, Løgstrup comes to associate the term ‘demand’ [*fording*] exclusively with those cases in which the sovereign expressions of life have failed to materialize (BED: 69). This is not to say that the sovereign expressions of life do not themselves have a ‘bindingness.’ Rather, he uses a different term to denote that bindingness: ‘claim’ [*krav*]. At the time of *The Ethical Demand*, however, Løgstrup has not developed this distinction. Nonetheless, Løgstrup’s use of the modifier ‘silent’ [*tavse*] signals an embryonic formulation of his later distinction between *fording* and *krav*. Thus, I take it that when Løgstrup talks about the silent demand implicit in trust, he is referring to what he would later designate as ‘claim’ and not as ‘demand.’

of the other (ED: 17). Thus, trust is not merely a neutral state of thinking nothing in particular; it involves a receptivity to a ‘silent’ or tacit demand. To anticipate: it is the nature of this awareness and how it relates to the above-mentioned ‘background’ status of trust that will animate the analysis in the following sections.

Read in a certain way, these additions can be seen to bring Løgstrup’s discussion of trust onto more familiar territory covered by contemporary philosophical debates about the moral significance of trust.¹² More specifically, it has been argued that these features of Løgstrupian trust signal that Løgstrup held an affective conception of trust. As Paul Faulkner defines it, the notion of affective trust captures the sense that ‘...to say that A trusts S to ϕ is to say that A depends on S ϕ -ing and expects this to motivate S to ϕ ’ (Faulkner 2014: 1977-8). Stern has developed a reading of Løgstrupian trust along the lines of affective trust, writing that

Trust is therefore important to Løgstrup because it reveals how...interdependence works: in trusting another person, I am placed in their hands and make myself vulnerable to them, while also expecting that ‘surrender’ of myself to play a role in their response to me; if they do not respond accordingly, I will feel resentment and hurt in a way that can quickly become moralized, sometimes in exaggerated ways. (Stern 2017: 274)

I fully agree that for Løgstrup trust is seen to be closely linked to human interdependence. Moreover, Stern’s construal of Løgstrupian trust along affective lines is certainly attractive in that it provides an account of the second-person claims involved in trusting and, thus, potentially helps to clarify the ethical demandingness Løgstrup associates with basic trust. Yet, I have some reservations about this construal as it stands.

¹² Annette Baier article ‘Trust and Antitrust’ is the *locus classicus* for contemporary philosophical debates on trust and its relation to morality. However, *pace* Løgstrup, Baier argues that ‘there are immoral as well as moral trust relationships, and trust-busting can be a morally proper goal’ (Baier 1986: 232). Løgstrup, by contrast, holds that ‘the [ethical] positivity of trust and the negativity of distrust are not some evaluative accretions of which trust and distrust are subjects, but inhere in the phenomena themselves’ (BED: 115).

The first reservation is interpretive: whilst it is true that Løgstrup draws attention to the place of expectation in trust, I can find no evidence that for Løgstrup the referent of this expectation is the perceived motivational impact of one's vulnerability in trusting. Rather, the referent appears to be, more straightforwardly, the projected and hoped for outcome of the encounter. This is apparent in Løgstrup's illustration of his point about expectation by appeal to an encounter between Leonard Bast and the Schlegel sisters in E. M. Forster's novel *Howard's End*. Of this encounter Løgstrup writes that 'Leonard was disappointed in his expectations for the afternoon. He had hoped to discuss books and to keep his visit with them in a romantic vein and at all costs to keep it from getting mixed up with his routine, uninteresting life at the office' (ED: 12). Here it seems clear that, for Løgstrup, Leonard's disappointed expectation referred to the kind of meeting he envisaged when he received an invitation to meet with the Schlegel sisters and not to the perceived impact his trusting vulnerability might have in motivating the Schlegel sisters to behave in certain ways.

Secondly, I have philosophical reservations about the potential implications of imputing a form of affective trust to Løgstrup. These reservations stem from a risk that the notion of affective trust imports a calculative dimension into the trustor's expression of trust which would be anathema to Løgstrup. The thought I have in mind here has been neatly expressed by Phillip Pettit in his article 'The Cunning of Trust.' Pettit writes that:

As Hegel spoke of the cunning of reason, so we can speak here of the cunning of trust. The act of trust is an investment by the trustor which will pay dividends only in the event that the trustee behaves appropriately. Like any investment it may have a risky side, for the trustee may not be bound to act as required. But it is not by any means as risky as it may first seem. For in the very act whereby the trustor is put at risk, the trustee is given a motive not to let that risk materialize. The trustor can bank on the fact that if the trustee does let the risk materialize they will suffer the loss of the trustor's good

opinion and, in all likelihood, the cost of gaining a bad reputation among those who learn what has happened. (Petit 1995: 216)

Pettit's comments here perhaps pertain more readily to game theory-inspired 'risk-assessment views' of trust than affective trust.¹³ Nonetheless, they surely touch on a more general implication that bears on affective trust and that is completely alien to Løgstrup's thinking on trust. Namely, that the risk and 'surrender' involved in affective trust is a *calculated* risk. It is calculated just in the thin sense that, in trusting, the trustor expects her trust to constitute a normative reason for the trustee to act or behave in certain ways.

By contrast, Løgstrup's notion of trust has a theological lineage. In a footnote towards the end of *The Ethical Demand*, for instance, we find Løgstrup referring approvingly to the theologian Rudolf Bultmann's assessment that 'trust and love among people are "not based on any trustworthiness or loveableness in another which could be objectively ascertained, but upon the nature of the other apprehended *in* the love and *in* the trust"' (ED: 216, fn. 5). More generally, it is worth noting the importance a particular understanding of trust has within the Lutheran tradition to which Løgstrup belonged. As Tage Kurtén puts it, 'in systematic theology there is a long tradition of emphasising trust in God (religious faith – *fides qua*) alongside the understanding of the content of belief in God (religious belief – *fides quae*).' According to this tradition, trust is 'unfounded,' 'spontaneous and without explicit reasons' (Kurtén 2008: 111).¹⁴ Arguably, this theological conception of trust as being

¹³ 'Risk assessment views' of trust are those according to which it is held that 'people trust other people whenever they assume that the risk of relying on other people to act a certain way is low – because it is in the self-interest of these people to act that way – and so they rely on them' (McLeod 2015).

¹⁴ Cf. 'Luther casts his theology in terms of a relationship to a promise...a promise to which one responds in trust or faith (*Fiducia*)...For Luther, the spiritual person is one who trusts, has faith...' (Hampson 2004: 15). And Karl Barth, who writes in one place that 'faith means trust' (Barth 1988: 18), where, according to Barth, 'faith-as-trust' is a *gift* from God which frees us to hear (and have confidence in) God's Word.

‘unfounded’ and ‘spontaneous’ contrasts with affective trust: trust on the theological model is envisaged not as an attitude rooted in the trustee’s desires and interests, but rather as a phenomenon in light of which the other’s ‘nature’ is apprehended, as Bultmann puts it. That is, trust is a mode of being comporting in relation to the other that is sensitive to the other’s otherness.

Yet, if affective trust is a less than perfect fit for elucidating the ethically demanding dimension of Løgstrup’s conception of trust, then how else can we understand the ethical import of Løgstrupian trust and the demand implicit in it? This turns out to be a delicate matter since, based on what we have seen so far, Løgstrup’s description of trust is at best bivalent – and at worst equivocal. One valence of trust and the demand implicit in it can be characterized as follows. When I address the other I make myself vulnerable to them in the sense that I, as it were, deliver part of myself over to them. Such vulnerability might be made particularly acute if it is combined with certain expectations I have for the encounter, as we have seen (ED: 9). Now, in virtue of this vulnerability alone (that is, aside from the particular content of my address or the expectations I have for the encounter), my address ‘forces’ upon the trustee the alternative: ‘either we take care of the other person’s life or we ruin it’ (ED: 18, fn. 6). That is to say, in slightly less hyperbolic language, that in virtue of my address, the trustee is placed in a position whereby she simply cannot *not respond* to my address, to the part of myself I have delivered over to her, for even feigning ignorance and turning a deaf ear to my address will constitute a – potentially ruinous – response. The trustee is made, in a quite literal sense, *responsible*. Concerning this valence, then, we can make the following conclusion concerning Løgstrup’s understanding of trust. (1) In trusting, I surrender part of myself into the hands of the other. (2) This surrender – just in virtue of the vulnerability and exposedness

involved in surrendering; in ‘daring to make an overture’ (ED: 15) – places a demand or claim on the trustee to respond to or to ‘accept’ the trustor.

However, seen from a different direction, we might equally construe the demand Løgstrup has in mind with respect to trust in the following manner. In the encounter with the other, trust is elicited *in me* in the sense that the other’s presence compels me to ‘break down’ my guard and potentially ‘erase’ the picture or theory I might happen to have of them (ED: 13), thus leaving *me* exposed to the other who stands before me, here and now. In other words, we might think that the demand implicit in trust is elicited by the presence of the other in the sense that the other’s concrete presence ‘demands’ attention – that is, it demands that we attend to the other in their otherness rather than reducing them to a caricature, regardless of how convenient such a reduction may be. This, recall, is the central point of Løgstrup’s initial description of trust. To wit, to trust is to be exposed to the other’s and, more generally, *life’s* capacity to renew itself in ways that may diverge from one’s pictures and theories. Moreover, plausibly, this is what it could mean to say that the demand implicit in trust demands that we ‘protect the life’ of the other, in that it demands that we attend to – rather than ‘encroach’ [*overgreb*] upon or negate (ED: 22) – the other’s vulnerable otherness.

Taken together, we can begin to see one possible way in which these two valences of trust purport to provide an account of the ethical demandingness primitive to face-to-face encounters, where this sense of ethical demandingness forms a common core of the variegated phenomena that comprise the category of the sovereign expressions of life. Stern, in his forthcoming monograph, has captured this sense perspicuously in terms of Joseph Raz’s notion of a ‘protected reason.’ A protected reason is a special kind of reason that ‘excludes’ other reasons as having justificatory force in our practical deliberations. To use Stern’s example, say I am walking to the pub to meet

a friend when I encounter a badly injured person at the side of the road who desperately needs assistance. The thought is that the reason I have to come to the aid of the injured person *excludes* other reasons – such as my reasons to get to the pub on time or any misgivings I may have about the injured person according to their particularity – as having any weight in my deliberations over how to respond to the situation I find myself in. Stern suggests that on Løgstrup's view the living vulnerability of the other as encountered in the trust relation constitutes just such a protected reason, where this explains the normative authority of the claim or demand made on us in our trusting encounters with others (See Stern: forthcoming). That is, in the trust-relation, one's encounter with an other person as living and, thus, *a fortiori* injurable constitutes the 'source' of the ethical demand, for Løgstrup.

Despite this point of clarification, it is worth emphasising the subtle but important difference between the two valences of trust at work in Løgstrup's phenomenology. According to the first valence trust is seen as that which provokes the demand: I, by 'placing' trust in the other, tacitly place a demand on the other. According to the second valence trust is seen as that which is demanded by the presence of the other: I, in my exposure to the living presence of the other, am impelled to trust the other. That is, I am impelled to respond and attend to the other standing before me, here and now. This valence resonates with theological definitions of trust as *fides qua*. Given this, we might think that Løgstrup has left himself open to the charge of equivocation, in that his initial definition of trust implies a certain construal of the demand implicit in it (the second valence), whereas his latter characterization of that demand potentially implies a slightly different conception of trust and how it functions (the first valence).

In order to illustrate the bivalence of Løgstrupian trust further, I will turn to a particularly illuminating example taken from *Les Misérables*, as discussed by Stern (Stern 2017a: pp. 288-289). The scene in question depicts an encounter between Bishop Charles Myriel and the ex-convict and now vagrant Jean Valjean in which the Bishop invites Valjean to stay in his home. On Stern's interpretation, the Bishop's act of 'compassion' and 'pity' is expressive of Løgstrupian trust, firstly, to the extent that it involves the Bishop 'laying himself open' and becoming vulnerable to Valjean. Further to this, however, Stern notes that

what seems to be emphasized by Hugo's narrative, at least from a Løgstrupian perspective, is that while everyone else sees Valjean as what he has done and thus become – a criminal, a vagrant, an outcast – the Bishop...see[s] him as an individual human being standing before the Bishop as such. Even Valjean seems shocked by this openness the Bishop shows to him, and seeks to remind him of how he should be characterized. (Stern 2017: 288)

Thus, in reflecting on the Bishop's behaviour in a letter, his sister, Mademoiselle Baptistine, writes the following:

[M]y brother did not so much as ask the man where he was born. He did not ask his story. For the story must have included some account of his crimes and my brother clearly wished to avoid all reference to these...Thinking it over afterwards, I believe I know what was in my brother's mind. He must have reflected that the man, this Jean Valjean, was sufficiently oppressed already by the burden of his wretchedness, and that it was better to distract his thoughts and make him feel, if only for a little while, that he was a man like any other. Was this not true charity? ... I can also affirm that if this was his thought he gave no sign of it, even to me. From start to finish he was his ordinary self, and he dined with Jean Valjean precisely as he would have done with the provost or the curé of the parish. (Hugo 1982: 89-90)

What is remarkable about this scene, at least from a Løgstrupian point of view, is the ambiguity of the trust relation it describes: who is the trustor and who is the trustee? On the one hand, Jean Valjean is the trustor: he is the powerless one who places trust in the kindness of strangers to help him in his hour of need. Yet, on the other hand, the Bishop is the trustor in that by opening his home to an ex-convict and vagrant, he is exposing himself and his family to a potentially dangerous criminal.

Moreover, on whom does the implicit demand fall? Does it fall on the Bishop who, upon encountering Valjean, is compelled to view him as a human being rather than as a criminal? Or does it fall on Valjean, who is perhaps obliged to prove his trustworthiness to the Bishop (an obligation he initially fails to meet)?

Viewed sympathetically, the ambiguity of trust in the face-to-face encounter illustrated here is precisely what Løgstrup seeks to capture with his bivalent account of trust. Indeed, this ambiguity can be seen to be productive insofar as it discloses something important concerning the basicness of interdependence to human existence as Løgstrup sees it. It is noteworthy in this connection that towards the end of his discussion of trust, Løgstrup places his analysis back within the broader context of human interdependence. He states that ‘the fact is...we constitute one another’s world and destiny’ (ED: 17). And, substantiating this point, he claims that

By our very attitude to one another we help shape one another’s world. By our attitude to the other person we help to determine the scope and hue of his or her world; we make it large or small, bright or drab, rich or dull, threatening or secure. We help shape his or her world not by theories and views but by our very attitude toward him or her. Herein lies the unarticulated and one might say anonymous demand that we take care of the life which trust has placed in our hands. (ED: 18)

In light of these comments we get a better sense of what Løgstrup means by human interdependence. He does not mean, for instance, that we are interdependent in a contractual sense – that I depend on you to keep your side of the bargain and *vice versa*. Rather, he means that the very texture and intelligibility of ‘my’ world – the meaning and sense of the world for me – is not exhausted by my personal circumstances and projects. Fundamentally, ‘my’ world is shaped by the other who, through the vulnerability of their address and the tacit demand therein, opens my world to an otherness (the first valence of trust). We might say that the other draws my attention or ‘care’ (in the sense of what shows up as mattering to me) outwards, beyond myself, thus, expanding my world. Correlatively, just as the shape of my world

depends on the other, who co-constitutes it in the way just mentioned, so too does the other – and the shape and hue of ‘their’ world – depend on me, where this dependency is disclosed to me by the vulnerability and exposure of their address (the second valence of trust). Thus interpreted, the two valences of trust outlined above can be seen to interact in a way that is disclosive of a fundamental interdependence basic to human existence. This point is exemplified by the trust relation between Bishop Myriel and Jean Valjean: confronted by the vulnerable presence of Jean Valjean, the Bishop’s care was drawn outwards towards the otherness of Jean Valjean as another living being. Conversely, the shape and hue of Jean Valjean’s world was emphatically dependent on others: on whether they would ‘accept’ him or deny him, where ultimately this informed his moral transformation as charted through the course of the novel.

The important point to focus on here for what follows is that, for Løgstrup trust is a basic mode of interpersonal human relation that is expressive of a fundamental openness to and a dependency on the other in their otherness for the meaningfulness of our world. One way in which fundamental interdependence is disclosed by trust is by way of a tacit demand in which the presence of the other, just in virtue of the vulnerability of their exposure, impels us to break down our pictures and theories and to attend to the other as another living being standing before us. The trust relation, so construed, is disclosive of fundamental human interdependence, then, in that it reveals to us the sense in which the meaningfulness of our world is co-constituted by the other, who draws our care out beyond our projects towards an otherness that outstrips our habitual ways of rendering the world intelligible.

2.2. Immediacy and Moral Agency

The preceding discussion has shown Løgstrup's analysis of trust to be protean and complex. Yet, as I will presently argue, in appreciating this complexity we are better able to assess the nature and severity of a central worry attending Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life. In a word, the worry I have in mind can be specified as follows: (1) moral agency constitutively involves a second-order insight into or awareness of the goodness or rightness of an occurrent motivation for action (F¹).¹⁵ (2) Løgstrup's emphasis on immediacy in characterizing the sovereign expressions of life precludes such awareness. Therefore, (3) the good works accounted for by Løgstrup with his theory of sovereign expressions of life precludes moral agency. In this section I will firstly elucidate the terms of this worry in light of our discussion of trust in 2.1. Then I will show that one initially attractive strategy for assuaging this worry by attacking (2) - the Kantian defusing strategy - is interpretively problematic. Rather than trying to assuage the worry by adumbrating further, more refined, variations of this defusing strategy, however, I will conclude the section by suggesting that a more promising strategy for assuaging the above-stated worry might be had through attending to phenomenological underpinnings of Løgstrup's discussion of trust. I will develop this phenomenological strategy in 2.3.

In the previous chapter, I presented the following premise as axiomatic:

(Premise¹) Moral actions presuppose a moral agent or, what is the same, moral agency.

¹⁵ Here the term 'moral awareness' stands for the most general sense in which one is aware of the moral import of a situation one encounters. F¹ is one way of fleshing out moral awareness, where I will sometimes use the term 'moral insight' to designate this more specific form of moral awareness. In what follows, I will present what I take to be Løgstrup's distinctive way of fleshing out moral awareness.

Furthermore, I observed that (F¹) Self-Regulation is widely seen to be a necessary feature of moral agency, where F¹ is defined as follows:

(Def) F¹: Self-Regulation = the evaluation of one's desires, mental states, motivations or incentives according to one's moral insight.

In relation to these premises, we saw that Løgstrup appears to affirm Premise¹ but to deny that spontaneous ethical action involves F¹. It thus emerged that there is a question concerning the compatibility of Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment with moral agency¹.

Based on our foregoing analysis of Løgstrupian trust, we can specify the reasoning behind Løgstrup's apparent denial of F¹ with respect to good works with greater determinacy. To wit, Løgstrup's rejection of F¹ with respect to good works is based on his affirmation of their putative immediacy:

(Def) Immediacy = A relation to the other that is not mediated by pictures and theories, up to and including moral principles.

This definition of immediacy can be inferred from Løgstrup's discussion of trust in *The Ethical Demand*. On Løgstrup's view the trust relation contrasts with what we might call a 'subjective' relation in which the self's relation to the other is mediated by pictures and theories generated by subjective prejudices and inclinations. More importantly, however, the trust relation also contrasts with what we might call an 'objective' relation to the other in which that relation is mediated by the self's moral beliefs. Løgstrup terms this latter kind of relation 'encroachment;' that is, what we might otherwise term 'paternalism.' And according to Løgstrup, encroachment happens when a person's understanding of life becomes 'hardened into an ideology' (ED: 23). In such cases, the person assumes that

Whatever concerns his or her own life must logically concern the life of all others as well. The ultimate truth which he or she possesses must be the

ultimate truth also for them – obviously, because otherwise it would of course not be ultimate truth! In the name of this ultimate truth he or she therefore also knows – with incontrovertible certainty – what is best for the other person. Consequently, he or she needs not concern him or herself with the idea of respect for other people’s independence and autonomy. (ED: 24)

As with the case of subjectivism, then, encroachment tends to subsume the other person under a particular set of beliefs which then determine one’s relation to the other person. In both cases, the other’s otherness is occluded, where the difference between the two cases consists in the sense that in the latter case this occlusion is justified by the self in terms of putatively objective or universal normative standards. By contrast, the trust relation is one that ‘protects the life’ of the other, in the sense of being sensitive to the other’s otherness and life’s capacity for renewal in ways which transcend one’s subjective pictures and ostensibly objective theories.

In his later writings on the sovereign expressions of life, Løgstrup is more explicit in his characterizations of immediacy:

[T]he immediacy of human interaction is sustained by the immediate expressions of life, whose sovereignty is such that they defeat our past experiences and private musings. (BED: 84-5)

Since the sovereign expressions of life attaches to the immediate relationship between one person and another, that is where it ends, ethically speaking, by which is meant that it cannot be subordinated to goals more remote than the intended outcome of the agency that meets the other’s needs. (BED: 88)

Before the relevant requirements on agency are requirements imposed by principles, they are requirements imposed by the specific and concrete situation, which latter enjoin us to act in ways answering to ethical predicates with descriptive content...including especially requirements prescribing communication acts whose descriptions involve such predicates – a sovereign expression of life, the showing of trust, the offering of help, veracity, and the like. The correspondence is immediate, and the requirement of substantive conduct of some form or other imposed by the situation is not necessarily mediated by some moral principle. There exist expressions of life, which are already intrinsically moral or immoral – they do not become so only in virtue of principles. (BED: 106)

In short, the immediacy of the sovereign expressions of life refers to a mode of interpersonal relation that is not mediated by subjective prejudices, extrinsic *teloi* or moral principles. Recall here the theological lineage of Løgstrup’s understanding of

trust as *fides qua*; as an unfounded and spontaneous apprehension of the other in their otherness: the point is that there is a primitive ethical significance to the face-to-face encounter with the other which ‘defeats’ our finite representational resources. So construed, Løgstrup’s notion of Immediacy shares an affinity with Levinas’ phenomenology of the face-to-face encounter. As Michael Morgan describes Levinas’ position:

The first things to remember about the face-to-face encounter between the self and the other person are that it is concrete and particular. It is not an idea or a concept, nor a type of action or event. It is a concrete reality, an event; it occurs. Furthermore, it occurs as utterly particular: the self is a particular person, and the face-of-the-other is a particular revelation of a particular person. What is occluded, hidden, or forgotten in our ordinary lives is not some idea or value; it is the presence of the other’s face to me – and my responsibility to and for this person. Moreover, this reality or event or encounter, which in a sense is beyond our thinking, our concepts and our rules, and prior to them, is determinative and unconditional. (Morgan 2011: 59)

Similarly, Løgstrup’s emphasis on Immediacy aims at an irreducible, concrete and particular relation to the other that, in a sense, ‘overmasters’ (BED: 68) our moral concepts and rules.

It follows from Løgstrup’s emphasis on Immediacy that the sovereign expressions of life preclude F¹. Formally speaking, this is because the Immediacy of the face-to-face encounter *ipso facto* precludes mediation by moral concepts, principles and rules, where such mediation is precisely what F¹ consists in. Phenomenologically speaking, this is articulated in terms of the primitive ethical significance of the face-to-face encounter, where this encounter is thought to make demands on the subject prior to the subject’s second-order awareness of the moral duties required of them in the encounter.

A crucial upshot of this is that, in his theory of sovereign expressions of life, Løgstrup appears to be committed to two *prima facie* mutually exclusive propositions,

viz. Premise¹ and Immediacy: F¹ is a necessary feature of moral agency¹, and moral agency¹ is presupposed by Premise¹ but Immediacy precludes F¹.

One strategy for defusing this problem is to argue that Løgstrup was not entirely consistent or rigorous in his application of Immediacy and that, despite his assertions to the contrary, his phenomenology does in fact allow for some version of F¹. I sketched an attractive version of this strategy in the previous chapter under the auspices of a broadly Kantian defusing strategy. Recall: the Kantian defusing strategy hinged on the following argument. *Pace* Løgstrup, primary motivations, such as immediate inclinations stemming from the suffering of another, and secondary motivations, such as those determined by a good will are not necessarily mutually exclusive on a Kantian view: it does not follow that just in virtue of having a second-order awareness of the rightness of a primary motivation that that second-order awareness inevitably becomes the sole motivating reason for action. Rather, on a more nuanced Kantian view, the obvious needs of the other can constitute a primary motivation for action, where this primary motivation shows up as reason giving in light of the agent's (tacit) commitment to the right. With this more nuanced view of Kantian moral agency in hand, it was thus argued that since Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, as exemplified by his phenomenology of the Good Samaritan, allows that the Samaritan was committed to the good of the injured traveller, his position is in fact not incompatible with a nuanced conception of the Kantian moral agent: both views hold that the Samaritan is primarily motivated by the urgent needs of other, where these needs show up as reason giving in light of a commitment to the good (Løgstrup) or the right (Kant).

The benefits of this defusing strategy are clear: trading on the putative inconsistency with which Løgstrup applies Immediacy, it re-integrates Løgstrup's moral phenomenology within the terms of moral agency¹, thus defusing the problem

of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics. But what are the costs? Clearly, a chief cost is that it gainsays Løgstrup's core phenomenological insight concerning the primitive ethical significance of 'the immediate relationship between one person and another' (BED: 88).

Put in Kantian terminology, the issue is this: to the extent that the second-order commitment to the right or the good included as part of the Kantian defusing strategy appears to require the positing of an independent, mediating faculty, perhaps resembling the Kantian *Wille*, that is, a capacity for practical reasoning meaningfully distinct from one's primary motivations and inclinations, it is incompatible with Immediacy. On Løgstrup's view the sovereign expressions of life purportedly appropriate and determine the will (*qua Willkür*) *a priori* and without remainder, that is, without mediation by the will (*qua Wille*).¹⁶ Therefore, *even if* in 'obvious' cases of moral action such as the Samaritan's this second-order commitment to the good is ostensibly tacit and, thus, does not enter thematically into the Samaritan's deliberations as a motivating reason in the way Løgstrup feared, in virtue of the fact that it nonetheless performs a mediating role, *viz.* 'treat[ing] this feeling [of mercy] or state of affairs [of the injured traveller] as reason giving' and, thus, 'regulating' the primary motivation (Stern 2015: 228), it surely stands at odds with the strong sense of immediacy Løgstrup associates with the sovereign expressions of life.

Yet, if we reject the Kantian defusing strategy – and other possible non-Kantian strategies like it – on interpretive grounds and take Løgstrup's commitment to Immediacy seriously, Løgstrup's moral phenomenology quickly begins to look

¹⁶ I take the *Wille/Willkür* distinction from Kant, where, roughly stated, *Wille* stands for the capacity to act for the sake of a universal principle and *Willkür* stands for our 'power of choice.' Cf. Kant 2013: 6:3-5.

unpalatably deterministic.¹⁷ For instance, on an interpretation that applies Immediacy rigorously, it would appear that in his showing of trust, Bishop Myriel *really did* think ‘nothing in particular:’ he was un-reflectively and anteriorly *bound* by trust, which then determined the scope of possible actions open to him. At no point did he pause to consider whether his showing of trust was right or good; he was simply determined by it. Similarly, on this reading, the Good Samaritan is seen to be perfectly ignorant of the normativity of the situation and of his actions as having any moral significance; in the grip of mercy he simply reacted to the situation in a manner not dissimilar to instinctual actions of Korsgaard’s Lioness mentioned in the previous chapter. Clearly, when interpreted in this way, it becomes hard to see how moral agency could be plausibly attributed to the Bishop or the Good Samaritan; indeed, they appear to look rather more like ‘responsive automatons,’ to borrow Stern’s phrase, than autonomous moral agents.¹⁸

This conclusion, however, is implausible both on phenomenological and exegetical grounds. It is phenomenologically implausible because it patently mischaracterizes the situations and actions it seeks to describe. That is to say, it is implausible to think that the Good Samaritan and Bishop Myriel were simply automatically *reacting* to the situations that they encountered. The Samaritan’s actions clearly involved *some* kind of ‘common human understanding’ of the good – even if this

¹⁷ We might think that other possible non-Kantian strategies in a similar vein, such as, for instance, a Humean or an Aristotelian strategy may be less susceptible to the kind of problems that the Kantian strategy incurs. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, even if such strategies fared better in relation to the problem at issue here, they would still prove to be incompatible with Løgstrup’s conception of the self, more generally. In anticipation of this, I leave considerations of possible non-Kantian strategies out of this discussion for the sake of clarity.

¹⁸ It is noteworthy, given their shared commitment to the immediacy of the face-to-face encounter, that Levinas has also been subject to similar accusations. Especially with respect to his later writing in *Otherwise than Being*, where he argues for a ‘radical passivity’ in which the self is ‘hostage’ to the other. With reference to this, Peter Zeillinger wonders: ‘[D]oes this observation actually explain or enable concrete ethical agency? Instead of opening up a clear possibility for thinking the basis of effective action, Levinas seems to achieve the opposite: the utter failure or incapacitation of any self-conscious agency as such’ (Zeillinger 2009: 98).

did not quite reach ‘the dizzying heights of the categorical imperative,’ as Stern puts it (Stern 2015: 230). Similarly, Bishop Myriel’s expression of trust was surely informed to some degree by his Christian background – a point for which Mademoiselle Baptistine’s letter, cited above, provides testimony. Secondly, it is exegetically implausible: recall Løgstrup’s assertion in *Norm og spontaneitet* that ‘the expression of life does not determine the behaviour or dictate the action, and it does not preclude rational reflection or judgment. On the contrary, it demands them’ (BED: 132). Løgstrup also claims that:

The expression of life does not permit deeds to be pointed out to it that it must perform whatever the circumstances. On the contrary, it sees and listens its way towards what, in the given circumstances, can be done to turn the situation round. The expression of life is what kindles the deliberations of the imagination and the intellect about what to say and do. (BED: 72)

As we have seen, Løgstrup’s assertions here are borne out in his phenomenological analysis of the Good Samaritan, which seems to allow that the Samaritan was committed to the good of the injured traveler in some way. Thus, on the balance of evidence, it is implausible to think that Løgstrup was committed to a picture of the human being as a responsive automaton; he clearly allows for some form of moral awareness.

The question is, then, are these two aspects of the sovereign expressions of life, Immediacy and moral awareness, compatible? On a reading that subsumes moral awareness under the definition F¹, the answer seems to be no: if Løgstrup were to rigorously apply his commitment to Immediacy, F¹ would be precluded – and *vice versa*. We are, thus, seemingly faced with two unsatisfactory options in providing a consistent interpretation of the sovereign expressions of life. Either rigorously apply Immediacy, at the cost of portraying the human being as a ‘responsive automaton,’ or allow for moral awareness in terms of F¹, at the cost of deflating Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology. Yet, on second blush, we might question whether F¹ exhausts the

conceptual space for thinking about the ways in which we can construe moral awareness. In what follows, I will suggest that when viewed *phenomenologically*, that is, in terms of the phenomenological method, Løgstrup's dual commitments to Immediacy and moral awareness can be seen to be compatible. On this strategy space is opened up for a reconciliation of Immediacy and moral awareness by disambiguating a particular form of ethically significant 'ontological' awareness from the forms of moral awareness I have subsumed under the definition F¹. I submit that elucidating this alternative will not only resolve the problem concerning the compatibility of Immediacy with moral awareness, but it will also illuminate the sense in which Løgstrup claims to be providing an 'ontological ethics' (ED: 265).

2.3. Sovereign Expressions of Life as Hermeneutic Conditions

I began my discussion of Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life by noting the exegetical difficulties involved in providing an account of the expressions of life. These exegetical difficulties stem in part from the incompleteness and fragmentariness of Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life and they pertain to questions as basic as those concerning how to construe the form and function of the expressions of life in Løgstrup's architectonic of ethical life. So far we have been working on the assumption that the expressions of life are a species of affective primary motivation, perhaps comparable with Kant's notion 'immediate inclination' (Cf. Kant 2008: 4: 397-398).¹⁹ Yet, as we have seen, so construed, Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life faces an interpretive dilemma concerning its compatibility with a plausible conception of moral agency.

¹⁹ In the literature, the sovereign expressions of life are often taken to refer to a kind of immediacy whereby one unthinkingly jumps into action in response to a critical situation (Cf. e.g., MacIntyre (2007); Niekerk (2007a)). However, whilst this is a natural supposition, it is inaccurate: for instance, we have already seen that Løgstrup often refers to the sovereign expressions of life in conjunction with deliberation.

Despite the naturalness of supposing that the sovereign expressions of life are a species of primary, immediate inclination, however, this supposition is textually unsupported. Recall: Løgstrup describes his so-called ‘ontological ethics’ in terms of an attempt to account for a

[D]etermining [of] the will that is neither purely formal (as is that of reason) nor through natural causation (as is that of inclinations), but is rather material and at the same time obligatory because it arises from the basic givens of existence. (ED: 289-90)

The important interpretive point to be drawn from this quote here is the implication that Løgstrup views the sovereign expressions of life not as primary motivations, such as immediate inclinations, nor as secondary motivations, such as a commitment to the right or the good, but rather as what he calls ‘basic givens of existence,’ which are both material and obligating. The obvious question is: what does it mean to construe the sovereign expressions of life as basic givens of existence? My aim in this section will be to show that by providing an answer to this question it is possible to overcome the apparent incompatibility of Løgstrup’s dual commitments to Immediacy and Premise¹.

In providing an answer to this question, I will analyse Løgstrup’s ontological ethics comparatively with Martin Heidegger’s ontological phenomenology. The influence Heidegger’s phenomenology had on Løgstrup’s conception of his ontological ethics has been widely noted.²⁰ For instance, Svend Andersen has claimed that ‘the importance of Martin Heidegger for Løgstrup’s philosophical thinking is indicated by the fact that Heidegger is the only philosopher besides Kant about whom Løgstrup wrote a monograph for teaching purposes’ and that ‘in calling his own ethics

²⁰ It is important to point out that the now largely un-read German phenomenologist Hans Lipps is often credited with being equally – if not more – influential on Løgstrup’s thought than Heidegger (Cf. Andersen 2007: pp. 42-48 & Fink & MacIntyre (1997): pp. xvi-xix). Important work remains to be done on the specific influences Lipps’s phenomenology had on Løgstrup’s ethics. However, this is not my task here.

“ontological,” Løgstrup places himself, beyond any doubt, in a Heideggerian context’ (Andersen 2007: 39-40; Cf. Christoffersen (2017)). However, as far as I am aware there exists no detailed examination of how this ‘Heideggerian context’ works itself out in Løgstrup’s ontological ethics. Clearly, this is not the place to provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of Heidegger’s infamously labyrinthine and terminologically dense ontological phenomenology and Løgstrup’s ontological ethics. Thus, I restrict myself here to a discussion of those elements of Heidegger’s ontological phenomenology which are of direct relevance to the task of correctly construing the sovereign expressions of life. I will begin by providing a brief exposition of the relevant aspects of Heidegger’s phenomenology (2.3.1) before drawing on this exposition in giving definition to the sovereign expressions of life (2.3.2). I will conclude by showing how my exegesis of the sovereign expressions of life along Heideggerian lines resolves the apparent incompatibility between Immediacy and moral agency.

2.3.1. Heidegger’s Ontological Phenomenology

One way of précising Heidegger’s project in *Being and Time* is that of ‘provid[ing] an account of the existential conditions constitutive of interpretation’ (Carman 2003: 2). That is to say, *Being and Time* aims to lay out the conditions presupposed by intentionality or comportment (*Verhalten*).²¹ So construed, Heidegger’s project in *Being and Time* formally resembles Kant’s attempt in the transcendental analytic to uncover the ‘scheme’ underlying everyday experience (Cf. Carman 2003: 10). Amongst the ways in which Heidegger departs from Kant,

²¹ The term ‘comportment’ (*Verhalten*) is employed here to qualify the term ‘intentionality’ in that, for Heidegger ‘intentionality is not a mere objective relation between two things, a subject and an object, but rather “a structure that makes up the *relational character* of Dasein’s comportment as such.” Intentionality is not just a feature of events and states of affairs, that is, but essentially involves agency, meaningful behaviour or “comportment” (*Verhalten*)’ (Carman 2003: 103).

however, is Heidegger's central claim that 'propositional intentionality is explanatorily derivative on some prior, nonpropositional level of experience' (Golob 2014: 5). In Heidegger scholarship, this central claim is often taken to signal Heidegger's prioritization of nonpropositional and, some argue, nonconceptual 'everyday coping skills as the basis of all intelligibility' (Dreyfus 1991: 3), where this prioritization putatively 'breaks with Husserl and the Cartesian tradition by substituting for *epistemological* questions concerning the relation of the knower and the known *ontological* questions concerning what sort of beings we are and how our being is bound up with the intelligibility of the world' (Dreyfus 1991: 3). Debates amongst Heidegger scholars concerning how to approach this central claim are notoriously disputatious and it is not my aim here to take up a stance within these debates. Rather, in the exposition that follows I will draw mostly on the work of Sacha Golob (2013) and Taylor Carman (2003), whilst referencing others where necessary.

Central to Heidegger's account of the conditions of intentionality is his notion of the 'as-structure.' Golob explains the *as*-structure as follows:

Suppose I understand '*a* as *b*': for example, I understand the kitchen table as ready-to-hand. The *a* variable here stands for an actual, physical object: the kitchen table. *Contra* Føllesdal's Husserl, there is no mediating noema that picks out the table. *Contra* the Lockean indirect realist, there is no mental image of the table. *Contra* the McDowell of *Mind and World*, the *a* variable is not a proposition or a fact with a propositional structure – for example, the fact that there is a table in front of me. Rather, it is simply the particular wooden object, the table itself. Heidegger's view is that I am able to intend that entity, and in this case to intend it as ready-to-hand, insofar as I locate it within the teleologically structured social context he calls "world" (*SZ*: 86). My act of locating the physical object within that context gives it significance (*SZ*: 87): it is no longer simply a brute physical entity, instead it is now "freed" or "allowed to be involved" by being understood in terms of a set of meaningful relations...He thus labels the *b* variable "meaning": it is that 'as' which, or in terms of which, the entity or entities, the *a* variable, are understood (*SZ*: 324, 86). (Golob 2013: 80)

In other words, a key innovation of Heidegger's account of intentionality consists in the claim that our capacity to intend entities involves locating those

entities within a relational context of significance that Heidegger calls ‘world.’ Importantly, this distinguishes Heidegger’s view from forms of representationalism, such as ‘mediational representationalism,’ according to which my capacity to intend an entity ‘should be individuated and explained by appeal to abstract entities which are ontologically distinct from their referents, and yet which enable access to those referents’ (Golob 2013: 77). On Heidegger’s view, the *b* variable does not function as a representational mediator, rather its function is to ‘explain how I understand whichever one of these entities my experience is about by locating it within a meaningful context’ (Golob 2013: 93). This point will become important when we return to consider Løgstrup’s commitment to Immediacy below.

An entailment of Heidegger’s account of intentionality in terms of the ‘*as*-structure’ is that we have a prior ‘familiarity’ (Golob 2013: 107, *passim.*) with the meaningful relational context Heidegger calls ‘world.’ An obvious question arises here: how do we have a familiarity with the ‘world?’ It can’t be the case that this familiarity is acquired through intending a particular entity - ‘world’ - on pain of regress: we would then need to account for how we are able to intend *that* entity and so on. Thus, Heidegger introduces his famous distinction between entities and being, namely, the ontological difference, and he argues that it is our prior familiarity with *being* - as distinct from entities - that conditions our capacity to intend entities. Hence, Heidegger terms this ‘familiarity’ as ‘understanding of being’ (*SZ*: 5, *passim.*)²² And, on Golob’s interpretation, understanding of being is established through a ‘familiarity with a special class of prototypes, those which exemplify the relations that define

²² Cf. ‘We may keep in mind, then, that understanding, as the projection which has been portrayed, is a basic determination of the Dasein’s existence. It relates to the Dasein itself, hence to a being, and is therefore ontical understanding. Because it is related to existence, we call it existentiell understanding. But since in this existentiell understanding the Dasein, as a being, is projected upon its ability-to-be, being in the sense of existence is understood in it. An understanding of the being of existence in general is enclosed in every existentiell understanding’ (BP: 279).

contexts such as “world” (Golob 2013: 111). More specifically, Heidegger’s major – but unsubstantiated – claim in *Being and Time* is that that ‘time...manifest[s] itself as the horizon of Being’ (SZ: 437). That is to say, a familiarity with ‘time, in some sense of that word, is the relevant prototype for world’ (Golob 2013: 112). In other words,

Heidegger’s claim is that time serves as the explanatorily basic instance of the *b* variable, the prototype in terms of which entities are understood as standing in the teleological and social relations that define the basic level of Dasein’s intentionality. (Golob 2013: 112)

Golob stresses that this familiarity with time should not be construed in a trivial way such as with claims like ‘all our experience is temporal’ or that ‘temporal properties should play a central role when distinguishing different kinds of entities’ (Golob 2013: 112). Rather, Heidegger construes this familiarity with time in an existential way according to what he calls the structure of ‘care’ (fallenness-thrownness-projection) that characterises the mode of being of Dasein in a primordially temporal way, namely, as a ‘thrown projection fallen into the world’. As Stephen Mulhall explains it:

Dasein’s thrownness...shows it to be already in the world; its projectiveness...shows it to be at the same time ahead of itself, aiming to realize some existential possibility; and its fallenness shows it to be preoccupied with the world. (Mulhall 1997: 111)

In short, on Heidegger’s view our capacity to intend entities as entities presupposes a prior familiarity with time, understood as a prototype that exemplifies the contexts and relations that define world. And Heidegger accounts for this familiarity with time in terms of a characterization of Dasein as a primordially temporal thrown project fallen into the world.

Yet, one may wonder how a characterization of the mode of being of Dasein is supposed to establish Dasein’s familiarity with prototypical time. It does not appear to follow that just in virtue of the claim that Dasein is characterized by a certain kind of temporality that Dasein is thereby familiar with time in the way required for

Dasein's capacity to intend entities. It is with respect to this issue that the existential dimension of Heidegger's phenomenology requires further elucidation. More specifically, it is crucial to emphasize how Heidegger's characterization of the mode of being of Dasein as 'care' – his so-called 'existential analytic' – differs from, for instance, logical or psychological accounts of the conditions presupposed by our capacity to intend entities. The key distinguishing feature of Heidegger's existential approach for our purposes is that Heidegger's existential characterization of Dasein aims to capture the conditions *constitutive* of our intending of entities.

Taylor Carman has captured this difference perspicuously by drawing a distinction between causal conditions and what he terms as Heidegger's *hermeneutic* conditions:²³

What is essential to hermeneutic conditions...is that they are constitutive of what they condition in a way that causal conditions are not. That is, whereas causal conditions bring it about that one as a matter of fact has some interpretive understanding of something as something, hermeneutic conditions constitute what it is for something to fall under an aspect, and thus to be interpretable at all. For a condition to be constitutive of what it conditions, it is not enough that it merely bring the thing about. It must also figure into an adequate understanding of the conditioned phenomenon as the thing it is. For hermeneutic conditions to be constitutive of the interpretability

²³ Carman's interpretation aims to show that while in certain crucial respects Heidegger's existential analytic is designed to resemble Kant's transcendental analytic, where the constitutive structures of existence ('existentials') Heidegger proposes can be seen as roughly analogous to Kant's "epistemic conditions," or conditions of knowledge' (Carman 2003: 12). Henry Allison deployed the term 'epistemic condition' in an effort to elucidate and define Kant's 'crucial notion of 'condition' as it relates specifically to Kant's transcendental idealism. Allison defines an epistemic condition as that which 'is necessary for the representation of an object or an objective state of affairs. As such, it could be called an "objectivating condition"; for it is in virtue of such conditions that our representations relate to objects or, as Kant likes to put it, possess "objective reality"' (Allison 1993: 10). According to Allison, the aim of Kant's transcendental analytic is 'to establish a set of epistemic conditions, namely the pure concepts of the understanding.' (Allison 1993: 10) Crucially for Allison, epistemic conditions are different to logical conditions, insofar as logical conditions concern only the rules for 'consistent thinking, but not for the representation of objects' (*ibid.*) and they are different from psychological conditions which offer empirical descriptions of the neurological mechanisms of the brain. Finally, they differ from ontological conditions which are conditions of the possibility of the being of things in themselves, not merely beings as objects of human experience. Carman notes that Heideggerian hermeneutic conditions, like epistemic conditions, contrast with logical and psychological conditions, but that their relation to *ontological* conditions is more complex 'since the point of fundamental ontology is precisely to deny any sense of ontological commitment independent of an account of our own every day, pre-ontological understanding of being' (Carman 2003: 21).

of entities, then, any explicit understanding of those entities as the entities they are must involve some understanding, however unthematic, of the hermeneutic conditions that render them intelligible. So, although we can remain perfectly oblivious of the causal conditions bringing about or sustaining our understanding of things, we must have at least some prephilosophical inkling, however primitive and inarticulate, of the hermeneutic conditions that constitute their ordinary intelligibility for us. (Carman 2003: 26-7)

The key point here is that the set of hermeneutic conditions Heidegger proposes in characterizing Dasein are distinct from, say, causal conditions such as ‘psychological or physiological processes’ (Carman 2003: 23) of which the subject to whom they apply can be completely unconscious, in the sense that Dasein possesses, at least at a *pre-thematic* level, a familiarity with hermeneutic conditions conditioning the ordinary intelligibility of entities. This is because hermeneutic conditions not only function as conditions on the possibility of intending entities – they also *constitute* in part the meaningfulness of entities they condition in a way that informs the Dasein’s fluent practical involvement with them. Put formally, we can define hermeneutic conditions in the following way:

(Def) Hermeneutic condition = α is only intelligible in the way that it is because of φ , where φ is a constitutive feature of α .

In order to get a better sense for hermeneutic conditions, it is worth investigating an example taken from *Being and Time*. Consider the hermeneutic conditions Heidegger terms ‘affectedness’ or ‘disposedness’ (*Befindlichkeit*) and ‘mood’ (*Stimmung*) (SZ: 134).²⁴ At their most general, affectedness and mood simply refer to ‘...affective inflections of Dasein’s temperament that are typically experienced as ‘given’, as states into which one has been thrown...’ (Mulhall 1996: 76). For instance,

²⁴ Zygmunt Bauman has claimed that the sovereign expressions of life bear resemblance to Heidegger’s notion of *Befindlichkeit*: ‘The “sovereign expressions of life” may be seen as another name for Heidegger’s *Befindlichkeit* (being situated – an essentially ontological notion) combined with *Stimmung* (being tuned – the epistemological reflex of being situated)...by insisting on its spontaneity, Løgstrup suggests the “an sich” status of life-expressions, reminiscent of that of *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*’ (Bauman 2007: 119).

Heidegger mentions anxiety, boredom and joy as moods that inflect the way in which entities show up to Dasein. More precisely, affectedness and mood refer 'to Dasein's capacity to be affected by the world, to find that the entities and situations it faces *matter* to it, and in ways over which it has less than complete control' (Mulhall 1996: 76). In other words, Heidegger's phenomenological point is that Dasein does not intend entities in an affectless vacuum; rather, as Heidegger puts it, 'in every case, Dasein always has some mood' (*SZ*: 134). That is, Dasein's intending of entities always takes place against an affective backdrop in virtue of which the entities Dasein intends matter to Dasein in various ways. This affective backdrop, then, is no mere adornment to Dasein's intentionality according to Heidegger; it is partly constitutive of the significance and meaning of Dasein's intending of entities, of the way those entities show up as mattering to Dasein. Hence, we can see how hermeneutic conditions, such as affectedness and mood, are *constitutive* of Dasein's intending of entities in a way that causal conditions are not: the significance and meaning of an intended entity is in some part constituted by the affective backdrop against which the entity is intended.

Beyond this, Heidegger's ontological point is that affectedness and mood are disclosive of a primordial ecstasis of Dasein's temporality, namely, thrownness: 'disposedness or mood is the disclosure of Dasein's thrownness (*Geworfenheit*), which establishes our primordial sense of pastness or having been' (Carman 2003: 192). The thought here is that Dasein's intending of entities, insofar as it is constituted in part against an affective backdrop, involves a primordial and pre-thematic familiarity with a sense of always already finding oneself in some mood. That is, of finding oneself as having been thrown into a world that always already matters to one in some way. Thus, on Heidegger's view, Dasein's intending of entities is constituted in part against the backdrop of affectedness and mood. And this affective backdrop involves – in however inarticulate and pre-thematic a way – a familiarity with a primordial sense

of time, *viz.* pastness, where it is in virtue of this familiarity that entities can be intended as the meaningful entities that they are.

In sum, according to Heidegger's ontological phenomenology, Dasein's capacity to intend entities presupposes a familiarity with prototypical time, *viz.* understanding of being, where this familiarity – as articulated through a set of hermeneutic conditions – is *constitutive* of the way entities show up to Dasein as the entities that they are. In what follows, I will suggest that, on a formal level, Løgstrup's ontological ethics can be seen to be isomorphic with this basic Heideggerian account of intentionality, albeit with some substantial differences, where the sovereign expressions of life can then be fruitfully construed as hermeneutic conditions.

2.3.2. Løgstrup's Ontological Ethics

In Heidegger's usage, phenomenology refers primarily to a method – he would call it *the* method – of philosophical research.²⁵ As such, Heidegger's usage of the term phenomenology differs markedly from its usage in contemporary analytic philosophy of mind, where the term often refers to a description of what a given sensation is like. Indeed, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that *Being and Time* is dominated by an attempt to properly articulate phenomenology as a *method* for philosophy, conceived of as ontology. By contrast, Løgstrup hardly ever discusses methodological issues in his writing: *The Ethical Demand* contains under two pages devoted to 'methodological remarks!' Nonetheless, Løgstrup repeatedly refers to his work as being phenomenological (BED: 10; 13; 20; 41). And there is much textual evidence to

²⁵ Cf. 'The expression 'phenomenology' signifies' primarily a *methodological conception*. The expression does not characterize the what of the objects of philosophical research as subject-matter, but rather the *how* of that research' (SZ: 27); 'Phenomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology, and it is our way of giving it demonstrative precision. *Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible*' (SZ: 35).

support the claim that Løgstrup understands his work to be phenomenological in a broadly Heideggerian sense of the term.

For instance, in a late article, Løgstrup provides a definition of phenomenology broadly consonant with Heidegger's method:

[Phenomenology] precisely consists in bringing into the light of day the understanding of human nature and relations in the world that lie hidden in pre-philosophical knowledge. The philosophizing person is therefore not merely interested, but involved. It is one's own knowledge and one's own possibilities and one's own world, which one occupies oneself with in order to reveal one's own nature and the world's character. The philosopher has always already understood the world, his own life and his life with the other. (FP: 117)

More significantly, however, his brief – and, admittedly, rather obscure – methodological remarks in *The Ethical Demand* contain clues that point to a phenomenological approach along broadly Heideggerian lines. For example, he writes that he will 'proceed from the standpoint of our own existence [*existens*]' (ED: 15), where this appears to refer to the fact that the starting point of his analysis is how we 'normally encounter one another' (ED: 8) in our average everydayness – that is, in the 'contexts, contradictions and conflicts of our own existence' (ED: 7). This clearly resonates with Heidegger's methodological prioritization of the first-personal 'average everyday' experience of meaning.²⁶ Furthermore, Løgstrup writes that 'methodologically, our task will be one of making distinctions' where he contrasts this approach from those which first lay out an abstract 'conceptualizing apparatus' (ED: 6 fn. 5) and then 'schematically' (ED: 6) apply it to different philosophical problems. This chimes with the important hermeneutic dimension of Heidegger's

²⁶ This commitment was shared by Husserl as well. But as Irene McMullin notes 'Heidegger's understanding of this point manifested itself in his greater focus on the preconceptual and non-theoretical dimensions of lived experience. Heidegger moves Husserl's phenomenological project forward by recognizing the practical and affective modes whereby preconceptual dimensions of lived experience manifest themselves first-personally...' (McMullin 2013: 23).

phenomenological method whereby he stresses the ‘need for painstaking attention to avoid forcing concepts drawn from one domain on to another’ (Golob 2013: 254).²⁷

Given this evidence, in what follows I will draw on the Heideggerian phenomenological framework provided above in elucidating Løgstrup’s so-called ontological ethics. My emphasis here will be on properly construing the sovereign expressions of life as ‘basic givens of existence,’ where a central claim I will make is that the sovereign expressions of life can be fruitfully construed as hermeneutic conditions. Bluntly, my claim is this: just as Heidegger’s project in *Being and Time* can be read as an attempt to provide an account of the existential conditions constitutive of Dasein’s capacity to intend entities as the entities they are, so can Løgstrup’s theory of the sovereign expressions of life be read as an attempt to provide an account of the existential conditions constitutive of our capacity to comport ourselves to the other in their otherness.²⁸

In his late work, *Source and Surroundings* (1976), Løgstrup notes approvingly that the ‘phenomenological philosophers, Husserl, Heidegger and Lipps, realized that the world was not only a surrounding for human existence, but belonged to its

²⁷ As Fehér (1994) puts it: ‘The hermeneutic turn of philosophy that Heidegger carried out implies not only the elaboration of the operation called *Verstehen*. More importantly, it implies that interpretation is no longer seen as an auxiliary discipline of the human sciences, as dealing with the rules of the interpretation of texts. Rather, it emerges as an autonomous philosophical perspective, insofar as the human being is viewed as an interpreting animal in all the modes of everyday activities and not just in the handling of classical texts in human sciences’ (74).

²⁸ Thus, to return to the issue concerning the extent to which the sovereign expressions of life should be read as having a transcendental status, my answer is that the sense in which the sovereign expressions of life have a transcendental status is formally similar to the sense in which hermeneutic conditions have a transcendental status in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. McMullin summarizes Heidegger’s position in this respect neatly: ‘In contrast to traditional characterizations of the a priori as an unchanging, complete set of categories, Heidegger’s aim in *Being and Time* is to *ground* the apriority of the I in its particular existence, emphasizing the fact that the *existence* character of the I is precisely what cannot be bracketed. The existential analytic’s shift away from traditional accounts lies in its insistence on recognizing that the a priori categories are only ever found within this or that Dasein’s particular, finite existing’ (McMullin 2013: 88). When viewed in this way, we can understand Løgstrup’s claim that the sovereign expressions of life, as basic givens of existence, are ‘material’ (ED: 290); that is, they are derived from the concrete, existing human and *not* from logical analysis.

structure. Our existence is an existence in complicity with the world' (M2: 126). Løgstrup's commitment to this phenomenological conception of 'world' has precedence in *The Ethical Demand*. Recall the final stage of my reconstruction in 2.1. where I considered the concluding passage of Løgstrup's discussion of trust. There he claims that trust is expressive of the 'fact' that we 'shape' or 'constitute one another's world,' i.e. that we are fundamentally interdependent. Clearly, these locutions present a notion of world at odds with traditional philosophical understandings of the world as the 'totality of objects' or the 'totality of facts.'²⁹ Not least because, as we have seen, Løgstrup goes on describe the ways in which our worlds are co-constituted by invoking a series of affective qualities such as 'large' and 'small,' 'bright' and 'drab,' 'rich' and 'dull' and 'threatening' and 'secure.' We can extrapolate: 'world' on Løgstrup's view designates an existential context of meaning and significance in terms of which entities and others show up as mattering in the way that they do: others show up *as* the others that they are in light of our familiarity with a context of relations and significance designated by the term 'world.'

A Heideggerian question immediately arises in relation to this observation: in virtue of what is our familiarity with world established? We have seen that Heidegger accounts for our familiarity with world, and thus our capacity to intend entities, by appeal to what he calls Dasein's understanding of being. On Golob's reading, Dasein's understanding of being is construed as a familiarity with prototypical time, where time in this sense is said to exemplify the relations that define contexts such as 'world.' Does Løgstrup have in his ethical philosophy anything resembling Heidegger's notion of understanding of being? My suggestion here is that Løgstrup's notion of

²⁹ See e.g., Gabriel, M., 2015 Ch. 1 for a discussion of these senses of world.

‘understanding life as a gift’ can be seen to be isomorphic with Heidegger’s notion of understanding of being.³⁰

Løgstrup’s claim that we understand life as a gift is notoriously contentious, particularly as it bears on questions concerning whether Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology is intelligible in secular terms or whether it presupposes theological notions.³¹ At this stage in my argument I remain neutral on these questions. Here I am interested only in the formal role Løgstrup’s notion of understanding life as a gift plays in his architectonic of ethical life. In this relation, it is important to note that according to Løgstrup an understanding that life is a gift is *presupposed* by our capacity to relate to others in the way that we do; as demanding care and acceptance. Thus, Løgstrup writes that the demand made on us by the presence of the other ‘presupposes...that a person has his or her life and the world in which it is lived only as a gift which he or she has received’ (ED: 171). Interestingly, Løgstrup substantiates this claim in a footnote by relating it explicitly to ontology, writing that ‘the one-sided demand contains an *ontology*, a fundamental and constitutive determination [*bestemmelse*] of being, namely, that human life and the world that goes with it have been given to human beings as a gift’ (ED: 171, translation modified). What these comments suggest is that our capacity to relate to others in the ethically inflected way

³⁰ In Løgstrup’s later writings, the notion of ‘understanding life as a gift’ disappears. Indeed, in his *Rejoinder*, Løgstrup notes his dissatisfaction with how he dealt this notion in *The Ethical Demand* (BED: 11). My sense is that Løgstrup does not *abandon* his line of thinking concerning the notion that life is a gift in his later writings; rather it is increasingly replaced with the notion of ‘creation.’ If I am right, what I say about Løgstrup’s notion of life as a gift below, *viz.* life’s givenness and our significant passivity in relation to it, still holds in his later writings. Although I do not have the space to develop it here, it seems to me that there are parallels between Løgstrup’s thinking on creation and Levinas’, where, as Jeffrey Kosky has argued, Levinas’ notion of creation refers to the thought that ‘since the self has been called into being before it exists, it is a creature...’ (Kosky 149). Similarly, Løgstrup’s thinking on life as a gift and as a creation carries with it the Lutheran thought that our existence as self-conscious, active individuals is in some sense ethically pre-determined by life. See §3 for further examination of the Lutheran dimensions of Løgstrup’s thought and §5 for further considerations of Løgstrup’s notion of life as a gift.

³¹ See Fink (2007) and Reinders (2007).

that we do is established by a prior familiarity with life as a gift, where this prior familiarity exemplifies the relations and contexts that define ‘world’ as that in which others shows up as intelligible *as* the other human beings that they are.

Clearly, despite the formal isomorphism between Heidegger’s notion of understanding of being and Løgstrup’s notion of understanding life as a gift, there are many substantial differences between Heidegger’s and Løgstrup’s respective notions. One fundamental difference is that whereas Heidegger argues that time is the prototype for the contexts and relations that define world, where this relates to Heidegger’s temporal characterization of Dasein in terms of care, Løgstrup argues that life, understood as a gift; that is, minimally, as something given, is the prototype. That Løgstrup takes life, in some sense of that word, to be the prototype for the contexts and relations that define world is unsurprising given both the influence of *Lebensphilosophie* on his philosophy and the centrality of the notion of creation to his theology.³² As Hans Fink and Alasdair MacIntyre note in their introduction to *The Ethical Demand*, Løgstrup’s variation on this *Lebensphilosophische* theme held that

Life has been given to us and it is a precondition of any cultural ordering that the basic expression of life is both to receive and to give. Life, thus, is necessarily interpersonal and involves that basic trust which informs all communication. (Fink & MacIntyre 1997: xxi)

It is beyond the scope of the present study to provide a detailed explication and assessment of Løgstrup’s thinking here. Nonetheless, it seems plausible based on what we have seen to think that a prior understanding of life as a gift serves as a prototype for the contexts and relations that define ‘world’ for Løgstrup, in the sense that it exemplifies a sense of ‘givenness’ Løgstrup takes to characterize human

³² It is perhaps worth noting in passing that in some early lecture courses, Heidegger himself used the word ‘life’ to designate what he would later call Dasein and that Heidegger’s notion of life there was in a significant sense indebted to theological conceptions of life – particularly those found in St. Paul’s Epistles. See, for example, Heidegger 2009: pp. 61-97 & Campbell (2012), Ch. 2.

existence and, thus, a sense of passivity and receivership as being definitive of our relation to the world and its meaning.³³ Indeed, Løgstrup writes that 'life is not of our own making, it is given' (ED: 18) and that life 'is greater than we are; it is superior to us' (ED: 165), where the implication is that human existence is characterized in terms of a passively finding oneself in a world with anteriorly given meaning and significance that transcends our finite conceptual and representational resources.

Yet, just as with Heidegger, we must ask: how is this characterization of human existence supposed to establish our familiarity with life as a gift, in the way Løgstrup's analysis suggests? If my suggestion concerning the isomorphism between Heidegger's notion of understanding of being and Løgstrup's notion of understanding life as a gift is correct, then we should expect that Løgstrup's notion of understanding of life as a gift to be disclosed through something like Heidegger's hermeneutic conditions. And this indeed appears to be the case. For instance, Løgstrup writes that '...trust and love...*contain* an understanding of the fact that our life and the person who is the object of our love have been given as gifts. From this understanding of life – however unconscious – trust and love cannot be separated' (ED: 138, my emphasis). According to the interpretation I have been prosecuting, Løgstrup's claim here can be understood to be suggesting that our understanding of life as a gift *qua* prototype for the contexts and relations that define 'world' is 'disclosed' by, to use Heidegger's terminology, or 'contained within,' to use Løgstrup's, the sovereign expressions of life, such as trust and love, in virtue of which we are 'bound to' and 'embedded in' the world (BED: 71).

Another way to put this point is as the claim that sovereign expressions of life are hermeneutic conditions: they are existential structures basic to human existence

³³ In this respect, Løgstrup's conception of life as a gift bears resemblance to Heidegger's notion of thrownness mentioned above.

that are constitutive of the way entities show up to us in the way that they do. And they perform this function insofar as they are those features of existence that disclose or contain a pre-thematic, affective familiarity with life as a gift, where it is in virtue of this familiarity that our capacity to make sense of entities within the contexts and relations that define 'world' is established.

Yet, at this stage it is important to broach a further substantial difference between Heidegger's account of hermeneutic conditions and Løgstrup's theory of sovereign expressions of life. Namely, whereas Heidegger's account of hermeneutic conditions in *Being and Time* is primarily aimed at explaining Dasein's capacity to intend ready-to-hand entities such as hammers and tables, Løgstrup's theory of sovereign expressions of life is aimed at explaining our capacity to relate to other human beings. That is to say, the sovereign expressions of life are a special class of hermeneutic conditions that pertain specifically to our capacity to comport ourselves to others in their otherness. It is with respect to this observation that the sense in which the sovereign expressions of life are expressive of a fundamental interdependence becomes significant: what the expressions of life disclose is a sense in which my life is not my creation; it is given, sustained and, indeed, co-constituted through the multifarious social relations that fundamentally mark our human form of life.

Appreciating this, we can offer a preliminary formal definition of sovereign expressions of life *qua* hermeneutic conditions:

(Def) Sovereign Expressions of Life *qua* Hermeneutic Conditions = the other is only intelligible in the way they are because of the sovereign expressions of life, where the sovereign expressions of life are constitutive of the way the other is intelligible.

Two key questions that need to be answered in explicating this definition are: (1) what is the ‘way’ in which the other is intelligible to us? And (2) how are the sovereign expressions of life constitutive of this? With respect to question (1) we have already seen in our discussion of Løgstrupian trust that, for Løgstrup, in paradigmatic cases of moral action the other shows up to us in their otherness, that is, as another vulnerable and living being irreducible to our pictures and theories.

How, then, are the sovereign expressions of life, construed as hermeneutic conditions, *constitutive* of this way of being comported to others? In answering this question, it is important to recall Løgstrup’s claim that in the face-to-face encounter the other shows up as ‘mattering’ just in virtue of their living vulnerability. That is, the other shows up as making a claim on us to ‘protect’ their life; they draw our ‘care’ out beyond our projects to an irreducible otherness and make a demand on us to attend to that otherness. In Heidegger’s terminology, we might say that the other ‘solicits’ or ‘concerns’ us in a way that ready-to-hand entities, such as tables and hammers, do not.³⁴ We have seen how this kind of relation is founded upon a familiarity with life as a gift, that is, as something given and as something that outstrips our finite conceptual and representational resources. Following the isomorphism with Heidegger’s phenomenology, my further claim is that this familiarity with life as a gift is articulated through the sovereign expressions of life, where the expressions of life can be seen as the existential structures in virtue of which our capacity to relate to the other in their otherness is established: The sovereign expressions of life manifest a

³⁴ Cf. ‘Generally translated as “solicitude” or “concern,” *Fürsorge* is meant to designate a mode of care specific to encountering other Dasein. Thus Heidegger insists that *Fürsorge* is not the same as taking care of *things*...Ecstatic transcendence or “being toward” characterizes both taking care of things and solicitude for others, but the fact that in the latter case it is another *Dasein* to whom I am related marks an insuperable difference...In concern Dasein recognizes a being that differs fundamentally from the innerworldly things experienced in *Zuhanden* and *Vorhanden* modes of encounter. *Fürsorge* designates Dasein’s way of being towards others who express their originary, ecstatic temporality in a co-constituting of the world.’ (McMullin 2013: 142)

familiarity with life as something given and, thus, as something that exceeds our finite resources of representation and conceptualization. And it is in virtue of this familiarity that the other shows up in their otherness, that is, as another vulnerable living being, irreducible to our pictures and theories.

The constitutive dimension of the expressions of life, then, consists not in projecting meaning onto the other, but rather in the sense that the expressions of life are constitutive of a mode of relation with the other – a mode of one’s having to do with another – that is open to the other as a living being who transcends my pictures and theories. This, I submit, is attested to by the phenomena that comprise the category of sovereign expressions of life. For example, trust denotes an openness to the other as another living being with the capacity for renewal and change. Similarly, mercy denotes a way of relating to the other that transcends what the justice adumbrated in moral theories might prescribe. Both phenomena share a common core: that the other is another vulnerable, living being irreducible to our pictures and theories. And, thus, both phenomena constitute an openness and receptivity to the demand to protect the life of the other that, as we have seen, arises just in virtue of the other’s living vulnerability.

With these two explanatory points in hand, we can add further determinacy to our formal definition of the sovereign expressions of life *qua* hermeneutic conditions as follows. The other is only intelligible in the way they are – as making a normative claim on us just in virtue of their otherness - because of the sovereign expressions of life, where the sovereign expressions of life are constitutive of the modes of relating to the other that are open to that otherness.

By way of illustration, consider again the examples of the Good Samaritan and Bishop Myriel. Løgstrup writes that in the parable of the Good Samaritan, ‘the call to

us is to engage with the situation – *through* the corresponding sovereign expression of life’ (BED: 76, my emphasis). Based on my interpretation, Løgstrup’s strange locution here makes perfect sense: the Good Samaritan’s responsiveness to the situation of the injured traveller constitutively involved a mode of relating to the injured traveller in light of the sovereign expression of life mercy, where this merciful mode of relation ‘let’ the injured traveller show up in the primitively ethically demanding way that he did. This contrasts with Løgstrup’s Kantian Samaritan, whose mode of relating to the injured traveller was mediated by moral principles – which according to Løgstrup occlude the other’s otherness. Similarly, as concerns the example of Bishop Myriel, on an interpretation of trust as a hermeneutic condition, the Bishop’s actions can be explained in the following terms. The Bishop’s relating to Valjean as another living human being with the capacity for renewal and change constitutively involved trust in the sense that trust opened the Bishop up to Valjean’s otherness – as a vulnerable, living being – where this then informed and inflected the range of actions open to the Bishop.

To conclude this section, I return to the twin criteria of exegetical and philosophical plausibility that have been motivating my discussion. Firstly, the criterion of exegetical plausibility related to Løgstrup’s designation of the sovereign expressions of life not as primary motivations, such as immediate inclination, nor as secondary motivations, such as practical rationality, but as ‘basic givens of existence.’ This claim forms the cornerstone of Løgstrup’s so-called ontological ethics. In my analysis, I have shown that Løgstrup’s conception of the sovereign expressions of life can be fruitfully read as being isomorphic with a Heideggerian notion of hermeneutic conditions. As such, we can understand Løgstrup’s designation of the sovereign expressions of life as ‘basic givens of existence’ in the sense that they are existential structures constitutive of our capacity to relate to others in the way that we do.

Furthermore, this reading sheds light on why Løgstrup refers to his ethics as ‘ontological.’ Løgstrup’s theory of the sovereign expressions of life aims to capture the existential structures presupposed by our capacity to intend a particular class of entities, namely, other human beings. Thus, it broadly follows the methodological framework laid out in Heidegger’s ontological phenomenology.

More importantly, however, we must ask whether my analysis meets the criterion of philosophical plausibility. I framed this criterion in terms of an apparent incompatibility immanent in Løgstrup’s theory of the sovereign expressions of life in which he seems to be committed to two incompatible premises, namely, Premise¹ and Immediacy. The crux of the issue rested on whether there is any conceptual space in Løgstrup’s account of the sovereign expressions of life in terms of Immediacy for some form of moral awareness. And the worry was that if there is *no* conceptual space for such awareness then the realization of the sovereign expressions of life in actions, such as those of the Good Samaritan, appear to reduce figures such as the Samaritan to ‘responsive automatons’ rather than moral agents. In response to this worry, we can now appreciate that with Immediacy Løgstrup is referring not to ‘mindless’ behaviour or instinctual reaction but rather to a mode of relating to the other in a way that is un-mediated by pictures and theories, including moral theories: it is a mode of relating to the other in their otherness, rather than a mode of relating to them in terms of one’s subjective projections on to them.

In appreciation of this, I have argued that the sovereign expressions of life are existential structures constitutive of a receptivity to the other in their otherness. We might say, figuratively, that they open us up to the other as another vulnerable, living being. It follows that the mode of relating to the other constituted by the sovereign expressions of life is a mode of relation receptive to a demand or claim made on us by the other – on the Løgstrupian premise that the presence of the other makes a

primitive ethical demand on us just in virtue of their living vulnerability. In this way, the sovereign expressions of life can be seen to involve a form of moral awareness, in that they are constitutive of a receptivity to a primitive ethical demand arising from the other in their living vulnerability. And this form of moral awareness is in fact definitive of Immediacy in the sense that the primitive ethical demand the sovereign expressions of life are receptive to is one arising from the other's otherness. Of course, this is not to say that mode of relating to the other 'silences' the everyday intelligibility of the world to us: Løgstrup explicitly states, for instance, that the ethical demand is 'refracted' through social norms (ED: 107) and that it 'kindles' practical deliberations concerning how to respond (BED: 72).³⁵ Rather, the point is that the sovereign expressions of life constitute a mode of relating to the other *for their own sake*, as an other - rather than for the sake of social norms or our subjective pictures and theories.

An important upshot of this, of course, is that it opens up some conceptual space for providing an answer to the question of moral agency. It does this because, it shows how Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life is compatible with a core feature often taken to be necessary for moral agency to obtain, namely, moral awareness – albeit in a way that is substantially different from variants of moral awareness subsumable to F¹.

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to provide an account of Løgstrup's signature theory of sovereign expressions of life. I have framed my discussion around one

³⁵ Cf. 'The expression of life gives rise to actions, and just as unconditional as the expression of life is, so conditional on the given situation and circumstances are the actions to which it gives rise. And just as conditional as the action is on the situation and its circumstances, so numerous will the reflections and arguments in the given situation be for anyone seeking to determine the right action' (BED: 130).

dimension of what I am calling the problem of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics, namely, does Løgstrup's commitment to Immediacy in his theory of the sovereign expressions of life preclude moral agency, in the sense that it precludes all forms of second-order moral awareness? In response to this worry, I have argued that by interpreting the sovereign expressions of life along Heideggerian lines as hermeneutic conditions, it can be seen how Løgstrup can be consistent in his commitment to Immediacy whilst also maintaining that this commitment does not preclude some form of moral awareness.

Clearly, however, this conclusion alone does not constitute a full answer to the problem of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics: whilst it provides an account of how Løgstrup's moral phenomenology can be seen to provide a competing conception of moral awareness to those subsumed under F^1 , it does not provide any sense of how Løgstrup's moral phenomenology can be seen to provide a competing conception of *agential activity* to those subsumed under F^2 . That is, it does not show how one incorporates the moral awareness constituted through the sovereign expressions of life into one's actions through the exercise of agency. Indeed, my account of sovereign expressions of life here might seem to make the chances that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology has the resources to provide such a competing account of agential activity to F^2 even more remote. Since, based on what we have seen so far, the sovereign expressions of life appear to be phenomena to which one is passively subjected: just as with Heidegger's affects and moods, they 'assail' us; we do not have any active regulating, sanctioning or evaluating control over them. They are 'basic givens of existence' which we passively receive. How can such passivity be compatible with a plausible conception of moral agency?

I presented an attractive strategy for defusing this worry in chapter one under the auspices of an Aristotelian defusing-strategy. According to this strategy, the

agent's activity in relation to the sovereign expressions of life can be construed in terms of a capacity to cultivate in oneself and become habituated to the sovereign expressions of life. Interestingly, such an Aristotelian strategy has been applied to Heidegger's conception of the hermeneutic conditions affectedness and mood, discussed above. As Katherine Withy has argued in her article 'Owned Emotions: Affective excellence in Heidegger on Aristotle:'

[A]ffective life can involve a choice...I can choose to let my *pathé* be themselves; I can let myself be genuinely moved. Such letting be is in some sense active, but it is not a matter of becoming "master of [my] moods" (*SZ*: 136) and controlling my *pathé* as might a continent person, who (for example) struggles to be angry at the appropriate person or at the appropriate time...The effort and control are directed towards removing impediments. The choice or resolution is an exercise of agency that aims at proper receptivity...We might speak of learning to experience certain *pathé* – learning to love or learning to grieve – but this is not a matter of practicing bringing about a particular result. It is a matter of holding ourselves open and letting ourselves be moved, and of doing so every time. (Withy 2015: 30)

Could such a broadly Aristotelian model of agency be applied to Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life? It is to this question that I now turn.

3. Løgstrup's Lutheran Dialectic

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and elucidate the Lutheran dimension central to Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics. The Lutheran dimension of Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics can be seen most evidently in his striking claim that human life contains the possibilities for goodness whilst the self is pervasively wicked and selfish. My aim is to provide an interpretive context for this puzzling claim and assess the implications it has with respect to the question of moral agency. The chief implication of the Lutheran dimension of Løgstrup's ethical thought for the question of moral agency, I will argue, is that it appears to preclude the possibility that the self *qua* agent can play any active role in the 'realization' [*realisere*] of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works, where this implication casts serious doubt on the chances of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology being compatible with a plausible conception of moral agency.¹

My strategy in this chapter will be heuristic. I will begin in 3.1. by returning to Alasdair MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy. I will employ MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy to help bring out the distinctively Lutheran dimension of Løgstrup's ethical thought, where MacIntyre's Thomism serves as a helpful contrast to Løgstrup's Lutheranism. The important issue that emerges from this contrast is that the Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's thought appear to preclude any form of self-governing activity (F²) on the part of the agent when it comes to the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works. Without any active role for an agent, it then becomes mysterious how the sovereign expressions of life can be realized in good works. In the remainder of

¹ Løgstrup's use of the term *realisere* means to 'accomplish' something or, maybe more correctly 'to actualize' something. Thus, when Løgstrup talks of 'realizing' the sovereign expressions of life we can interpret him to mean the actualization of the sovereign expressions of life in good works. Bjørn Rabjerg drew my attention to this linguistic point.

the chapter, I will canvass two ways of overcoming this problem. One taken from the work of Patrick Stokes (3.2.) and one taken from the work of Bjørn Rabjerg and developed by Stern (3.3.). Whilst both of these strategies can be seen to move in the right direction with respect to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics, I will suggest that they are both subject to philosophical and interpretive problems. Thus, in the next chapter I will build on these strategies, taking account of their philosophical and interpretive problems, in providing a positive answer to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics.

3.1. MacIntyre's Critical Appropriation of Løgstrup

In the previous chapter, I argued that the sovereign expressions of life can be fruitfully interpreted as hermeneutic conditions. The benefit of this interpretation is that it can make sense of how the sovereign expressions of life can offer a competing account of moral awareness to those subsumed under the label F^1 – in such a way as to be compatible with Løgstrup's commitment to Immediacy. However, I concluded by noting that, on Løgstrup's view, the sovereign expressions of life appear to be features of our existence in relation to which we, *qua* agents, are wholly passive. In a way analogous to Heidegger's notions of mood and affectedness, the sovereign expressions of life *assail* us in ways we do not control. With this observation, the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics reasserts itself. According to the standard view of moral agency I presented in chapter one, along with self-regulation (F^1), some form of self-governance (F^2) is seen to be a necessary feature for moral agency to obtain. That is, moral agency is typically thought to involve some degree of active involvement on the part of the agent. This active element can be specified in a variety of different ways: for instance, as guidance or direction by the agent; as rational self-control or as second-order volition. It is sometimes associated with a process of self-constitution. But at its core, F^2 designates a distinctive mode of activity

involved in moral agency whereby the moral agent actively takes up or identifies with a motivation or incentive for action in light of its normativity, thus making that motivation or incentive efficacious. By contrast, on what seems to be Løgstrup's view, we are *passively* subjected to the sovereign expressions of life. In Løgstrup's words, they 'overmaster' (BED: 68) or 'overwhelm' (BED: 68) us. And, as we shall see, any attempts we make to actively engage with them *qua* agents leads to their 'distortion' or 'corruption' (BED: 68; 69), in the sense that in trying to 'govern' the sovereign expressions of life we transmute them into *ersatz* or counterfeit phenomena. Thus, we are compelled to ask: to what extent, if at all, are the sovereign expressions of life related to moral agency?

In chapter one, I presented one possible way of construing a form of self-governing activity (F²) that looked *prima facie* to be compatible with a significant part of Løgstrup's phenomenology of the sovereign expressions of life in the form of Alasdair MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy. The spirit in which MacIntyre approaches Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is broadly sympathetic. He writes that he finds himself 'strongly inclined...to assent to Løgstrup's central claims' (MacIntyre 2008: 148) and that Thomists, such as MacIntyre himself, have 'much to learn' from Løgstrup (MacIntyre 2007: 147). MacIntyre is attracted to Løgstrup's moral phenomenology because it engages seriously with the themes of human vulnerability and interdependence, and considerations concerning what constitutes a proper response to them, where MacIntyre thinks these that themes have been underexplored in Thomist-Aristotelian virtue ethics – and moral philosophy more generally.² Indeed, one cannot fail to notice the striking parallels between Løgstrup's

² Cf. MacIntyre (2009): '[W]hile Aristotle understood very well the importance of the relevant kinds of experience for rational practice...in neither ethics nor politics did he give any weight to the experience of those for whom the facts of affliction and dependence are most likely to be undeniable [...] Aristotle thus anticipated [Adam] Smith – and a great many others – in importing into moral

theory of the sovereign expressions of life, where the notion of mercy plays a central role, and MacIntyre's development of the so-called virtues of acknowledged dependence, of which mercy (or, in Aquinas's language *Misericordia*) is a leading example (MacIntyre 2009: pp. 123-126): both Løgstrup's sovereign expressions of life and MacIntyre's virtues of acknowledged dependence reflect attempts to re-configure moral philosophy in such a way as to 'treat the facts of vulnerability and affliction and the related facts of dependence as central to the human condition' (MacIntyre 2009: 4).

Yet, despite the considerable overlap between Løgstrup's and MacIntyre's respective philosophical concerns, MacIntyre's engagement with Løgstrup bears the hallmark of his signature 'tradition-constituted' mode of enquiry.³ He avers, for example, that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is an 'historical residue, [a] report of what remains when some larger scheme for understanding the moral life has, for whatever reason, lost its credibility' (MacIntyre 2010: 14). Moreover, he claims that Løgstrup's notion of the ethical demand is 'what is left when the framework of Lutheran ethics is no longer available' (MacIntyre 2010: 13). In other words, MacIntyre takes Løgstrup to have articulated some important moral truths, *viz.* his focus on the themes of human vulnerability and interdependence, but that these truths

philosophy the standpoint of those who have taken themselves to be self-sufficiently superior and of those who take their standards from those who take themselves to be self-sufficiently superior. And he also and correspondingly anticipated them in being unable to give due recognition to affliction and to dependence' (6-7).

³ Cf. MacIntyre (2001): '[C]entral to a tradition-constituted enquiry at each stage in its development will be its current problematic, that agenda of unsolved problems and unresolved issues by reference to which its success or lack of it in making rational progress toward some further stage of development will be evaluated. At any point it may happen to any tradition-constituted enquiry that by its own standards of progress it ceases to make progress. Its hitherto trusted methods of enquiry have become sterile. Conflicts over rival answers to key questions can no longer be settled rationally. Moreover, it may indeed happen that the use of the methods of enquiry and of the forms of argument, by means of which rational progress had been achieved so far, begins to have the effect of disclosing new inadequacies, hitherto unrecognized incoherences, and new problems for the solution of which there seem to be insufficient or no resources within the established fabric of belief' (362).

have lost their bearings; they have been cut off from the larger scheme of moral understanding out of which they initially emerged and which rendered them intelligible.

Given this, it is important to appreciate that MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy takes the form of a *critical appropriation* of Løgstrup's ethics rather than as an attempt to amend or defend Løgstrup's own position. Patrick Stokes has captured MacIntyre's stance well, writing that

MacIntyre's Løgstrup turns out to be a sort of degraded Thomist, who still dimly discerns the significance of *Misericordia* despite his – and our – disconnection from the form of life that once gave that virtue its normative force and meaning. (Stokes 2017: 277)

MacIntyre's critical appropriation of Løgstrup, then, is restorative in nature: it aims to re-contextualize Løgstrup's phenomenological observations within the Thomist-Aristotelian framework from which – on MacIntyre's view – they originally derived their ethical significance and intelligibility.

One way of glossing MacIntyre's appropriating agenda is as an attempt to recast the sovereign expressions of life as virtues of acknowledged dependence. So construed, MacIntyre can be seen to view the sovereign expressions of life as a special class of virtues – virtues of acknowledged dependence – that are to be cultivated, as with the other virtues, through reflection on and habituation to right reason. As such, the natural place for the sovereign expressions of life, on this MacIntyrean view, is as part of a Thomist-Aristotelian framework of moral learning and development: our lives as moral agents chart a passage from an initial state of passive subjection to desires and instincts through to a stage of continence directed towards the achievement of virtue. Ultimately, then, the seeming passivity and spontaneity of our relation to sovereign expressions of life can in fact be interpreted as 'the effortlessness that comes at the end point of the process of self-conscious moral character formation

[...] like the seeming effortlessness of a dancer who has spent years assiduously practicing his steps in a continually self-reflexive and self-evaluative way' (Stokes 2017: 289). So construed, it becomes possible to see how Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life can be compatible with a form of self-governing activity (F²).

In a Thomist mode, MacIntyre concludes his discussion by suggesting that the spontaneous realization of the sovereign expressions of life in good works reflects 'lives that have progressed beyond that stage [of continence], the lives of those in whom the openness to the grace of charity has allowed them to become spontaneously responsive to whatever is demanded of them' (MacIntyre 2007: 165). Immediately after writing this, however, he continues:

[T]o say this is to have reached a point at which the issues that divide Thomists from Løgstrup in moral philosophy turn out to reflect theological issues that have always divided Catholics from Lutherans. (MacIntyre 2007: 165)

Unfortunately, this is where MacIntyre's text ends. The implication here is that MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy diverges from Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics in a significant way. And that the source of this divergence can be found in the difference between MacIntyre's Thomist presuppositions and Løgstrup's alleged Lutheran presuppositions.

But what are Løgstrup's Lutheran presuppositions, if indeed he has any? And how do they conflict with MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy? In what follows, I will pick up where MacIntyre left off. My aim is to expose the putative Lutheran presuppositions underlying Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics in order to clarify the extent to which MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy diverges from and potentially conflicts with Løgstrup's own view. Underlying this endeavour is a general concern that if Løgstrup's way of thinking

about ethics turns out to be incompatible with some variant of F², whether construed in Aristotelian terms or not, then the chances that his theory of the sovereign expressions of life can be compatible with a plausible conception of moral agency will be substantially diminished.

It is helpful, first of all, to provide some context: Løgstrup was a committed Lutheran. He briefly served as a pastor on the island of Funen whilst revising his thesis before becoming a professor of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion in the faculty of Theology at the University of Aarhus. In this latter capacity, he was deeply engaged in the theological debates of the day: along with many articles, he wrote an original work of theology, *Creation and Annihilation* (1978), as part of his unfinished four-volume *Metaphysics*. Moreover, as is plainly evident from even the first pages of *The Ethical Demand*, theological and philosophical themes were to a significant degree interlinked in Løgstrup's thinking.⁴ Indeed, Svend Andersen has gone as far as suggesting that 'Løgstrup, in working out his ethics, shows himself to be a Lutheran philosopher' (Andersen 2007: 29).

It is important to note, however, that, although in what follows I will draw on the theology of Martin Luther in elucidating certain dimensions of Løgstrup's ethical thinking, I am mindful that he departs significantly both from Luther himself and the Lutheran theological *milieu* of his own time. Thus, I take it that Løgstrup is a Lutheran-inspired philosopher and not a straightforwardly Lutheran philosopher, as Andersen has it, where an important implication is that, whilst Løgstrup's moral

⁴ Cf. Løgstrup's avowed mission in *The Ethical Demand* as an 'attempt to give a definition in strictly human terms of the relationship to the other person which is contained within the religious proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth' (ED: 1).

phenomenology might be seen to draw on certain Lutheran themes, it does not follow from this that it presupposes any Lutheran theological dogma.⁵

With this preliminary in hand, I turn to the subsection of *The Ethical Demand* entitled ‘The wickedness of human beings [*menneskets onskab*] and the goodness of life [*menneskelivets godhed*],’ where a central Lutheran presupposition of Løgstrup’s thought can be seen to find its most decisive expression. Løgstrup writes:

To show trust and to expose oneself, to entertain a natural love is goodness. In this sense goodness belongs to our human life though we are evil. Both apply completely so that no reckoning in terms of more or less can be made of this. Even though this is done often enough when it is said, there is “at least some” good in human beings! To this we can only reply, no, there is not! When speaking of the notion that there is “at least some” good in human beings one means to subtract something from evil and then add it to goodness – on the individual’s own account. As if trust and natural love were not given to human beings, but were a human being’s own achievements and belonged to the account of the self.

But there is nothing to subtract from the evil of human beings. The self brings everything under its selfish power. In it the human will is bound. The demand to love, which as a demand is addressed to our will, is an unfulfillable demand.

Nor can anything be added to the goodness of human life. It is there and is there in completeness, but beforehand – always beforehand, among other things in the realities of trust and love. (ED: 140-1, translation modified)

⁵ As we shall see, given the considerable influence of Luther’s theology on Løgstrup’s thought, it is easy to get carried away and to surreptitiously impose elements of Luther’s thinking onto Løgstrup’s ethics. We must be careful to remember that, as Heinz Schilling puts it, ‘Luther’s world is not our world, but that distinction does not mean that these worlds are unconnected. As we look for lines that run from Luther and the era of the Reformation through the modern age and up to today, we must be careful to ensure...that we do not make Luther one of us. [...] Over the centuries the reformer and his work have been interpreted in light of the perceptions and with the terminology of each new age’ (Schilling 2017: 3). Løgstrup’s Luther is one that has been refracted through the prisms of Kierkegaard’s theology and the dialectical theology of Friedrich Gogarten, Rudolf Bultmann and the *Tidehverv* movement. Furthermore, it is important to remain sensitive to the delicate and often ambiguous relation between theology and philosophy in Løgstrup’s thinking. This relationship has been the subject of much debate in the literature. Some, such as Hans Reinders, have suggested that Løgstrup’s ethics contains theological presuppositions, where Reinders takes Løgstrup’s notion of life as a gift as an example of where Løgstrup’s thinking seems to rely on theistic premises. Others, such as Hans Fink (2013), however, have taken Løgstrup’s stated aim to be proceeding in ‘strictly human terms’ to mean that Løgstrup was pursuing a resolutely secular agenda with his ethics, and have interpreted him as such. This is not the place to put forward an interpretive stance on this issue. However, my reading of Løgstrup holds that his *phenomenology* – which includes his theory of the sovereign expressions of life – should in principle be *secularly intelligible* (NB. Not simply *secular*). I try to remain neutral on the broader *metaphysical* question as to whether Løgstrup’s phenomenology does indeed suggest a religious interpretation, as he sometimes claims.

Løgstrup's position here is uncompromising: on the one hand he affirms human life's potential for goodness, as reflected in 'natural' – that is, erotic and filial – love and the 'natural' trust with which we 'normally encounter one another' (ED: 8). Yet, on the other hand he claims that the wickedness of the human being or the self (ED: 139) is so pervasive that 'the only love we know anything about from our own actual existence is a natural love to which we have given our own self's selfish form...' (ED: 138).⁶ Crucially, the claim is not that, when we are at our best, we can overcome our selfishness, but most of the time we can't, as N. H. Sørensen has suggested.⁷ Rather it is the much stronger claim that human life or existence *itself* contains the possibilities for goodness; these possibilities for goodness are *always already there* and nothing can be 'added' to them by our own efforts, however well-intentioned they may be.⁸ And, conversely, the self or the human being is pervasively evil and wicked, from which nothing can be 'subtracted' no matter how hard one tries.⁹ My suggestion is

⁶ The nature of distinction between human life or existence [*menneskelivets, tilværelse*] and the human being or self [*menneskets, selv*] is left unexplained by Løgstrup. In what follows I will refer to the wickedness of the *self* – rather than the wickedness of the human being – in anticipation of Løgstrup's later focus on the self. Bjørn Rabjerg (2017) has interpreted the distinction in terms of a distinction between *ontology* (human life, existence, 'world order') and *anthropology* (human nature, the self). Whilst this distinction is to some extent clarifying, it seems to be a misnomer to refer to the wickedness of the self in *anthropological* terms, where this brings with it the implication of human wickedness being an empirical claim about a local or accidental feature of human life. It seems to me that Løgstrup's claim about human wickedness is not an empirical claim, but an a priori one, of some kind. I will return to this issue in §4.

⁷ Cf. '[Professor Sørensen] says I will not get one single person who is not a Christian to agree with [this claim]. No one "save a Christian theologian could ever think of saying something like that." Sørensen invokes the non-Christian, who will certainly find that here I have "risen too high." "They will say something to the effect that our self-assertion and desire to get ahead...do, as a matter of course, have their own justification, but that we must remember not to tread on others too brutally. And of course, most nice people will admit that we are probably more prone to err in favour of self-assertion. But people will not treat these drawbacks as high tragedy, although they will hope that by and large, these aspects will be offset by 'exceedingly' unselfish actions.'" (BED 27-8)

⁸ It is important to note that Løgstrup is not making the absurd claim that life is *wholly* good. Indeed, Løgstrup explicitly notes that loneliness, grief and suffering are just as much signs of life, so to speak, as are the sovereign expressions of life (see ED: §7.3 & M1: §4.3).

⁹ With this assertion, Løgstrup is breaking with the Barthian-inspired *Tidehverv* theological movement with which he was briefly affiliated. Rabjerg characterizes Løgstrup's central disagreement with the *Tidehverv* movement as follows: 'It is well known that Løgstrup was critical of the theological existentialism of his time, and of Kierkegaard. Now, it is important to stress that Løgstrup did indeed

that Løgstrup's puzzling line of thinking here becomes somewhat more intelligible when viewed in light of what, following Daphne Hampson, I will refer to as the dialectic central to Luther's theology.

In the preface to the Wittenberg edition of his works, written just a year before his death, Luther provides an insightful autobiographical *précis* of this dialectic as follows:

I had been overcome with a wonderful and certain desire to understand St Paul in his letter to the Romans, but what had hindered me thus was not any "coldness of the blood" so much as that one phrase in the first chapter: "The righteousness of God is revealed in it." For I hated that phrase "the righteousness of God" which, according to the use and custom of all the doctors, I had been taught to understand philosophically, in the sense of the formal or active righteousness (as they termed it), by which God is righteous, and punishes unrighteous sinners.

Although I lived blamelessly as a monk, I felt that I was a sinner with an uneasy conscience before God; nor was I able to trust that I had pleased him by my satisfaction. I did not love – in fact, I hated – this righteous God who punished sinners, if not with silent blasphemy, then I was certainly angry with God with much grumbling, saying "As if it were not already enough that miserable sinners should be eternally damned through original sin, with all kinds of misfortunes laid upon them by the Old Testament law, and yet God adds sorrow upon sorrow through the gospel, and even brings his wrath and righteousness to bear upon us through it!"

[...]

At last, God being merciful, by meditating day and night on the connection of the words "the righteousness of God is revealing in it, as it is written: the righteous shall live by faith," I began to understand that "righteousness of God" as that by which the righteous lives by the gift of God, namely by faith, and this sentence, "the righteousness of God is revealed," to refer to a passive righteousness, by which a merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "The righteous lives by faith." (Luther, quoted in McGrath 2011: 128-130)

The fundamental issue that is tormenting Luther in this retelling is the question of justification (*iustitia*), that is, how can sinners become justified or righteous

criticize Kierkegaardian theological existentialism, but his dispute concerned the view of human *life* (ontology) – not human *nature* (anthropology). Theological existentialism placed not only *the human being* within the confines of sin, but the whole of existence, life – or *finitude* as Kierkegaard calls it – was placed under the sign of sin. That life is created was understood by Danish existentialists to mean that life is alien to God – finitude is godless – because God is transcendent. This ontological disagreement resulted in Løgstrup's emphasis on the positive valuation of existence; human beings are not first and foremost the subject of God's wrath, but of God's love' (Rabjerg 2017: 201).

in the eyes of God? Or, as Alister McGrath puts it, ‘if *iustitia* means rendering good for good and evil for evil, how can God justify sinful humanity? How can God, being righteous, render good for evil?’ (McGrath 2011: 135). According to the theological custom of Luther’s time, God was viewed as a judge who ‘rendered someone their due’ and, thus, punished sinners and saved the righteous.¹⁰ Yet, since according to Luther’s doctrine of the sin we are *all* sinners and we are sinners *through and through*, it is unclear under what circumstances *any* of us would escape the wrath of God.

Within the theology of the humanist *via moderna*, in which Luther was trained, typical responses to this problem appealed to the notion of ‘covenantal causality.’ On this view, God was seen to have established a covenant or *pactum* with humans whereby so long as humans do *quod in se est* (what lies within us), God will justify us. And, in Luther’s early theology, what doing *quod in se est* meant is the sinner owning up to his sinfulness and crying out to God for help; doing *quod in se est* involves lowering oneself in self-humiliation so as to be led to salvation. In his later theology, however, Luther broke decisively with the soteriology of the *via moderna*. At an existential level, the task of self-humiliation was the source of much *Anfechtung* for Luther, as the quote above indicates: how will we ever know if we have done *quod in se est* and, thus, if we are justified?¹¹ As we shall see in more detail below, a central conviction provoking Luther’s *Anfechtung* here was the thought that the sinner has an irrepressible knack for ‘seeking himself in all things’ and, thus, perverting humility into pride. In turn, this conviction informed the thinking characteristic of Luther’s so-

¹⁰ Interestingly, McGrath (2011) notes that this conception of God could have come about as the result of the difficulties of translating Hebrew in to Latin, where, as a result, ‘the Hebrew notion of divine justice was assimilated to prevailing secular notions of entitlement. The inevitable outcome was the gradual belief that God, when acting righteously, rewarded people with what they were entitled to – in other words, to a covert notion of justification by achievements, merit, or works, rather than the Pauline notion of justification by faith, or the justification of the ungodly’ (137).

¹¹ *Anfechtung* literally means ‘being fought against.’ In Luther’s usage, it is the opposite of faith and, thus, has connotations of insecurity and doubt.

called theological breakthrough, namely, that '[he] no longer believed that humanity is capable of the true humility required in order to receive the gift of grace; rather grace is *required* in order to achieve this true humility in the first place' (McGrath 2011: 173). Thus, as regards the question of justification, the sinner is no longer cast an *active* role as a party to a covenant with God, but is rather now seen to be passive in relation to God's saving gift of grace; there is nothing the sinner can *actively* do to be justified.

Yet, perhaps surprisingly, acknowledging our radical passivity with respect to our justification did not lead Luther back into a state of despondent *Anfechtung*, but rather to joy. To understand why, we must introduce the peculiar dialectic operative in Luther's mature theology:

The formula *simul iustus et peccator* encapsulates the structure of Lutheran thought...the Christian lives by Christ's righteousness, a righteousness which is extrinsic to him. Thus he is, at one and the same time, both a sinner (in himself) but also righteous (in that he lives by God's righteousness)...On the one hand God, for Christ's sake, holds the sinner to be just; he acquits us...Thus we may say that we are indeed to be considered fully just. On the other hand when the human is placed *coram Deo* (before God), faced with God's goodness he must necessarily judge himself a sinner. But again it is not so much that the human is a sinner in himself. It is not that there is nothing good in the human. It is simply that when one considers the nature of God, the human cannot bring anything to God, on account of which God could accept him. In relation to God, he must count himself a sinner. The human thus has a double sense of himself, as both fully just and yet also as a sinner. (Hampson 2004: 24)

In other words, Luther's solution to the problem of justification is to say that under a certain aspect we are justified – our sins forgiven – but under a different aspect we are and will remain sinners: we are simultaneously justified and sinful. According to Hampson, the key to making sense of this dialectically is appreciating the relational nature of Luther's conception of justification.¹² The human stands in an external

¹² Admittedly, on this point, Hampson may be accused of inserting a level of dialectical sophistication into Luther's view that is not textually justifiable. However, as I have already highlighted, Løgstrup's approach to Luther will have been marked decisively by the development of Lutheran theology by the

relation with God, where righteousness is seen not in terms of an intrinsic transformation of the self but rather in terms of God's 'alien righteousness' covering the sinner *extra se*. As McGrath notes, 'Luther uses familiar images such as Boaz covering Ruth with his cloak (Ruth 3.9), or a mother hen covering her chicks with her wing (Luke 13.34), to illustrate how God clothes the sinner with the alien righteousness of Christ' (McGrath 2011: 183).

Importantly, for Luther it is only upon receiving God's alien righteousness in the form of the gifts of grace and faith that we are capable of performing good works, that is, 'external' actions or deeds that fulfil God's law. As Luther puts it in *The Freedom of a Christian*:

Behold, from faith thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbour willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss. For a man does not distinguish between friends and enemies or anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness, but he most freely and most willingly spends himself and all that he has, whether he wastes all on the thankless or whether he gains a reward. (Luther 2007: 2: 43)

In other words, our capacity for works of *agapic* love is wholly dependent on our having received the gifts of grace and faith from God. Luther's mature interpretation of the sentence 'the righteous shall live by faith,' then, can be glossed as the thought that the righteous are those who have passively received, or have been 'clothed in,' the alien righteousness of God in the form of the gift of faith. And only by having received God's alien righteousness is sinful humanity able to perform good works.

Now, what I take this brief *excursus* into Luther's theology to provide is a suggestive interpretive context for understanding Løgstrup's puzzling dual claims

likes of Kierkegaard, Freidrich Gogarten and Rudolf Bultmann and so a dialectical reading of Luther is not inappropriate in the context of a discussion of Løgstrup's philosophy.

that human life or existence contains the possibilities for goodness but that the self is pervasively evil and wicked. Løgstrup's dual claims here look to be isomorphic with the Lutheran doctrine of justification: the self is pervasively wicked and is, as such, incapable of bringing about life's goodness through his or her own self-governing activity. However, human life nonetheless contains the possibilities for goodness, namely, in the form of what Løgstrup will come to call the sovereign expressions of life. On this point it is worth noting that Løgstrup asserts that the sovereign expressions of life are the 'grace of existence' (BED: 69) and that whilst 'there are no limits to our iniquity...there are limits to the devastation it can effect; which limits are evidenced by our inability to prevent the sovereign expressions of life from forcing their way through and realizing themselves' (*ibid.*). In a word, the possibility of good works, that is, of actions expressive of *agapic* love, depends not on the self-governing activity of the agent, but rather on the grace of existence, the sovereign expressions of life, which have the power to 'overmaster' the self's pervasive wickedness.

Despite this apparent isomorphism, there are some obvious differences between Luther's doctrine of justification and Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment, where some of these differences presage some potential difficulties in rendering Løgstrup's position philosophically plausible and coherent. For instance, whereas Luther's doctrine of justification is resolutely theistic, where this allows him to posit an external or 'alien' agent - God - who can justify the self by the bestowing of the gifts of grace and faith, on Løgstrup's purportedly secularly intelligible moral phenomenology no such direct appeal to divine agency is made. Rather, on Løgstrup's view, it might appear that some form of quasi-agency is attributed to life itself, which is said to have 'a spontaneity with an inexplicable power of breaking-through' (M1: 91). The fact that Løgstrup refers to this 'power of breaking-through' as *inexplicable* is telling. Moreover, we might register initial scepticism concerning Løgstrup's

assertions about the imputed wickedness of the human being or the self: in what sense is the human being of the self pervasively wicked and on what grounds does Løgstrup make this claim?

Yet, it is perhaps worth noting here that, quite apart from the Lutheran presuppositions underlying Løgstrup's view, there is something intuitively compelling about Løgstrup's phenomenology here. The phenomena under discussion are phenomena such as trust, love and mercy. And it is natural to suppose, firstly, that these are not the kinds of phenomena that one can simply bring about through a heroic act of the will. Rather, they are all phenomena in relation to which we are passive to a significant degree. For instance, we talk of *falling* in love, where the implication is that love is something *undergone* rather than chosen. Moreover, it is plausible to think that attempts to *try* and be loving, merciful or trusting will have an *ersatz* character just in virtue of the fact that one's efforts will be focused on *doing what one imagines a loving, merciful or trusting person would do* rather than straightforwardly *being* loving, trusting and merciful. We might think, that is, that *learned* spontaneity may lack a certain genuineness or authenticity that belongs to the phenomena with which Løgstrup is dealing.

Nonetheless, clearly much more work needs to be done in order to render Løgstrup's claims here philosophically intelligible and plausible. And the purpose of this chapter is to probe the Lutheran dimension of Løgstrup's thought in search of greater clarity. However, at this stage in my discussion, we can mark an initial and negative definition:

(Def) Human Wickedness = The human being or the self is incapable of bringing him or herself into identity with the sovereign expressions of life through self-governing activity.

We can register one implication of Human Wickedness right away: it is flatly incompatible with the conception of moral agency canvassed as part of MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy. The incompatibility here is stark: on a Thomist-Aristotelian view, the self is part good and part bad; we are created good but we have fallen into sin, and, thus, with the help of God's grace, we are tasked to become better through reflection on and the cultivation of the virtues, both theological and cardinal. By contrast, on a Lutheran view, 'all attempts to become integrated (to come to oneself) on one's own as a self-subsisting entity (for example with the help of God's infused grace) must fail' (Hampson 2004: 12). Rather, for Lutherans 'the [righteous] human is said to live *extra se* (outside himself) by an alien righteousness' (Hampson 2004: 12). And, as I have suggested above, Løgstrup's conception of the sovereign expressions of life as the 'grace of existence' appears to be isomorphic with the Lutheran view on this point. In a word, for a Thomist it is possible to move towards righteousness through one's own moral and spiritual efforts – one can become more loving, more trusting and more merciful through spiritual practice. Conversely, for a Lutheran, we depend entirely on God's gift of grace for our salvation, where Løgstrup seeks to present a secularly intelligible version of this whereby our capacity for performing good works is wholly dependent on our passive receiving of the grace of existence, the sovereign expressions of life. Thus, by re-configuring the sovereign expressions of life as virtues of acknowledged dependence, MacIntyre is forced to discard a central Lutheran dimension of Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment.

It is important to stress at this point that MacIntyre is perfectly entitled to discard Løgstrup's Lutheran presuppositions: he is not attempting to defend Løgstrup's ethical thought, but rather to critically appropriate it for his own philosophical project. And, indeed, having brought the nature of the incompatibility

between MacIntyre's Thomism and, thus, his Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy, and Løgstrup's Lutheran presuppositions to light, we might think that MacIntyre has good reason to discard the Lutheran dimension of Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics. Not least because the foregoing elucidation of the Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's ethical thought seems to have exposed an impending inconsistency internal to Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, where this inconsistency has potentially grave implications for our attempt to provide a positive answer the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics.

Ole Jensen, an early follower of Løgstrup, has captured the potential inconsistency as follows:

If we read [*The Ethical Demand*] with our current knowledge of Løgstrup's view-point, one will immediately think that with trust and love's 'reality' he must have meant the *fulfilled* life expressions of trust and love. But precisely here the ambiguity manifests itself, for if you turn back three pages to p.158 one is astonished by the formulations such as this: 'What we know about love from our own existence...can only be a natural love, to which we have given our own self's selfish form.' What does this mean? Does 'the selfish form' mean that the love is never fulfilled, or that selfishness does not come in until after the fulfilment as the exploitation of it? On p.158, the first is the case. [By contrast] we have...his use of trust at the beginning of the book. Here Løgstrup makes use of trust as an elementary *fact* in our life together, and as we know, he claims that with the power over another person that trust gives us, we immediately stand under the ethical demand to take care of the part of the other person's life...It goes without saying that the whole of this basic argument...would become meaningless, if trust were really not fulfillable...Harmonizing these views is impossible. (Jensen 2017)

In short, the inconsistency Jensen highlights consists in the fact that Løgstrup appears to simultaneously affirm as a fact that phenomena such as trust and love are indeed realized and 'fulfilled' in good works *and* that, given human wickedness, they remain unfulfilled and are, thus, construed by Løgstrup as 'hypostatizations' and 'imaginary entities' (ED: 138).

Plausibly, the apparent inconsistency in Løgstrup's thinking here arises from a premise operative in *The Ethical Demand* to the effect that 'we cannot give [life's

goodness] direct expression' (ED: 19-20); trust and love are not realized *in general*, so to speak, rather they are refracted and given concrete form through our agency. Yet, if we human beings are as pervasively wicked as Løgstrup suggests in *The Ethical Demand*, then as soon as phenomena such as trust and love are given concrete form through our agency they have *ipso facto* become distorted and corrupted by the self's selfishness. So, the Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology go beyond the thought that we are largely passive with respect to the realization of the sovereign expressions of life to the much stronger claim that the passivity with which we receive the sovereign expressions of life is matched by a self-assertive activity that distorts and corrupts the sovereign expressions of life *per force*.

This inconsistency is, of course, grist to the mill of MacIntyre's claim that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is an 'historical residue' of a well-nigh lost framework of moral understanding. To understand why, it is instructive to turn briefly to a central line of argument developed by MacIntyre in *After Virtue*. In his critical discussion of enlightenment moral philosophy, MacIntyre suggests that the Aristotelian framework of moral understanding, from which enlightenment philosophy putatively derived many of its moral concepts, is undergirded by a threefold teleological scheme. Namely,

human-nature-as-it-happens-to-be (human nature in its untutored state) [which] is initially discrepant and discordant with the precepts of ethics and needs to be transformed by the instruction of practical reason and experience into human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-*telos*. (MacIntyre 2007a: 53)

He continues:

Each of the three elements of the scheme – the conception of untutored human nature, the conception of the precepts of rational ethics and the conception of human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-*telos* – requires reference to the other two if its status and function are to be intelligible. (MacIntyre 2007a: 53)

The proponents of enlightenment morality, MacIntyre avers, abandoned a teleological view of human nature, that is, they abandoned ‘any view of man as having an essence which defines his true end’ (MacIntyre 2007a: 55). As a result, they operated with an incomplete and, for that reason, unintelligible two-fold moral scheme: ‘There is on the one hand a certain content of morality: a set of injunctions deprived of their teleological context. There is on the other hand a certain view of untutored-human-nature-as-it-is,’ where these two features of are ‘expressly designed to be discrepant with one another’ (MacIntyre 2007a: 55). What is lacking, according to MacIntyre, is the third feature of the Aristotelian threefold scheme of moral understanding, namely, the sense that the purpose of moral injunctions is to ‘improve and to educate that human nature’ (MacIntyre 2007a: 55) such that it can move towards and realize its true end.

Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology can be seen to fit into MacIntyre’s analysis in an interesting way. *Contra* the epigones of enlightenment morality, Løgstrup appears to have held on to a notion of the human *telos*, *viz.* his theory of the sovereign expressions of life. Indeed, in one place, Løgstrup suggestively states that to realize oneself in the sovereign expressions of life is to become one’s ‘true self’ (BED: 53). Similarly, and in a way that goes beyond many enlightenment philosophers, Løgstrup holds an uncompromising view of untutored-human-nature-as-it-is, *viz.* the wickedness of the self. Yet, for reasons that are rooted in Løgstrup’s Lutheran presuppositions, he is resolutely opposed to any sense that the ‘untutored’ self can, through her own efforts, ‘pass from [her] present state to [her] true end’ (MacIntyre 2007a: 55).

On a MacIntyrean view, then, Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology captures some important fragments of a scheme for understanding morality – for instance, the

regulative ideals of the sovereign expressions of life, and a conception of the human being in his or her untutored state – but these fragments have been cut off from that broader scheme of moral understanding and development and are, thus, rendered incoherent. One way of construing this claim is as the thought that Løgstrup’s phenomenology of ethical comportment depends on the theistic and dogmatic presuppositions of Lutheran theology for its coherence: for instance, the possibility of the realization of the sovereign expressions of life might seem to depend on the activity of an ‘external’ agent, where some notion of divine agency is the most likely candidate to fill this role. However, plausibly, MacIntyre’s criticism runs deeper: Lutheran theology *itself* reflects a fragmented framework for understanding morality, and that Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology is in effect a symptom of a more fundamental ‘epistemological crisis’ that has discredited the Lutheran tradition of moral and theological enquiry.

Notwithstanding issues such as these, in his later work Løgstrup confronts the putative incoherence of his dual claims concerning the ‘reality’ of life’s goodness and the wickedness of the self present in *The Ethical Demand* head on. Indeed, his development of the theory of the sovereign expressions of life was in part motivated by the need to overcome this incoherence. In *Opgør med Kierkegaard* he makes this point explicitly:

The sovereign expression of life is...not concealed by selfishness or stifled by self-enclosedness. The power so to conceal does not lie within our volition. Admittedly, I once thought that this power should be conceded to the latter when in *The Ethical Demand* (in the section “The wickedness of human beings and the goodness of life”) I claimed that natural love and trust are “constructs” with which we operate “speculatively.” Ole Jensen has criticized this claim, and I fully endorse his criticism, which produced clarity. For it will not do, Ole Jensen points out, simply to draw a parallel between the ethical demand and the sovereign expressions of life. To be sure, it is the sovereign expressions of life and their works that are demanded, but the difference between the ethical demand and the sovereign expressions of life “lies precisely in their realization.” The demand is unfulfillable, the sovereign expression of life is not

produced by the will's exerting itself to obey the demand. The sovereign expression of life is indeed realized, but spontaneously, without being demanded. (BED: 69)

Here, Løgstrup unambiguously affirms the 'reality' of the sovereign expressions of life. And he explains the possibility of this reality by clarifying the difference between the manner in which the sovereign expressions of life are 'realized' in contrast to the manner in which the wicked self attempts to fulfil the ethical demand: namely, the self's attempt to fulfil the ethical demand is marked by the exertion of the will; it consists in a deliberate attempt on the part of the self to do what the ethical demand requires. And according to Løgstrup, exerting one's will in an attempt to fulfil the ethical demand results in distortion and corruption because the self's attention is focused on the ethical demand *qua* demand rather than on the needs of the other which gave rise to it. By contrast, the sovereign expressions of life 'precedes the will; its realization takes the will by surprise' (BED: 68). That is, as concerns the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their works, the will is 'overmastered' (BED: 68); it does not 'rely on its own efforts' (BED: 68) but is rather 'pre-empted' (BED: 68) by the sovereign expressions of life.

Plausibly, the kind of thought Løgstrup has in mind here can be seen to parallel Luther's characterization of the will as a 'beast of burden':

If God rides it, it wills and goes whence God wills...If Satan rides, it wills and goes where Satan wills. Nor may it choose to which rider it will run, nor which it will seek. But the riders themselves contend who shall have and hold it. (Erasmus & Luther 2011: 97)

In Løgstrupian terms, the point would be this: the will can be determined by the sovereign expressions of life or the self. If the will is determined by the sovereign expressions of life then it manifests as a capacity to perform good works whereas if it is determined by the self – if it is 'in the power' (ED: 141) of the self, as Løgstrup puts it – it manifests as deliberate effort and exertion, which results in *ersatz* action.

Now, whilst this clarification helps us to avoid the immediate worry concerning the overall coherence of Løgstrup's position, it brings with it its own difficulties. Firstly, it generates a worry over a kind of determinism. For if we follow the analogy with Luther, then it appears that concerning the performance of good works the will is *bound* to or *determined* by the sovereign expressions of life, where this entails that Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment precludes any variant of F², and, thus, potentially any plausible conception of moral agency. Secondly, there is a worry over a possible 'mysticism' that appears to attach to Løgstrup's position as presented here: as we have seen, Løgstrup appears to attribute an 'inexplicable power' (M1: 91) to the sovereign expressions of life, namely, a power by which they can cast the self aside and determine the will. When assertions such as these are read against the background of Lutheran theology, one begins to get the impression that Løgstrup assigns a mysterious quasi-agential status to the sovereign expressions of life *themselves*, where this impression threatens to reduce the plausibility of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology.

Given these worries we might think that MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy remains an attractive option for interpreting Løgstrup, in that it renders Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment compatible with a variant of the standard conception of moral agency. And, arguably, it retains the bulk of Løgstrup's phenomenological insights whilst jettisoning some of the less plausible Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology.

But is this conclusion too quick? Are there alternative ways to construe a plausible conception of moral agency such that it can be seen as compatible with the Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology? In what follows I will consider two strategies that purport to do just this. The first strategy, taken from the work of Patrick Stokes, is another defusing strategy in that it attempts to render

Løgstrup's moral phenomenology compatible with a variant of the standard conception of moral agency. Unlike MacIntyre's Thomist-Aristotelian defusing strategy, however, it aims to capture more of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology and to remain truer to Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics. The second strategy, taken from the work of Bjørn Rabjerg and developed by Stern, is a bullet-biting strategy: it fully embraces the Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, where it proposes a distinctive conception of agency that is compatible with them. I shall discuss each in turn.¹³

3.2. *Via Purgativa: An Alternative Route?*

In this section, I will consider an alternative way of approaching Løgstrup's moral phenomenology that purports to be compatible both with Human Wickedness and with a variant of the standard conception of moral agency. This is the so-called *via purgativa* (the purgative way) interpretation proposed by Patrick Stokes. Like MacIntyre, Stokes thinks that Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life is compatible with a perfectionist conception of moral agency, *viz.* moral agency as character formation. But he suggests that there is 'a radical difference in the

¹³ There are two other strategies that present themselves that I will not consider here. Firstly, there is what we might call a *theological strategy*, namely, a strategy that argues Løgstrup accepts the kind of theistic presuppositions that would render his affirmation of the sovereign expressions of life compatible with his Lutheran conception of the self. On this strategy, space would be made for agency - but in the form of theological voluntarism: The realization of the sovereign expressions of life would depend on the intervention of divine agency. Hans Reinders (2007) can be seen to hold an interpretation of Løgstrup along these lines. Alternatively, on what we might call a *deflationary strategy* we might reject Løgstrup's affirmation that the sovereign expressions of life expressions of life are realities. On this strategy, moral agency could be seen to play a role in Løgstrup's ethics – but only as concerns our always already failed attempts to fulfil the ethical demand. Neither of these strategies are satisfying. The theological strategy runs roughshod over the previously mentioned delicate balance Løgstrup is attempting to strike between theology and philosophy, whereby his aim is to show that a secularly intelligible phenomenology of ethical life *suggests* – but does not presuppose – a religious interpretation. The deflationary strategy, by contrast, reduces Løgstrup's later development of the theory of sovereign expressions of life to speculation and hypostatization. And this reduction, it seems to me, is too high a price to pay for very little gain.

directionality of agent formation between MacIntyre and Løgstrup' (Stokes 2017: 289).

Stokes articulates the difference as follows:

[F]or Løgstrup, fundamental phenomena of moral life point to a diametrically opposed form of perfectionism [to MacIntyre's], one in which the agent does not so much acquire virtue as become divested of positive evil that impedes the operation of a good that ultimately comes from outside the agent. For MacIntyre, spontaneous goodness can only be an outcome of moral education; for Løgstrup, the road to spontaneous goodness could only run in the opposite direction. (Stokes 2017: 289-90)

In other words, whilst for MacIntyre the effortless spontaneity that attaches to the realization of the sovereign expressions of life in moral action can only be intelligible as spontaneity *informed* by moral reflection and reasoning; ethical spontaneity is *learned* spontaneity, Løgstrup views moral reflection as 'inimical to properly moral motivation' (Stokes 2016: 146). Indeed, one might say that the moral value of spontaneity, on Løgstrup's view, lies precisely in the fact that it is *unformed*; that it is primitive and particularistic in the sense that 'the sovereign expression of life draws its content from the specific situation and the relation to the other' (BED: 53) and not from a set of engrained principles or moral norms.

In light of this difference, Stokes' raises what he calls 'the problem of spontaneous goodness' in relation to Løgstrup's ethics. Namely, 'How can we *try* to be spontaneous? Surely the very attempt would be self-defeating?' (Stokes 2017: 148). That is to say, if the sovereign expressions of life can only be realized through a primitive 'reaction' to the other and their situation, how can we *qua* moral agents improve the quality of our reactions so that they align more readily with the sovereign expressions of life? Will all such attempts be necessarily self-defeating, where this again casts doubt on the compatibility of Løgstrup's theory of the expressions of life with a conception of moral agency?

Stokes' response is to re-configure the perfectionist notion of character formation in terms of what, echoing Simone Weil, we might refer to as character *deformation* or *decreation*.¹⁴ On this conception, the task set for the agent is not that of building oneself up, but of breaking oneself down. Taking inspiration from the notion of the *via purgativa* found in the work of mystical medieval theologians such as Johannes Tauler and Meister Eckhart, Stokes, thus, proposes a model of character deformation whereby the agent, through practices of self-renunciation and self-annihilation, becomes 'a mirror or conduit for the ontological good' (Stokes 2016: 155). Putting the point in Løgstrupian terms, Stokes argues that

we can't exactly *choose* to realize a sovereign expression of life, for this would already be excessively reflective, nor cultivate these expressions within ourselves directly. Does this mean we cannot become more trusting, more sincere, more spontaneously merciful? No, for we can at least become aware of habitual patterns of thought, beliefs and motivations that generate distrust, insincerity and mercilessness, and work to remove these from our cognitive and dispositional repertoire. (Stokes 2016: 155-6)¹⁵

It is noteworthy that this model of moral agency as self-purgation appears to accord with Løgstrup's comments that

To decide to show trust and mercifulness is to decide to surrender oneself to trust or mercy. Trust and mercifulness must already be there as life-possibilities. If they are not, no decision can elicit them. So the expression "to decide to show trust or mercifulness" is somewhat inadequate, but it is not incorrect because the decision consists in the renunciation of attitudes or movements of thought and feeling that are incompatible with trust and mercifulness – such as, for example, aloofness, guardedness, reticence, glibness, vengefulness, arrogance. The spontaneity accruing to the decision springs from the spontaneous expression of life – trust, mercifulness, sincerity and so forth – to which the person decides to give free rein. (BED: 79-80)

¹⁴ Cf. Weil (2002): 'Decreation: to make something created pass into the uncreated [...] He emptied himself of his divinity. We should empty ourselves of the false divinity with which we were born. Once we have understood we are nothing, the object of all our efforts is to become nothing. It is for this that we suffer with resignation, *it is for this that we act*, it is for this that we pray. May God grant me to become nothing. In so far as I become nothing, God loves himself through me' (33-4).

¹⁵ The original text reads '...we can at least become aware of habitual patterns of thought, beliefs and motivations that generate distrust, *sincerity and mercy...*', however, I take the highlighted words to be a mistake and have altered them to *insincerity* and *mercilessness* in the quote.

That is, whilst, given our pervasive wickedness, we cannot actively bring about trust and mercifulness through virtuous striving or exertions of the will, we can engage in practices of self-renunciation whereby we work to remove those aspects of our ‘cognitive and dispositional repertoire’ which are incompatible with the sovereign expressions of life.

Prima facie, then, Stokes’ notion of the *via purgativa* appears to provide a way to accommodate a mode of moral agency within Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology that is compatible with Løgstrup’s commitment to Human Wickedness: the realization of the sovereign expressions of life is possible for those agents who have engaged in the work of self-purgation and have, thus, become ‘conduits’ for the sovereign expressions of life. On this view, the wickedness of the self and its inability to improve its nature is taken in its full seriousness. But it is seen to be compatible with a mode of agency aimed at owning up to and purging oneself of one’s wickedness. As such, Stokes provides a neat strategy for answering the question of moral agency for Løgstrup’s ethics, but in a way that looks compatible with Løgstrup’s commitment to Human Wickedness, for now we can see that there is a role for moral agency in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life – albeit a purely negative one. Yet, while I think Stokes’ suggestion here helps to move the debate forward, I have some reservations about any direct application of the *via purgativa* to Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology, one philosophical and one interpretive.

The philosophical reservation pertains to the worry over mysticism outlined above. Indeed, the appeal to the notion of *via purgativa* can be seen to sharpen and exacerbate the worry over mysticism in Løgstrup’s ethics. For what is essential to the thought of the mystical theologians such as Meister Eckhart, on whom Stokes draws

in developing his argument is a notion of a divine agency that can work through the purged self. As Eckhart puts it:

When we go out of ourselves through obedience and strip ourselves of what is ours, then God must enter into us; for when someone wills nothing for themselves, then God must will on their behalf just as he does for himself. (Eckhart 1994: 3)

In a word, the *via purgativa* – at last from Eckhart’s perspective - relies on the thought that the self’s attempts at self-annihilation will be matched by God’s divine agency which ‘enters into’ the space the self has opened up through its purgative activities. By implication, then, if the *via purgativa* works by removing the impediments to the sovereign expressions of life from our cognitive and dispositional repertoire and if, on Løgstrup’s Lutheran view, the self *as such* is an impediment to the sovereign expressions of life because the self is *pervasively* wicked, then it appears to follow that the sovereign expressions of life could only be realized if the self *qua* agent has been annihilated *in toto*. But then one wonders, if the self *qua* agent has been annihilated *in toto*, *how* are the sovereign expressions of life realized or, rather, *what* or *who* is supposed to realize them? Short of including theistic presuppositions in our interpretation of Løgstrup, we appear to be left with the puzzling conclusion that the sovereign expressions of life somehow realize themselves in action - without reference to an agent.

Together with this philosophical worry, I have a further interpretive reservation. Namely, that whilst the *via purgativa* appears to accommodate the claim that we cannot through our own efforts ameliorate our pervasively wicked natures, it remains incompatible with the specific *Lutheran* sense in which that wickedness manifests. Recall here my discussion of Luther’s theology in 3.1. There I noted that Luther ultimately rejected the view that we can work towards our own righteousness through practices of self-humiliation. One way to understand why Luther rejected

this view is to appreciate one central dimension of his conception of human sinfulness, namely, sin as *incurvatus in se* (incurvedness or inturndness). As Luther describes it in his *Lectures on Romans*

[D]ue to original sin, our nature is so curved in upon itself at its deepest levels that it not only bends the best gifts of God toward itself in order to enjoy them (as the moralists and hypocrites make evident), nay, rather, “uses” God in order to obtain them, but does not even know that, in this wicked twisted crooked way, it seeks everything, including God, only for itself. (Luther 1961: 159)

The key idea here is that, for Luther, the nature of human sinfulness consists, in part, in a human proclivity to seek everything only for ourselves; to make everything – even God’s gifts – about ‘me.’ This extends to practices of self-humiliation. Hence, as I noted above, according to Luther all attempts by sinful humanity at self-humiliation will be irrepressibly recuperated back into the self’s selfishness and thus transfigured into a perverse sort of pride rather than proper humility.¹⁶

An important question, then, is the following. Does Løgstrup follow Luther in holding human sinfulness to render hopeless even our attempts at self-humiliation? If

¹⁶ By way of a contemporary philosophical comparison, it is noteworthy that something like this idea has been captured by Iris Murdoch in her memorable description of the ‘fat relentless ego’ which ‘relentlessly looks after itself’ (Murdoch 1997: 342; 364). As Maria Antonaccio writes in her study of Murdoch, ‘the relentlessly “machine-like” nature of the psyche makes self-scrutiny dangerous because the psyche is in effect “programmed” to look after itself...So relentless is the psychic machinery in Murdoch’s view that even a negative judgement of oneself may perpetuate a consoling self-absorption’ (Antonaccio 2000: 133). As with Murdoch, Luther holds that human sinfulness is so pervasive that it effects even the self’s capacities for self-humiliation. It is perhaps also worth noting in this context that, in *Norm and Spontaneity*, Løgstrup refers approvingly to aphorism 133 in *Dawn*, where Nietzsche attempts to expose what he sees as the complexly self-interested motives underlying purportedly compassionate or selfless actions. The aphorism in question runs as follows: ‘One ought indeed to ponder the question seriously: why do we jump in after someone who has fallen into water right in front of us even though we are not drawn to that person? [...] [W]e never do anything of this sort from one motive; as surely as we wish to free ourselves of suffering through such an act, we are, with the same act, just as surely surrendering to *an impulse for pleasure* – pleasure arises in viewing a contrast to our own situation, in the very idea of being able to help if only we do desired, in the thought of praise and gratitude were we to help, in the very activity of helping insofar as the act is successful and succeeds step by step, thus allowing the performer to delight in himself, but especially in the sensation that our action has put an end to an injustice that arouses our indignation (already the release of indignation in itself is invigorating)’ (Nietzsche (1997)).

so, then the availability of the *via purgativa* as a possible way of resolving the problem from human wickedness will be cast into further doubt. For, plausibly, on a Lutheran view, even our attempts at self-annihilation will ultimately ensnare us yet further in our sinfulness rather than freeing us from it. This question, moreover, is not of merely local interest: we have reason to further investigate Løgstrup's commitment to Human Wickedness just in virtue of the fact that, baldly stated, it might seem to strain credibility. Is the self really as selfish and wicked as Løgstrup seems to think? We might object, as did N. H. Sørensen, that Løgstrup is simply asserting a piece of Christian dogma here, whilst turning a blind eye to the richness and complexity of human existence. It is important, then, to get a full picture of Løgstrup's thinking about human wickedness in view. Here I will focus on Løgstrup's discussion of the wickedness of the self in *The Ethical Demand*, while referring to his later works where necessary.

In *The Ethical Demand*, Løgstrup associates human wickedness with selfishness [*selvisheds*]. As we have seen, he claims that 'the self brings everything under the power of its selfishness' (ED: 141), where he further qualifies this thought in his later writings variously in terms of 'self-centredness' (BED: 33) and 'self-enclosedness' (BED: 68). Far from presenting this claim as a bare assertion, however, throughout his writings Løgstrup pays much phenomenological attention to the nature of selfishness and the way it manifests in ethical life. In one of his most sustained discussions of this subject in *The Ethical Demand*, Løgstrup presents a series of phenomenological accounts of what he takes to be three dominant ways in which selfishness manifests itself, namely, as 'dispassionate selfishness' [*Ulidenskabelige selvished*], 'passionate selfishness' [*Lidenskabelige selvished*] and 'sentimentality' [*Sentimentaliteten*]. I shall take each in turn.

‘Dispassionate selfishness,’ Løgstrup writes, ‘means that in whatever a person does and in whatever happens to him or her he or she has him or herself in mind, though for no objective reason’ (ED: 132). Dispassionate selfishness captures a human proclivity for ‘self-righteousness’ that consists in the ‘vain desire to be worshipped’ and in which ‘the other person exists only to provide me with my meritoriousness; beyond that he or she is of no interest to me’ (ED: 133). Despite what this rather hyperbolic description may suggest, dispassionate selfishness is not confined to extravagant cases of Donald Trump-like megalomania. Rather it is supposed to describe something very mundane and basic: it describes a delusional yet, for Løgstrup, pervasive and unselfconscious human tendency to view ourselves as standing at the centre of the world, where this might manifest in a vague paranoia that the world is against us or, conversely, in a self-aggrandizing belief in one’s own importance to others. Dispassionate selfishness is ‘dull and truncated’ and the dispassionately selfish person is ‘opaque to him or herself’ (ED: 132). In his later works, this sense of selfishness can be seen to attach most readily to his descriptions of a tendency for ‘self-righteousness’ (BED: 69) by which we ‘corrupt the sovereign expression of life by...crediting ourselves with what the sovereign expression of life achieves and thus, flattering our will, we deprive the former of its sovereignty’ (*ibid*). It is a simple and spiritless self-*centredness*.

Passionate selfishness, by contrast, refers to a selfishness that is self-conscious. That is, it is a selfishness that is aware of its ‘inconsiderateness,’ as Løgstrup puts it. This self-consciousness, however, is not therapeutic: rather, Løgstrup avers that it ‘either fails to face up to its inconsiderateness and looks in all other directions in the hope of finding excuses and ameliorating circumstances, or else it runs amuck and in its passion loses control of itself’ (ED: 133). I think what Løgstrup has in mind here is well illustrated in David Foster Wallace’s short story ‘Good Old Neon.’ The story

takes the form of a confessional in which the protagonist has become aware that ‘my [meaning: his] whole life I’ve been a fraud. I’m not exaggerating. Pretty much all I’ve ever done all the time is try to create a certain impression of me in other people. Mostly to be liked or admired’ (Wallace 2004: 141). As the story progresses, the narrator recounts his various (vain) attempts to reach out for help in combating his feeling of fraudulence. For instance, going to an analyst:

By that time I already knew I was a fraud. I knew what my problem was. I just couldn’t seem to stop. I remember I spent maybe the first twenty times or so in analysis acting all open and candid but in reality sort of fencing with him or leading him around by the nose, basically showing him that I wasn’t just another one of those patients who stumbled in with no clue what their real problem was or who were totally out of touch with the truth about themselves. When you come down to it, I was trying to show him that I was at least as smart as he was and that there wasn’t much of anything he was going to see about me that I hadn’t already seen and figured out. And yet I wanted help and really was there to try to get help. (Wallace 2004: 143)

The issue here is that no matter how counter-productive or inhibiting it may be, the protagonist is aware that he can’t help but assert himself in relation to his analyst and try to prove himself to be the master and sovereign of his own life – in this case by proving himself to have a level of self-knowledge that far exceeds whatever the analyst could muster. In fact, his relation to his analyst is reduced to an occasion for the protagonist to show off his intellectual depth – all the while his gnawing sense of fraudulence is left untouched.

Notice the vicious circle the protagonist finds himself in: he is disturbed by his pervasive feeling of fraudulence, but his active attempts to address that feeling by going to analysis and going to meditation classes (where he suffers a similar fate) end up ensnaring him yet further in his fraudulence.¹⁷ This illustrates well how, to

¹⁷ Cf. ‘Right from the first class meeting, even though the small, brown instructor had told us to shoot for only ten minutes of stillness at the outset because most Westerners’ minds could not maintain more than a few minutes of stillness and mindful concentration without feeling so restless and ill at ease that they couldn’t stand it, I always remained absolutely still and focused on breathing my prana with the lower diaphragm longer than any of them, sometimes for up to thirty minutes, even though

someone in the thrall of passionate selfishness, the task of extricating themselves from it by their own efforts can seem futile. Notice also that there is clear overlap here with Luther's *Anfechtung* concerning the possibility of self-humiliation: self-assertion and self-righteousness tend to beget self-assertion and self-righteousness, so that attempts at self-effacement – attempts to escape from self-occupation – from the standpoint of self-assertion and self-righteousness are often self-defeating.¹⁸

A similar structure can be found in what Løgstrup refers to as 'sentimentality,' where

It is not that the other person is not a vital part of the sentimental person's life. It is rather that the sentimental person is not content to live in that dependence. Instead he or she draws it into him or herself, introverting it in order to be able to observe it. Instead of just depending he or she seeks to taste the dependence. He or she wants to feel sentimental happiness at knowing that his or her own vital happiness is dependent on the other person's vital happiness. (ED: 133)

In contrast to the assertive self-righteousness characteristic of dispassionate selfishness and the self-stultifying *Anfechtung* of passionate selfishness, sentimentality reposes in its own weakness, finding some perverse emotional pleasure in being so dependent. In a way analogous to dispassionate selfishness, however, the other on

my knees and lower back were on fire and I had what felt like swarms of insects crawling all over my arms and shooting out the top of my head – and Master Gurpreet, although he kept his facial expression inscrutable, gave me a deep and seemingly respectful bow and said that I sat almost like a living statue of mindful repose, and that he was impressed. The problem was that we were also supposed to continue practicing our meditation on our own at home between classes, and when I tried to do it alone I couldn't seem to sit still and follow my breath for more than even a few minutes before I felt like crawling out of my skin and had to stop. I could only sit and appear quiet and mindful and withstand the unbelievably restless and horrible feelings when all of us were doing it together in the class – meaning only when there were other people to make an impression on.' (Wallace 2004: 159)

¹⁸ Luther's own experience of monastic life provides another vivid example of this vicious circularity. As Rabjerg reports: 'According to [Luther], monasticism is institutionalized selfishness, it is *pharisaic*, because monastic life is centred on the attempt to secure oneself and one's relationship to God. One of Løgstrup's existentialist contemporaries, who specialized in Luther, expresses it like this: 'He [Luther] knows that he must seek and serve God and fellow man, but he experiences that he is inescapably turned inward on himself, so that he steals any action – even the one appearing to be the most unselfish – for himself, seeks himself in everything, undertakes no action that is not an attempt at securing himself, saving himself, or earning merit, so that he is protected by God'' (Rabjerg 2017: 201).

whom the sentimental person is dependent is essentially occluded, in that the sentimental person ‘introverts’ their dependency.

Consider another illustration provided by David Foster Wallace, this time from his aptly named *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*:

For she was frightened, the depressed person confessed to the trusted and convalescing friend, profoundly, unprecedentedly frightened by what she was beginning to feel she was seeing and learning and getting in touch with about herself in the grieving process following the sudden death of a therapist who for nearly four years had been the depressed person’s closest and most trusted confidante and source of support and affirmation and – with no offence in any way intended to any members of her Support System – her very best friend in the world. Because what she had discovered, the depressed person confided long-distance, when she took her important daily Quiet Time now, during the grieving process, and got quiet and centred and looked deep within, was that she could neither feel nor identify any real feelings within herself for the therapist, i.e. for the therapist as a person, a person who had died, a person who only somebody in truly stupefying levels of emotional agony and isolation and despair which were comparable to or perhaps – though it was only on a “head” or purely abstract intellectual level that she seemed to be able even to entertain this possibility, the depressed person confessed over the headset telephone – even exceeded the depressed person’s own. The depressed person shared that the most frightening implication of this (i.e., of the fact that, even when she centred and looked deep within herself, she felt she could locate no real feelings for the therapist as an autonomously valid human being) appeared to be that all her agonized pain and despair since the therapist’s suicide had in fact been all and only for *herself*, i.e. of *her* loss, *her* abandonment, *her* grief, *her* trauma and pain and primal affective survival. And, the depressed person shared that she was taking the additional risk of revealing, even more frightening, that this shatteringly terrifying set of realizations, instead now of awakening in her any feelings of compassion, empathy, and other-directed grief for the therapist as a person, had – and here the depressed person waited patiently for an episode of retching in the especially available trusted friend to pass so that she could take the risk of sharing this with her – that these shatteringly frightening realizations had seemed, terrifyingly, merely to have brought up and created still more and further feelings in the depressed person about *herself*. (Wallace 2011: 56-7)

The central realization tormenting the depressed person is her inability to *genuinely* care about others *for their own sake* rather than in terms of herself and her own needs. And *this very realization* traps her yet further in her encircling and introverted self-concern. Despite her acute awareness of her own imprisonment in herself, she is unable to change herself on the basis of that awareness. And in fact this

realization exacerbates and nurses her obsessive self-concern rather than releasing her from it.¹⁹

We can draw two important conclusions from the foregoing discussion. Firstly, despite their differences, the unifying core common to all of these manifestations of selfishness is that they are *self-enclosing*; they occlude the Immediacy of one's relations with other and turn the self in on itself in a manner comparable with Luther's definition of sin as *incurvatus in se*. In other words, Løgstrup's claim concerning human wickedness consists in the thought that the self-governing activity of attempting to bring oneself into identity with the sovereign expressions of life in the performance of one's actions involves thinking about one's relation to the sovereign expressions of life or, more generally, to one's goodness. And as soon as one becomes concerned with the one's relation to goodness, the Immediacy definitive of the sovereign expressions of life has been lost. One way in which self-enclosedness manifests, as *per* dispassionate selfishness, is as a concern for one's moral standing in relation to the other; it is a desire to be thought of as a good person. Another way in which it manifests, as *per* passionate selfishness, is as a gnawing awareness that one's putatively other-regarding actions are incessantly accompanied by a concern for one's moral standing in relation to the other, where this then generates a further level of self-concern but this time in terms of a self-defeating will to rid oneself of one's self-concern. Yet another way in which self-enclosedness manifests is as introverted sentimentality, whereby in acknowledging one's selfishness as a weakness, one comes

¹⁹ These latter two senses of selfishness, passionate selfishness and sentimentality, are fleshed out in Løgstrup's later writings in terms of what he calls 'obsessive' or 'encircling' phenomena such as offence, jealousy, and envy (BED: 51). According to Løgstrup, these phenomena, in contrast to dispassionate selfishness, 'spring from powerlessness' (BED: 52) and 'pursue their own obsessive course;' 'they are fixations, whose paltry emotionality consists in the self's forcing them to revolve around him' (*ibid*).

to, as it were, love one's weakness; one lets oneself be defined and consumed by one's weakness thus cutting oneself off further from the outside world.

Secondly, given that Løgstrup's phenomenology of human wickedness appears to constitute a fairly transparent attempt to render the Lutheran doctrine of sin (as a 'basic proneness toward evil that determines man's whole being' (Pauck 1961: xliii)) secularly intelligible, we can plausibly infer that Løgstrup considers Human Wickedness to be a fundamental tendency *built in* to the structure of self-regulating, self-governing activity. That is, the forms of self-enclosedness Løgstrup describes are not meant to represent just some heap of random phenomena that the author happened to find interesting or important about human experience, which can be removed from the self's cognitive and dispositional repertoire by a fiat of the will, as Stokes' analysis suggests. Rather, they reflect an attempt to uncover or disclose fundamental existential features of the self.

In this regard, and to anticipate a central line of argument in §4, it is noteworthy how seamlessly Løgstrup's various characterizations of human wickedness map on the forms of despair (Kierkegaard's definition of sin) discussed by Kierkegaard in *The Sickness unto Death*: dispassionate selfishness is comparable with what Kierkegaard calls 'despair that is ignorant of having a self' (spiritlessness), passionate selfishness is similar to the 'despair to will to be oneself' (defiance) and sentimentality reflects what Kierkegaard calls 'despair not to will to be oneself (inclosing reserve)' (See Kierkegaard 1983: pp. 42-7, pp. 67-8 and 61, respectively). I will explore the Kierkegaardian themes present in Løgstrup's ethics in more detail in the next chapter. But it is worth noting in anticipation of that discussion that for Kierkegaard the forms of despair are not epiphenomenal but rather represent a structural tendency of the self. And, as I shall suggest, Løgstrup can be seen to follow Kierkegaard in this estimation.

Given these clarifications, we can enrich our definition of Human Wickedness as follows:

(Def) Self-Enclosedness = Human Wickedness remains true because of a structural tendency of the self to turn in on itself and, thus, cut itself off from Immediacy.

To wit, if Human Wickedness holds that the self is incapable of bringing itself into identity with the sovereign expressions of life through self-governing activity because of a structural tendency built in to it that undermines Immediacy in its very performance we are, thus, returned to Stokes' problem of spontaneous goodness. But now we have the added complication that, for Løgstrup, even one's attempts to expunge oneself of the perceived impediments to the realization of spontaneous goodness that attach to one's nature are complicit in sustaining the very impediments that they aim to expunge. For example, it is plausible to think that self-conscious attempts to try to be less *dis*-trustful are, for Løgstrup, performatively self-undermining in just the same way that self-conscious attempts to be *more* trustful are, namely, in that 'the notion of trust is logically tied up with the fact that our trust will implicitly be called into question once we start *talking* [or thinking] about it' (Lagerspetz 1998: 32). Naturally, Løgstrup's Self-Enclosedness claim is disputable. My aim here has not been to fully defend Løgstrup's phenomenology of human wickedness, but rather to explicate it.

However, as concerns questions of moral agency, an important upshot of this discussion of Løgstrup's way of thinking about human wickedness is that it looks to be incompatible with the kind of purgative work appealed to by Stokes in his solution to the problem of spontaneous goodness. In a way that parallels Luther's notion of *incurvatus in se*, on Løgstrup's view, human wickedness is apt to re-assert itself even in one's attempts to rid oneself of one's wickedness through practices of self-purgation

where such practices tend to ensnare oneself further in one's self-obsessiveness and, thus, intensify it rather than purging it.

Furthermore, what this discussion has helped bring in to view is a central issue concerning the attempt to provide a positive response to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics. Namely, how can the self be considered as an agent capable of performing the good works called forth by the sovereign expressions of life? If it is concluded that, on Løgstrup's view, the self must be set aside in order for the sovereign expressions of life to realize themselves, then Løgstrup's position appears to court the worry over mysticism. But, conversely, it appears that any agential role granted to the self with respect to the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works necessarily transgresses Human Wickedness. Can this pending dilemma be resolved?

3.3. The Split-Self

Let us take stock. So far we have established that the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works constitutively involves Immediacy (§2), where there is a question as to how – and indeed whether – Immediacy is compatible with a plausible conception of moral agency. This question is compounded by Løgstrup's commitment to Human Wickedness as Self-Enclosedness, according to which the self *qua* agent is seen to be *incapable* of playing an active role in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life (Human Wickedness) due to a structural tendency built in to self-governing activity which cuts the self off from Immediacy (Self-Enclosedness). Given the importance of the notion of self-governing activity to standard conception of moral agency it, thus, seems as if Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment is likely to be incompatible with a plausible conception of moral agency. I have considered various strategies for resisting this

conclusion, yet none of these strategies have met the twin criteria of philosophical and exegetical plausibility.

In the literature, however, there is a further strategy for interpreting Løgstrup's moral phenomenology in such a way as to be compatible with a conception of moral agency, namely, the 'split-self' view, first outlined by Bjørn Rabjerg and developed in relation to the question of agency by Robert Stern. In contrast to the other strategies considered, the split-self view is a *bullet-biting* strategy rather than a defusing strategy. Instead of trying to amend or appropriate Løgstrup's moral phenomenology in a way that makes it compatible with a variant of the standard view of moral agency, where this involves weakening Løgstrup's commitments to Immediacy and Human Wickedness, the split-self view embraces Løgstrup's commitments to Immediacy and Human Wickedness, arguing that these commitments are compatible with a mode of moral agency – but one which departs substantially from the standard view.

In his forthcoming monograph, Stern has framed the problem of finding a mode of moral agency compatible with Løgstrup's commitment to Human Wickedness in terms of an inconsistent triad:

[I]f the will is bound by the self's inherent selfishness which is what makes us wicked, and if good acts can therefore only be performed when the self is no longer involved, how can such acts be attributed to the self as an agent, and if they cannot, how can they be acts at all? We seem to have an inconsistent triad:

1. Actions require a self
2. Good actions require a good self
3. The self is inherently evil

Given Løgstrup's Lutheran conception of (3), it would appear that he must end up denying either (1) or (2), or else concluding that there are no good actions. (Stern: forthcoming).

In other words, the problem framing Stern's discussion of the split-self view is the following. How can Løgstrup's affirmation of the reality of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works ever be compatible with Løgstrup's commitment to Human Wickedness? *Prima facie* it seems that in order for Løgstrup's affirmation of the reality of the sovereign expressions of life to be coherent he must posit an agent, where the self looks to be the most likely candidate to fill this role. But given Løgstrup's Lutheran conception of the self, this option appears to be unavailable.

In attempting to resolve the inconsistent triad, Stern appeals to Bjørn Rabjerg's split-self reading of Løgstrup. On Rabjerg's view

Løgstrup operates with a split self, between what we could call respectively an *original spontaneous self* and a *reflective, inturned self*. When we are left to ourselves, we are in the power of our inturnedness. In reflection we are caught up with ourselves, and in this way our circling around ourselves prevents us from being ourselves. But when the expression of life seizes us, we are opened up to the outside world and fellow human beings, so the sovereign expressions of life provides an escape from our self-encircling self. The sovereignty of the expression of life creates the possibility of realizing the original self that it otherwise obscured by self-absorption and inturnedness. (Rabjerg 2014: 130).

Here, Rabjerg is essentially challenging the second premise of the inconsistent triad; it is not the case for Løgstrup – at least from the perspective of his later writing – that the self is *inherently* wicked in the sense that 'the self brings *everything* under the power of its selfishness' (ED: 141, my emphasis). But the claim is rather that, when 'left to ourselves' our tendency is to turn inwards in self-reflection. However, when we are 'seized' by sovereign expressions of life our inturnedness and selfishness can be 'overmastered,' where this then allows for the possibility that an 'original spontaneous self' – a self seized by the sovereign expressions of life – can perform good works.

At first glance, the split-self view may seem to involve a *non sequitur* in its positing of an ‘original spontaneous self,’ where this seems to simply run roughshod over Løgstrup’s Lutheran conception of the self. Rabjerg’s positing of an original spontaneous self, however, is in fact well founded in Løgstrup’s later texts, where Løgstrup appears to nuance his conception of the self so as to allow for a form of selfhood capable of performing good works. In *Opgør med Kierkegaard*, for example, Løgstrup writes that ‘to say that the expressions of life are sovereign is to say that in them, the human person is – ipso facto – himself’ (BED: 53) and that ‘a person comes his true [*eigentliche*] self, and concretely so, by realizing himself in the sovereign expressions of life and identifying himself with them’ (BED: 54). On Rabjerg’s view what these comments imply is that the self *is* capable of performing good works and thus performing the role of an agent with respect to the realization of the sovereign expressions of life, but for it to be compatible with Human Wickedness the realization of the self *qua* agent capable of performing good works is only possible when the sovereign expressions of life ‘overwhelm our self-enclosedness’ (BED: 68).

Stern has taken up and developed Rabjerg’s split-self reading of Løgstrup more explicitly with regard to questions of agency. Citing Løgstrup’s student notebooks, Stern suggests the following interpretation:

‘[F]reedom is given to us by our fellow men’ insofar as other people free us from our self-absorption and the centripetal power it exerts upon us, thus transforming us from being wicked to being good in a way that we could not achieve on our own. To this extent, ‘the self brings everything in the power of selfishness’, as *left to itself*; this selfishness cannot be overcome. However, in being exposed to the other person we are precisely drawn out of ourselves in a manner we do not control, but *once we are* we are thereby transformed into agents who are capable of acting for the sake of the other in a way that was not possible previously; we can thus be treated as agents who bring about the good, even though this agency is only made possible by forces beyond our control. Thus, the self is not inherently wicked in the sense that it must be controlled by an other if it is to do good, as this would threaten the idea that such actions can be attributed to it as an agent; rather, it is inherently wicked because it cannot escape from this wickedness on its own, but once it is hereby

free to do good, then it acts on its own behalf, not under the control of another.
(Stern: forthcoming)

On Stern's interpretation, there are two constraining conditions that must be observed in presenting a conception of moral agency compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. Firstly, given Løgstrup's Lutheran conception of the self, any sense that the inturned self can be seen to be taking 'initiative' or playing an active role with respect to the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works must be rejected. Yet, equally, Stern accepts that in order for the split-self view to amount to a conception of *moral agency*, it cannot be the case that the spontaneous self is taken over and *controlled* by the other; the agent must be in some respect *free*. In order to harmonize these requirements Stern holds that the possibility for the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works arises out of our ethical encounter with the other: the ethical encounter with the other frees us to become moral agents and it does this because the presence of the other draws our attention away from ourselves, so that our capacity to act spontaneously is no longer impeded by self-enclosing reflection. In this respect, the split-self view can be seen to correspond roughly to the Lutheran view of justification in which the sinner is justified *extra se* and is, thus, made capable of performing good works in the sense that, for Stern's Løgstrup, it is in virtue of the *other* that we are 'justified,' so to speak, and are thus freed to perform good works.²⁰

Stern likens the conception of agency he has in view here with Iris Murdoch's notion of 'attention,' as evocatively illustrated in the following passage from *The Sovereignty of the Good*:

²⁰ It is worth noting that Stern's interpretation of Løgstrup appears to have changed considerably between his article discussed in §§1-2, where he sees an underlying compatibility between Løgstrup's moral phenomenology and a Kantian conception of moral agency, and his forthcoming monograph, where he is less sanguine about the possibility of a rapprochement between the two thinkers.

I am looking out of my window in an anxious and resentful state of mind, oblivious of my surroundings, brooding perhaps on some damage done to my prestige. Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but the kestrel. And when I return to thinking of the other matter it seems less important. (Murdoch 1997: 369)

In essence, the thought here is that by virtue of something completely exterior to the intuned self, the self and its world can be transformed; a new aspect can dawn, a moral vision can crystallize. And it is from out of this new way of seeing the world and the other that new possibilities for agency are opened up that were previously occluded or distorted. It is important to stress that the split-self view overcomes the worry over mysticism for Løgstrup's ethics by positing the *other* as the external agent with the capacity to free the self of its self-enclosedness thereby making the true self *qua* agent free to perform the good works called forth by the sovereign expressions of life.

Rabjerg's and Stern's development of the split-self view, then, appears to provide a way of accommodating a form of moral agency as part of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology without having to jettison the Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics. But is it plausible? Whilst I believe that the split-self view, in appreciating the later Løgstrup's more nuanced conception of the self, has made an important step forwards in answering the question of moral agency, in what follows I shall register three reservations I have with the split-self view as it stands. The first two reservations stem from ambiguities internal to the split-self view concerning the relations between the self, the other and the sovereign expressions of life. The third reservation, which follows from the first two by implication, concerns whether, viewed externally, the split-self view constitutes a plausible and satisfying conception of moral agency.

One way of explicating my first reservation is with reference to the parable of the Good Samaritan discussed in chapter one. In the parable, Jesus speaks of a priest and a Levite who passed the injured traveller by before the Samaritan mercifully came to his aid. On the split-self interpretation under consideration here, the Good Samaritan's merciful actions would likely be explained in terms of his being drawn out of his self-enclosedness by the injured traveller. But, one wonders, what of the priest and the Levite? Why were they not drawn in a similar manner? One response might be to say that it is ultimately a matter of contingency as to whether one is drawn out of one's self-enclosedness by the other or not. Yet, the worry that attends this kind of response is that it leaves the nature of the transition from the intuned self to the true self as a *mystery*: it is just something that happens sometimes – but sometimes it doesn't. And a potential implication of this worry is that if the proponents of the split-self view were to opt for this response, the split-self view would turn out to not so much constitute an answer to the problem of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics as put a label on it: it would, on this construal, amount to simply re-asserting Løgstrup's claim that the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and its good works presupposes a split-self, whilst leaving the operations of this split-self a mystery.

Another response might be to suggest that the priest and the Levite were not drawn out of their self-enclosedness by the injured traveller because they actively resisted the injured traveller's appeal; they *refused to be drawn*. This response has precedence in Løgstrup's writings. Consider, for instance, Løgstrup's rather breathless introduction to *Norm and Spontaneity*:

At four o'clock in the morning there is an insistent ring at the door. When the woman descends the secret police are outside, demanding that she open up. Once inside they ask her for her husband. They are informed that, as it happens, he is not home but away on business. One of the two men, the

subordinate, heavily armed, ugly as sin, and looking capable of every kind of brutality, starts searching the house. The other, possessed of an engaging manner, all amiability and courtesy, is talking to the woman meanwhile and assuring her that the visit is of no consequence, merely a routine procedure. The woman acts obligingly, appearing surprised – a composed and polished performance. She is perfectly aware that his charming insistence on the insignificance of their visit is aimed solely at getting her to talk, and is not taken in by anything that he says. She knows that from the least unconsidered remark ammunition will be forged for use against her husband and herself. In spite of that – and this is probably the oddest thing of the whole business – she needs constantly to rein in an inclination to talk to the man as to another human being, as though he might be drawn from his destructive enterprise to properly human perceptions and good sense. Unremittingly, she must keep a cool head. Why? What manifests itself in that inclination? Nothing other than the elemental and definitive peculiarity attaching to all speech *qua* spontaneous expression of life: its openness. To speak is to speak openly. That is not something the individual does with speech; it is there beforehand, as it were, *qua* anonymous expression of life. We yield to its sovereignty at the very moment in which we begin to speak. (BED: 83-4)

Here, Løgstrup allows that the woman actively resists or ‘reins in’ the ‘inclination’ to speak openly in her encounter with the secret police, where this implies that the self *qua* agent has the power to defy the sovereign expressions of life. Thus, we might imagine that the priest and the Levite likewise resisted the claim made on them by the injured traveller.²¹ However, if the proponents of the split-self were to opt for this line of response, it would compromise a central aspect of the split-self view itself, namely, that in the ethical encounter ‘we are precisely drawn out of ourselves in a manner we do not control,’ since the thought that we can actively resist the claim made on us by the other in the ethical encounter appears to contradict the thought that the other draws us out of ourselves in a manner we do not control.

The second ambiguity I wish to highlight can be elucidated in terms of a worry about the example from Murdoch that Stern appeals to in illustrating his position. Concerning Murdoch’s example, my worry is this. If Murdoch was totally wrapped

²¹ Arguably, this is one of the places where Løgstrup risks contradicting himself. Compare his comments here, which imply that the self can resist or defy the appeal of the sovereign expressions of life to his comments quoted above to the effect that ‘The sovereign expression of life is...not concealed by selfishness or stifled by self-enclosedness. The power so to conceal does not lie within our volition’ (BED: 69). I shall investigate this issue further in §4.

up in herself and ‘oblivious to her surroundings,’ then how could she have ‘suddenly observed’ the hovering kestrel in the way she describes? Surely the very fact that she observes the kestrel shows that she was not totally wrapped up in herself and oblivious to her surroundings after all. However minimally, it seems she must on the contrary have been sufficiently open to her surroundings for the kestrel to show up as salient within it. This kind of ambiguity, I would suggest, ramifies in the split-self view. For it appears that being seized *by* the other presupposes an openness *to* the other that belies the radical self-enclosedness of the inturned self. Conversely, being seized by the expressions of life – which is *ex hypothesi* a precondition for an open relation to the other – appears to equally require initiation by the other to come about. Thus, being seized by the other and being seized by the sovereign expressions of life appear to presuppose one another.

It is noteworthy in this regard that the ambiguity identified here appears to be reflected in a subtle difference between how Rabjerg and Stern construe the split-self view: whereas Rabjerg holds that it is when the *expressions of life* seize me that I am opened up to my fellow human being, Stern holds that it when the *other* draws me out of my inturnedness that I am made free to realize the sovereign expressions of life in action. Indeed, there is a deadlock between our capacity for openness to the other through the expressions of life and the capacity of the other to draw us out of our inturnedness that appears to be intractable.²² At least we can say that there is some ambiguity in the split-self view, concerning how the two selves, the other and the sovereign expressions of life are related in the realization of good works.

²² Interestingly, there is a parallel problem in Levinas’ ethics. As Diane Perpich (2008) writes, ‘...it is unclear whether it is the face that undoes and “ruins” representation or whether the conditions for this undoing are already there before the face-to-face encounter in the sensuous existing of the lived body. Can the face call me into question if the ground for such a call is not prepared in the body? Are sensibility and embodiment pre-ethical conditions for ethics, or are they *themselves* ethical? Here the initial dilemma reasserts itself, since if they are already ethical we can ask what makes them so’ (64).

My third reservation concerns whether, viewed externally, the split-self view constitutes a plausible conception of moral agency. The strength of the split-self view may seem to consist in its apparent exegetical fidelity: it enthusiastically embraces Løgstrup's commitment to Human Wickedness; the self is portrayed as being entirely passive in relation to the realization of the sovereign expressions of life. However, an obvious general worry with this construal of agency is that it is *too thin* to constitute a plausible conception of moral agency; the agent is *too passive* with respect to the sovereign expressions of life and the other for it to count as *moral* agency. Indeed, one might wonder in what sense the agency of the original spontaneous self posited by the split-self view differs from the agency attributable to Korsgaard's Lioness or Stern's responsive automaton: can agency in this thin sense justifiably be called *moral* agency rather than *mere* agency? This worry, of course, returns us to the problematic with which we began this chapter, namely, that if we are *wholly* passive in relation to the sovereign expressions of life, it becomes unclear to what extent, if at all, the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works is a matter of moral agency.

In response, it could be argued that the Løgstrup would likely reject of the terms underlying this kind of objection: Løgstrup was often critical of the 'over-exaggerated' role given to reflection in moral theory (ED: 273-80) and was keen with his phenomenology to challenge the assumption that human agents are optimally autonomous and self-governing when it comes to the performance of moral actions (M1: 297). Indeed, as Stokes has suggested, arguably the interest of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology lies precisely in his attempt to disclose 'a class of action for which lack of reflection over whether to act or not *enhances* rather than diminishes our moral appraisal of the agent' (Stokes 2016: 145).

Yet, even so, what my first two reservations concerning the split-self view have revealed is that there are significant ambiguities that need to be resolved in making a case for the plausibility of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology in this regard such that it could sway a neutral reader. For instance, one might wonder, on the one hand, whether it is plausible to suppose that the self can be wholly *passive* with respect to being freed for good works, and, on the other hand, whether the idea of a spontaneous self freed for the good is enough to underwrite attributions of *moral* agency. In a word, what is lacking in the split-self view as it stands is an account of the distinctive structural characteristics of the mode of agency involved in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works that justify our appraisal of them as *moral* actions. If we content ourselves with the thought that, on Løgstrup's view, the realization of the sovereign expressions of life in good works is something that just happens, in effect we could be accused of simply admitting that the problem of moral agency in Løgstrup's ethics is insoluble. If, however, we want to respond to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics by providing an account of the structural characteristics of the mode of agency involved in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works, then it seems that we need to go beyond the resources provided by the split-self view as it stands. Thus, in the next chapter my aim will be to build on the important interventions made by the split-self view in providing an account of the structural characteristics of a mode of moral agency that is compatible with Løgstrup's commitments to Immediacy and Human Wickedness.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to bring the important Lutheran dimension of Løgstrup's way of thinking to bear on the question of moral agency. It has emerged that Løgstrup's Lutheran conception of the self appears to preclude any form of self-

governing activity (F^2) on the part of the agent in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works, where this, in turn, casts doubt on the compatibility of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology with a plausible conception of moral agency. I have considered two possible responses to this problem, but have argued that, whilst these strategies move us in the right direction, ultimately neither of them satisfy the twin criteria of philosophical and exegetical plausibility. However, in light of this discussion, we have clarified and enriched our understanding of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, where as a result, we are in a better position to respond to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics.

4. The Self, the Sovereign Expressions of Life and Medio-passive Agency

The aim of this chapter is to provide an answer to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics, namely, that Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment is compatible with what I shall call, following the work of Béatrice Han-Pile, a *medio-passive* mode of moral agency. In 4.1., I will provide a *précis* of my findings so far, where I will focus on clarifying the conditions of adequacy that must be met in answering the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics - as well as the difficulties we face in meeting these conditions. In particular, I will focus my attention on the ambiguities surrounding the relation between the self and agency in Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, ambiguities that were gradually exposed in my previous discussion. In an attempt to clarify these ambiguities, I will, in 4.2. and 4.3., argue that Løgstrup's conception of the self *qua* agent can be elucidated in light of his critical discussion and appropriation of Kierkegaard's conception of the self: insofar as Kierkegaard draws an intimate connection between the self and agency, this discussion will provide a model for a plausible and satisfying conception of agency for Løgstrup's ethics. In 4.4. I will build on this model in arguing that Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment is compatible with a medio-passive conception of moral agency. In arguing for this conclusion, I hope not only to make a contribution to Løgstrup scholarship, but also to philosophical debates concerning moral agency, where the distinctive conception of moral agency captured by Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment can be seen as providing a genuine alternative to the standard conception of agency discussed in chapter one.

4.1. *The Self and Agency in Løgstrup's Ethics: Framing the Chapter*

So far we have established that for a conception of agency to be compatible with Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment it must be compatible with (1) Immediacy, namely, the thought that the ethical relation with the other in which the sovereign expressions of life are realized is not mediated by pictures and theories, up to and including moral principles; and (2) Human Wickedness, namely, the claim that there is a self-enclosing tendency built in to self-governing activity that cuts the self-governing agent off from Immediacy. As I have argued previously, these two features central to Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment are incompatible with the standard conception of moral agency, which, according to my definition in chapter one, is often characterised in terms of some combination and variation of (F¹) self-regulation and (F²) self-governance. There remains, then, a question as to what conception of moral agency, if any, is compatible with Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment.

In the previous chapter, I considered two strategies that attempt to respond to this question. Patrick Stokes' *Via Purgativa* represents a move in the right direction in that it presents a mode of agency compatible with the thought that the possibilities for realizing 'ontological goodness' are in fact impeded by the self, so that the task facing the self *qua* agent is to negatively purge oneself of these impediments rather than attempting to build oneself up, as it were, through virtuous self-striving. This conception of agency as character *de*formation appears to accord with Løgstrup's comments to the effect that 'the decision [to surrender oneself to trust or mercy] consists in the renunciation of attitudes or movements of thought and feeling that are incompatible with trust and mercifulness' (BED: 79). However, I registered some potential problems concerning the applicability of the *via purgativa* to Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment as it stands: firstly, the *via purgativa* appears

to court an objection on grounds of mysticism, in that if the self is purged *in toto*, and if we do not posit an external agent (such as God) to will in the self's place, then we risk, implausibly, attributing a form of quasi-agency to the sovereign expressions of life *themselves*. Secondly, the *via purgativa* implies that the self is capable of removing those aspects of the self's cognitive and dispositional repertoire that impede the sovereign expressions of life by a *fiat* of the will, where this appears to be incompatible with the specifically *Lutheran* conception of human wickedness operative in Løgstrup's moral phenomenology: for Løgstrup, as with Luther, even one's attempts to purge oneself of one's wickedness, to lower oneself in humility, will irrepressibly ensnare the self yet further in its self-enclosedness.

Bjørn Rabjerg's and Robert Stern's split-self view moved our discussion forward by bringing to light Løgstrup's more nuanced configuration of the self in his later writings, where he allows for a 'true' [*eigentliche*] self along with an 'inturned' self. Moreover, the split-self view importantly emphasised the role of the ethical encounter with the *other* in the transition between the 'inturned' self and the 'true' self, where the other is viewed as an external centre of agency with the power to draw the self out of its inturnedness. Yet, I have suggested that there remains considerable ambiguity concerning how the two selves, the other and the sovereign expressions of life are related in the split-self view. For instance, we might wonder if, on the split-self view, it remains a matter of sheer contingency as to whether one is drawn out of one's self-enclosedness by the other or not. Moreover, there is a question as to *how* the inturned self can be drawn out of its radical self-enclosedness *by* the other if, as the proponents of the split-self view imply, a defining feature of self-enclosedness is that it renders us deaf to the other's appeal. These two ambiguities contributed to a general worry concerning the plausibility of the split-self view as a conception of moral agency. At worst, it could be argued that the split-self view merely puts a label

on the problem of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics – that is, as a problem concerning Løgstrup's positing of two selves – whilst leaving the operation of these two selves a mystery. At best, it might be suggested that the split-self view does allow for a form of agency, but that the form of agency it allows for is too thin to constitute a satisfying conception of *moral* agency that could sway a neutral reader.

In appreciation of both the insights and the ambiguities of the *via purgativa* and the split-self interpretations, I will begin my argument here by making a diagnostic move. It seems to me that much of the ambiguity generated by the *via purgativa* and the split-self interpretations alike can be attributed to the conception of the self implicit in both interpretations: both interpretations encourage the thought that the self, on Løgstrup's view, is a 'substance' or 'entity' with accidental qualities or attributes.¹ Call it a *substantivist* conception of the self. By conceiving of the self in substantivist terms, the problem of how the condition or state of the entity or substance labelled as the inturned self can be overcome becomes seemingly intractable: it cannot be overcome by the purgative work of removing those attributes or qualities of the self that make up its inturnedness, since the activity of self-purgation itself is precisely an exercise of the self-enclosing attributes that it seeks to expunge. And it is mysterious how inturnedness can be overcome solely by the other, as *per* the split-self view, since this possibility appears to presuppose the very attribute, *viz.* openness of the other's otherness, that it seeks to establish.

What my analysis of Løgstrup's way of thinking about human wickedness in the previous chapter suggested, however, is that, for Løgstrup, human wickedness is not a state, condition or attribute of the self considered as a substance or entity, but

¹ Rabjerg's description of the two selves in terms of an *ontological* 'true' self and an *anthropological* 'inturned' self in particular invites the thought that the two selves at play in the split-self view refer to two different conditions or states.

rather a *structural tendency* of the self. In the first part of this chapter, my aim is to take this as my clue in proposing that Løgstrup's conception of the self can be fruitfully read in *relational* rather than *substantivist* terms. That is to say, that Løgstrup's conception of the self can be read as consisting in a reflexive structure of self-relation. More specifically, I will suggest that Løgstrup's conception of the self can be seen to be in some respects isomorphic to Kierkegaard's relational conception of the self as a dynamic process of self-relating, a process that can be done well or poorly, where an important upshot of this will be that in viewing Løgstrup's conception of the self in this way, we can interpret Løgstrup's conception of the self, like Kierkegaard's, as reflecting the fundamental structural characteristics of moral agency.

My second move will be to suggest that, in light of this construal of Løgstrup's conception of the self, we can unravel the mystery of how the transition between the mode of being a self in inturnedness and the mode of being a self in truth happens in terms of a conception of moral agency. Here, I will focus on Løgstrup's use of terms such as 'surrender,' 'letting' and 'allowing' in describing the process by which the sovereign expressions of life are realized, where, bluntly, my suggestion will be that the mode of being a self in truth can be explained as follows. In the ethical encounter with the other, the true self comports itself *surrenderingly* in relation to the sovereign expressions of life that tacitly frame that encounter. Crucially, whilst this reading can make sense of how Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment is compatible with a mode of moral agency, the mode of agency thereby conceptualized does not involve features F^1 and F^2 constitutive of the standard view. Rather, I will suggest that the mode of agency compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is best construed in terms of a *medio-passive* mode of agency. It is with this agenda in mind that I turn, firstly, to an investigation of selfhood and agency in Kierkegaard's thought.

4.2. *Selfhood and Agency in Kierkegaard*

Kierkegaard provides his most methodical – if notoriously prolix – definition of the self in *The Sickness Unto Death*, under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus.² There, the self is defined as ‘a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates to another’ (Kierkegaard 1983: XI 128). From this we can immediately see that Kierkegaard conceives of the self as a complex *relation* – in contrast, for instance, to conceptions of the self as a substance with accidental qualities or attributes (as *per* the Cartesian ‘thinking thing’).³ More specifically, Kierkegaard here defines the self as being composed of no less than *three* interrelated relations (or syntheses). I will investigate each in turn.

The first relation is what John Davenport refers to as a ‘hylomorphic’ synthesis between the physical or bodily and the psychical or soulful, whereby the two sets of polarities characteristic of the human being (finitude, temporality and necessity on the bodily side and infinitude, eternity and possibility on the soulful side) are held together (Davenport 2013: 235). As Michelle Kosch illuminatingly describes it:

The basic opposition is between an individualizing/concretizing element (finite, temporal, necessity) which is required for existing as an individual (for being at all, for being in a particular situation, and therefore for being free), and an idealizing/integrating element (infinite, eternal, possibility) that

² My intention here is not to take a position in the debates concerning Kierkegaard’s conception of the self. Here I rely mostly on the interpretation developed by Michelle Kosch (2006), and refer to others where relevant.

³ Cf. C. Stephen Evans (2006): ‘The philosophical roots of this [metaphysical view of the self] go back to Greek philosophy. Aristotle tells us that human beings are rational animals. In the Middle Ages, philosophers attempted to say what kind of entity the human self is by specifying where humans are in the Great Chain of Being: we rank lower than God and the angels; higher than the other animals. In the early modern period, Descartes employs the concept of “substance” to tell us that he (and presumably other human persons) is a “thinking thing”’ (263). Interestingly, Hampson (2004) notes that Kierkegaard’s distinctive notion of the self perhaps has roots in his Lutheranism: ‘As will at once be evident, what we have here are the Lutheran structure and definitions. The self can only be itself as it is grounded in God. Kierkegaard writes: ‘In relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently [Kierkegaard’s previous translator, Lowrie, has here ‘grounded transparently’] in the power that established it.’ This is the Lutheran understanding of faith. Indeed Kierkegaard says as much. ‘Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself rests transparently in God.’ (274)

involves an abstraction from and transcendence of individuality/concreteness, and so integration into some ideal structure: some aim of action, some set of goals, some view of life. (Kosch 2006: 201)

Yet, the ‘animal unity’ (Davenport 2013: 235) accomplished by this first synthesis, while being enough to generate a distinctive notion of the ‘human being,’ is ‘still not a self’ (Kierkegaard 1983: XI 127) according to Kierkegaard. Thus, we move to a second relation in which the relation just described ‘relates itself to itself’ (Kierkegaard 1983: XI 127). That is to say, this first relation bears some additional reflexive relation to itself in the sense of *relating back* to its polar aspects. The second relation thus generated, which *is* the self for Kierkegaard, is what we might term, imperfectly, the relation of *self-consciousness*. The term ‘self-consciousness’ is imperfect because the relation it labels is both more and less than ‘self-consciousness’ as this term is usually understood in the Cartesian tradition. It’s less because it needn’t involve any reflective or thematic self-awareness. But it’s more because it involves something like *taking a stand* on how the poles of the synthesis are related.

As Kosch notes, up to this point, Kierkegaard’s conception of the self in many ways parallels – to the point of almost re-iterating – the conception of the self held by some German idealists, where Kosch mentions Fichte in particular. However, at this point, Kierkegaard introduces a further consideration. Namely, that the ‘relation that relates itself to itself, a self, must either have established itself or have been established by another’ (Kierkegaard 1983: XI 127). In affirming the first option – that the self establishes itself – we would presumably end up with something like a Fichtean conception of the self in which the ‘self-relating synthesizing activity [just mentioned] must see itself as absolutely self-positing’ and, as such, ‘it must see itself as absolutely spontaneous (its actions having no external causal source) and rationally self-determining (its actions following from its own laws)’ (Kosch 2006: 202-3).

Kierkegaard, however, affirms the second option, where this then generates a further level of relationality:

If the relation that relates itself to itself has been established by another, then the relation is indeed the third, but this relation, the third, is yet again a relation and relates itself to that which established the entire relation. (Kierkegaard 1983: XI 128)

In other words, if we accept that the self is established by and, thus, is grounded in another, then in relating itself to itself it relates to another – namely, that which established it. One way of understanding this third and final synthesis is to say that ‘just as [the self] is (in some way or other conscious of its own activity, it is also (in some way or other) conscious of that fact [that it is established by another]’ (Kosch 2006: 203). Accordingly, in contrast to the Fichtean view, for Kierkegaard, the self that in relating itself to itself relates itself to another is not just *self-conscious* – in the cautious way we have previously employed that term – but also ‘conscious’ (again, in some way or other) that it is not the source of its own existence as a self.

With the basic contours of Kierkegaard’s conception of the self in view, we can now ask: How, if at all, is agency related to the self, on Kierkegaard’s view? In a sense, we have already answered this question just in describing Kierkegaard’s conception of the self. For, as Kosch observes, ‘the description of the self as a synthesis of this sort is supposed to reflect the fundamental structural characteristics of human agency,’ whereby

Such agency is at the same time that of a naturally situated being and that of one not exhaustively defined by its natural situation, a being tied to and constrained by a past which likewise does not exhaustively define it, a being with concrete characteristics which place limits on its powers and at the same time with power to transcend (at least some of) those limits. (Kosch 2006: 201)

It is with respect to this this remark that we can begin to understand Kierkegaard’s well-known claim that a self is not something which we statically ‘are’ nor something we inalienably ‘have,’ but rather it is something we continually *become*

through the synthesizing activity the term self designates. That is to say, the self reflects the fundamental structures characteristic of human agency in the sense that the task of becoming a self constitutively involves one's taking a stand in relation to oneself with respect to the *way* that the various syntheses that comprise the self are carried out.

Yet, further to this, by claiming that the self is established by another, Kierkegaard integrates a distinctive normative dimension into his account of what it is to become a self. As Kosch puts it, this is because Kierkegaard's 'account of the structure of the self, by making the self dependent on and oriented towards an outside source of norms, makes structurally possible a genuine alternative: turning away from that source and turning towards it' (Kosch 2006: 209). Thus, not only is the self something we continually *become*; it is also, to that extent, something we continually 'achieve' or win or, conversely, fail to achieve.⁴ In other words, the Kierkegaardian self describes the fundamental structures of human agency and it posits a distinctly *normative* dimension as being inherent in those structures of the self so that we can 'win' or 'lose' ourselves in the very way we relate to ourselves as agents. I will investigate both alternatives, starting with Kierkegaard's characterization of what it is to *fail* to become a self.

In *The Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard identifies three modes of failing to become a self which, along with the possibility of 'winning' oneself, exhaust the structural possibilities of self-synthesis as Kierkegaard has set it up. He characterizes these three 'mis-relations' as forms of despair, which, as I noted in the previous chapter, constitute Kierkegaard's definition of sin. They are: (1) the despairing ignorance of having a self and an eternal self (spiritlessness); (2) the despair not to

⁴ Evans (2006) uses the terminology of achievement when he argues that Kierkegaard holds a 'relational achievement theory' of the self (264).

will to be oneself (the despair of weakness) and; (3) the despair to will to be oneself (despair in defiance). With his characteristic psychological perspicuity, Kierkegaard offers a rich tapestry of different variations that each of these forms of despair can take, which should be taken to represent archetypal and sometimes exaggerated and caricatured illustrations of what are often subtler and more subterranean features of our existence.

I shall briefly discuss each basic form of despair in turn. But it is important to preface these discussions with a more general comment about Kierkegaard's conception of despair. At root, despair in its various forms is a *mis-relation* in the sense that the self in despair has failed to relate to itself as the kind of agent that it is. This is why the concept of the will is so prominent in Kierkegaard's latter two characterizations of the forms of despair; to be in despair is to fail to have a proper conception of oneself as an agent, where this manifests itself in an excessive tending to one pole or other of the two sets of polarities that define the human being: for instance, either by emphasizing one's finitude and the sense of one's being determined by a causal order or, conversely, over emphasizing one's infinitude and the sense of one's existence as possibility to an exaggerated degree.

Spiritlessness, the first form of despair, is the failure to relate to oneself as an agent at all. That is, it is a failure to take a stance on oneself *as* a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, of the temporal and the eternal and of freedom and necessity. The spiritless person is not only in despair – but she is ignorant of being in despair; she lives a 'merely vegetative life' (Kierkegaard 1983: XI 157) in which she fails even to recognize that she is 'intended to be spirit' (Kierkegaard 1983: XI 156). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Løgstrup's description of dispassionate selfishness can be seen to correspond to spiritlessness in that they both designate modes of existence that are ignorant of their own selfishness or despair, respectively.

The despair of weakness, by contrast, which is defined as the despair of not willing to be oneself, describes a failure to see oneself as a *responsible* agent. Kosch notes that the character of the aesthete as portrayed in *Either/Or* serves as an archetype for this form of despair: ‘*A* [the aesthete] is...a compatibilist – but one who embraces determinism. His situation is that of an individual stymied by his own refusal to believe anything is up to him. The judge characterizes *A*’s attempt to see himself as a spectator in life rather than a participant in it...as the aesthetic attitude made explicit’ (Kosch 2006: 149). The despair of weakness, I have suggested, corresponds to Løgstrup’s notion of ‘sentimentality,’ where, as *per* my illustration from David Foster Wallace’s story ‘The Depressed Person,’ the sentimental self reposes in her own exaggerated sense of powerlessness and dependency.

Finally, the despair of defiance – the despair of willing to be oneself – is the opposite; the self in this form of despair ‘wants to be master of itself or to create itself, to make itself into the self he wants to be, to determine what he will have or not have in his concrete self’ (Kierkegaard 1983: XI 179). Viewed in a certain way, this second form of despair may not seem to be particularly problematic. Indeed, from a Fichtean perspective, this may even seem to be precisely what is required of a self. Yet, since Kierkegaard holds that the self is established by another, the will to self-mastery – insofar as it fails to acknowledge its dependence on the power which established it – is also a form of despair; just as with the two previous forms of despair it fails to have a proper conception of itself as an agent. This form of despair can be seen to correspond to Løgstrup’s notion of passionate selfishness where the self, whilst being conscious that it is selfish, tries to overcome its selfishness through self-assertion.

So much for despair, what is it to ‘win’ ourselves on Kierkegaard’s scheme? Unsurprisingly, it is to have a *proper* conception of oneself as an agent. And this,

according to Kierkegaard, involves the self's 'resting transparently in the power that established it' (Kierkegaard 1983: XI). Yet, unlike his discussion of despair, we find in Kierkegaard little by way of psychological exposition as to what it is for the self to rest transparently in the power that established it. This is due partly to the fact that, for Kierkegaard, what is under discussion here is no less than Christian faith. And Kierkegaard was notoriously doubtful of the possibility of Christian faith *per se*, let alone the chances he himself had to 'win' himself in faith. Thus, in a sense, Kierkegaard did not take himself to be an authority on what faith is like. Furthermore, however, in contrast to despair, Kierkegaard held that faith resists representation in terms of disinterested philosophical and psychological exposition. Indeed, a central aspect of Christian faith for Kierkegaard consists in passionately embracing a belief in that which cannot be thought – namely, the 'absolute paradox' of God (the eternal and infinite) in time. Thus, not only is Kierkegaard reticent to make psychological pronouncements about faith out of a sense of humility, but, perhaps more significantly, according to Kierkegaard's understanding of Christian faith it simply cannot be grasped by the disinterested stance of philosophical enquiry. Nonetheless, there is a general shape given by Kierkegaard as to what it is to occupy the standpoint of faith which is of moment for our present purposes.

We can get a sense for what this right conception of oneself in faith consists in by turning to a recent paper by Daniel Watts on Kierkegaard's notion of truth. In the paper, Watts tackles a perennial difficulty in Kierkegaard scholarship concerning Kierkegaard's puzzling division of truth into two: objective truth and subjective truth. However, rather than claiming that objective and subjective truth stand for different kinds or species of truth, Watts maintains that Kierkegaard holds a unitary conception of truth – truth as self-coincidence – which manifests differently as a 'standard of success' across different contexts of enquiry. Watts interprets Kierkegaard's

definition of truth – that is, a redoubling which is nevertheless cancelled at the very same moment – to hold *agents*, rather than propositions, as the primary candidates for truth. This is eminently the case with God’s agency, about which Watt’s notes that ‘on Kierkegaard’s understanding, there is within divine agency an in-built duality, between God’s self-awareness and God’s being *notwithstanding their perfect agreement*’ (Watts 2017: 6). This understanding of God’s agency provides a model in light of which Watts offers the following elaboration on Kierkegaard’s conception of truth as self-coincidence:

[Kierkegaard] holds that, if it is to be substantive, the concept of truth must apply, paradigmatically, to a certain form of agency. This is, namely, a form of agency that satisfies two conditions: (i) it must exhibit the duality of self-relation; and (ii) it must remain in agreement with itself, being in no wise self-estranged. A certain form of agency that perfectly satisfied both of these conditions would be neither a simple unity, since it would exhibit the duality of self-relation, nor a complex multiplicity, since it would also exhibit perfect self-coincidence. (Watts 2017: 7)

On the basis of this definition we can see more clearly how an agent can be a candidate for truth, for, as Watts continues,

on this account, an agent is ‘in the truth’ – or, as we may also put it, she comports herself *truly* – just to the extent to which she exercises her agency in a self-coinciding way. Conversely, you are ‘in untruth’ – you comport yourself *untruly* – just to the extent to which you are characterized by self-division, duplicity, self-estrangement. (Watts 2017: 10-11)

Tellingly, according to Kierkegaard’s understanding of God as ‘the very archetype of self-coincidence,’ Watts writes that ‘Divine agency is truth itself; there is in God no opacity, duplicity or shadow of turning’ (Watts 2017: 7). Thus, returning to Kierkegaard’s definition of faith as the self’s resting transparently (i.e. not opaquely) in the power that posited it, we can see how the self’s having the ‘right’ or ‘true’ conception of itself as an agent can be understood in terms of the self’s transparent coinciding with itself *as* established by another and, thus, as oriented in a particular way.

The question remaining, then, is *what is it to exercise one's agency in a self-coinciding way?* We can, by *via negationis*, suggest what such agency is *not*. Namely, it is not robustly *active*: it does not aim at self-mastery, as this is a form of despair. Yet, conversely, it is not, as it were, fully *passive* for this would be to fail to take oneself as an agent at all and, thus, to despair in one's weakness. Can we provide a more positive account of the agency of faith?

One way of answering this question, favoured by 'virtue ethics' readings of Kierkegaard promoted by commentators such as John Davenport, appeals to Kierkegaard's theory of the stages or spheres of existence, as developed in *Either/Or*, *Stages on Life's Way* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.⁵ On the account provided in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Christian faith or 'religiousness B' is a regulative ideal which can be achieved through the activity of self-resignation and religious suffering characteristic of the 'immanent' religiousness of 'religiousness A.' On Kosch's reading, religiousness A 'is characterized by a consciousness of necessary guilt, what Kierkegaard calls the 'immanent expression' of the 'terribleness' of the religious: one cannot, of one's own power, make the finite commensurate with the absolute' (Kosch 2006: 166):

The ideal of religiousness A, the task it sets for the individual, is to overcome those aspects of his being in which finitude consists: not only finite desires and attachment to the world (the task of 'dying to immediacy'), but also existence as a particular individual, and indeed the will itself in so far as it is the particular will of the particular individual. This is the meaning of the imperative of self-annihilation...what is demanded is a strenuous effort to overcome one's individuality. (Kosch 2006: 167)

In other words, in a way that parallels Stokes' notion of *via purgativa*, the agency of faith is to be seen in terms of the ongoing attempt to 'root out' despair through practices of self-renunciation and religious suffering. And, as with Stokes' notion of

⁵ See, e.g. Davenport (2001)

via purgativa, the difficulty with – or, more precisely, the impossibility of – this task rests in the fact that ‘since individual agency is among those characteristics of finite existence that one is supposed to attempt to overcome, it is clear that any such effort is doomed to failure’ (Kosch 2006: 167).

Yet, as George Pattison has noted, on one reading, it might be precisely upon confronting this self-defeating limit that a site of potential transformation is opened up. With reference to an example given in one of Kierkegaard’s upbuilding discourses, Pattison elucidates this possibility as follows:

In the discourse ‘To desire God is a human being’s highest perfection’...Kierkegaard tells the story of a self that grows dissatisfied with merely being part of the world or nature rather than a self-directing centre of conscious freedom. As a result, it sets about trying to master itself and to get control of its own life. But this is not so easy. In fact, Kierkegaard seems to think, it is downright impossible, since no one is stronger than their self. In seeking to get a grip on ourselves, to permeate our existence with subjective freedom, we put ourselves in a scenario that Kierkegaard likens to a wrestling match between two exactly equal combatants. In such a situation, the self is fated to fight itself to a standstill, an impasse, in which it effectively annihilates itself. Yet this ‘annihilation is his truth’ and, to the extent that a person accepts this annihilation as his subjective truth, the new possibility of the God-relationship, a relationship that restores him to himself but on a new and unshakeable basis, opens up. This shipwreck of human will and understanding clears a space for a foundational dependence on God that encompasses and permeates every aspect of the subject’s life in the world. (Pattison 2015: 67)

In other words, while the tasks set by self-mastery or self-annihilation that, according to Pattison, follows from it are impossible tasks *for the individual agent*, the dialectical tension built up through our taking up of these tasks might nevertheless set the scene, as it were, in which the possibility of faith – the possibility of the self’s resting transparently in the power that established it – is opened up.

It might be objected, however, that the ideas presented here do not constitute an account of what the agency of faith itself consists in, but rather an account of the agency involved in properly relating to faith as a regulative ideal of agency. Does Kierkegaard provide any positive account of what the agency of faith itself consists

in? Kierkegaard can be seen to come closer to providing a direct answer to this question with his so-called ‘theory of the leap,’ as developed in *Philosophical Fragments*. As Watts notes, however, Kierkegaard’s development of the theory of the leap took place primarily in response to a set of *logical* rather than religious considerations, where in responding to Hegel’s putatively presuppositionless and self-contained system of logic, Kierkegaard argues that ‘demonstrative reasoning ultimately depends on certain kinds of non-deductive, non-inferential judgment’ (Watts 2017a: 9). The image of the ‘leap,’ then, should primarily be taken to signify precisely this form of non-deductive, non-inferential judgment whereby a movement is made from ‘A to B without touching the intervening ground;’ the leap, that is to say, is ‘a primitive act of judging, in the sense of an act of judging that is unmediated by any prior judgement’ (Watts 2017a: 9).

Now, Kierkegaard admits that the phrase ‘leap of faith’ when used in common parlance perhaps brings with it certain associations of, for example, ‘A “Münchhausen” type leap, where “one closes one’s eyes, grabs oneself by the neck...and then stands on the other side”’ (Ferreira 1998: 215). Indeed, it is this association that has led some to criticize Kierkegaard’s theory of the leap as representing a form of decisionism consisting of a ‘criterionless choice’ (MacIntyre 2007a: 39) and, for that reason, it signals Kierkegaard’s affirmation of a form of irrationalism. But, as Jaime Ferreira insists, Kierkegaard opposed his notion of the leap to the kind of criterionless ‘deliberate act of willpower’ illustrated by the Münchhausen type of leap. Notwithstanding his characterization of the leap as ‘the category of decision,’ there is an important *passive* and receptive dimension constitutive of the substance of the leap

for Kierkegaard that belies any talk of straightforward decisionism.⁶ Rather, as Ferreira emphasizes, the leap is said at once to involve a ‘letting go,’ where we can think of this in terms of a *letting go* of our attempts to comprehend the absolute paradox, and *passion*, which is understood by Kierkegaard in terms of the embracing of ‘extreme opposites together and, existing, to understand oneself in them’ (Ferreira 1998: 223).⁷ In other words, Kierkegaard’s theory of the leap is constituted by both *active* and *passive* dimensions which qualify one another and which Ferreira interestingly characterizes as a ‘captivating yet free engagement.’

To paraphrase Kierkegaard, then, we could say that, for Climacus, passion is the substance of the leap, the transition to the infinite consists in passion... that is, with a decisive interestedness or attraction, with the surrender constituted by captivating yet free engagement. [...] The surrender of interestedness, of being grasped by something or decisively engaged by it, can account for both the letting-go that constitutes the leap and the passion that also constitutes it. (Ferreira 1998: 226)

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to develop anything like a comprehensive account of Kierkegaard’s ‘theory of the leap.’ Nonetheless, we can see from this brief exposition how the leap can be seen to designate a form of agency that is neither problematically passive, as with the despair of weakness, nor problematically active, as with the despair of defiance: the leap, in a word, designates the mode of self relation that relates to itself transparently as the agent that it is. Importantly, in contrast to

⁶ Ferreira is quick to add that this passive dimension should not be understood to reduce the leap to a cumulative or automatic notion whereby ‘something passively “flops over” by “immanent necessity”’ (Ferreira 1998: 210).

⁷ C.f. Kierkegaard: ‘By beginning, then, I have presupposed the ideality, I have presupposed that I will succeed in accomplishing it, but what else is that but presupposing that the god exists and actually beginning with trust in him. And how does the existence of the god emerge from the demonstration? Does it happen straight away? Is it not here as it is with the Cartesian dolls? As soon as I let go of the doll, it stands on its head. As soon as I let go of it – consequently, I have to let go of it. So also with demonstration – so long as I am holding on to the demonstration (that is, continue to be one who is demonstrating), the existence does not emerge, if for no other reason than that I am in the process of demonstrating it, but when I let go of the demonstration, the existence is there. Yet this letting go, even that is surely something; it is, after all *meine Zuthat* [my contribution]. Does it not have to be taken into account, this diminutive moment, however brief it is – it does not have to be long, because it is a *leap*.’ (1985: IV: 210-11).

the theory of the spheres of existence, the ‘theory of the leap’ is not a *precursor* to faith, but is its *realization*.⁸

With this all too brief characterization of the relation between the self and agency in Kierkegaard in hand, I will now return to Løgstrup. My guiding intuition will be that Løgstrup’s conception of the self can be seen to parallel Kierkegaard’s in certain key respects, one of which is the sense that the self is a reflexive self-relation that describes the fundamental characteristics of human agency. And, if I am right, this isomorphism will provide a way of establishing a conception of agency that is compatible with Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology.

4.3. *Løgstrup and Kierkegaard: Controversion and/or Appropriation?*

The purpose of this extended *excursus* into Kierkegaard’s conception of the self has been to show one way in which a relation between the self and agency can be articulated. And it seems to me that, *prima facie*, Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology can be seen to readily map on to this Kierkegaardian conception of the self, albeit with some important differences. It is conceivable to suppose that Løgstrup, as with Kierkegaard, conceives of the self in terms of a relation that in relating to itself relates to an ‘outside source of norms.’⁹ This is what Løgstrup can be seen to be arguing when he claims that the true self is one which *identifies* with the sovereign expressions

⁸ One way to illustrate this point is to consider Kierkegaard’s claim that the leap represents the ‘closest [thing] to being in two places at once’ (Kierkegaard 2009: 168). The point of the leap is not that the self has been *substantially* transformed in the sense that its contingent attributes – namely, those associated with despair and sin - have been altered. Rather, it is to say that the self has come to embrace or hold together the opposing sets of polarities that constitute the human being in equilibrium - rather than trying to sublimate them. This is what it is to have a transparent conception of oneself as an agent. One may venture the thought that in this respect Kierkegaard’s ‘theory of the leap’ is comparable to Luther’s doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator*: In both cases, the difficulty of faith consists in embracing the inherent paradoxicality of the human being in recognizing that one is a sinner, given over to finitude and worldliness, whilst simultaneously believing in the forgiveness of sins; that is, that one stands in an absolute relation to a God for whom all things are possible.

⁹ Indeed, Løgstrup often refers to the sovereign expressions of life as being, at once, ‘anonymous,’ suggesting a sense of ‘outsideness,’ and ‘personal,’ suggesting that they are related to the self’s existence (M1: 91, *passim*; BED: 59; 84; 163).

of life, which, as we have seen, Løgstrup refers to variously as the ‘givens’ or ‘grace’ of existence. But whereas for Kierkegaard, this outside source of norms is *God*, for Løgstrup, this ‘outside’ source of norms can be seen to come from the fundamental fact of human interdependence which is disclosed by the sovereign expressions of life in our encounter with the other and which, in that encounter, orients us in a particular way.

Given this possible initial parallel, it is plausible to think that the difference between the two selves in Løgstrup’s architectonic lies not in any accidental attributes or qualities predicable to the intuned self and the true self, respectively, but rather in the way that the self relates to that ‘outside source of norms’ in their encounter with the other. On this conception, we could understand Løgstrup’s conception of Human Wickedness as reflecting a mode of being a self that stands in a mis-relation to itself as the agent that it is: for instance, by taking itself to be ‘sovereign’ over its own existence or, conversely, by sinking back into reflective ‘sentimentality.’ By contrast, we have seen that, for Løgstrup, ‘a person comes his true [*eigentliche*] self, and concretely so, by realizing himself in the sovereign expressions of life and identifying himself with them’ (BED: 54). This assertion can be readily understood in Kierkegaardian terms as the self’s transparently coinciding with itself; Løgstrup’s ‘true’ self is a self that, in the ethical encounter with the other, has come into *identity* with the sovereign expressions of life disclosive of its fundamentally interdependent existence. We might expect, then, that like Kierkegaard, Løgstrup understands this coming into identity with the sovereign expressions of life as consisting in a special form of agency – a leap of faith. And it is feasible that Løgstrup’s notion of ‘receiving life as a gift,’ as discussed in chapter two, could fruitfully be read in this way: what it is to receive life as a gift is to exercise one’s agency in a self-coinciding way, which

involves holding a proper conception of oneself as the fundamentally interdependent agent that one is.

Yet, despite the initially promising possibilities opened up through this comparison, there are many interpretive and philosophical difficulties involved in proposing a Kierkegaardian reading of Løgstrup in the manner just outlined. In this section, I will investigate some of the interpretive difficulties involved in drawing a direct analogy between Kierkegaard's and Løgstrup's conceptions of the self and some of the philosophical problems that arise in light of them. However, ultimately, I will suggest that the interpretive and philosophical difficulties encountered here are not insurmountable and that the comparison with Kierkegaard opens up a promising way of conceiving of a conception of moral agency compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology.

There is little doubt that Kierkegaard's philosophy had a profound and lasting impact on Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics. It is equally clear, however, that Løgstrup's relation to Kierkegaard's thought was not one of straightforward influence. Although Kierkegaardian themes and ideas permeate Løgstrup's thought, his relation to Kierkegaard was fraught and often polemical. Therefore, any attempt to trace a line of Kierkegaardian influence in Løgstrup's thought must be approached with caution.

We can get our first sense for Løgstrup's relation to Kierkegaard in his Berlin lectures of 1949, which were published in 1950 under the title *Kierkegaards und Heideggers Existenzanalyse und ihr Verhältnis zur Verkündigung* [*Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's Analyses of Existence and their Relation to the Proclamation*]. At the time of these lectures, Løgstrup was broadly sympathetic to what he calls Kierkegaard's 'analysis of existence:' he registers his agreement with what he takes to be

Kierkegaard's claim that human existence is subject to an infinite demand, but he disagrees with Kierkegaard as concerns the nature of that demand. In a word, the issue is this. Whereas for Løgstrup's Kierkegaard the demand is a demand to relate absolutely to the absolute, God, and relatively to the relative, i.e. the finite, temporal and worldly, Løgstrup's ethical demand, while being 'infinite' in that it is unconditioned and absolute, registers in 'concrete existence,' namely, in one's relation with the other.¹⁰ Thus, we find Løgstrup writing:

[T]he question necessarily arises, whether it is possible to talk of the infinite demand in a different way from Kierkegaard. One can indeed ask: Are we not posed with the alternative, either to give up all thought of an infinite, an absolute, an unconditioned demand – or to put up with the difficulties that are present in Kierkegaard's account? The critique that has been levelled here against Kierkegaard therefore obliges us – if we do not want to give up all thought of the infinite demand and thereby reject Kierkegaard's understanding of existence – to clarify that the infinite demand announces itself in concrete, external existence. (KHE: 84-5)¹¹

Putting Løgstrup's critique of Kierkegaard to one side for the moment, what I want to draw attention to in this passage is Løgstrup's implied desire to hold on to Kierkegaard's 'understanding of existence.' At this stage in his thinking, Løgstrup clearly wants to build on a Kierkegaardian foundation rather than raze it.

In the subsequent years, however - partially as a result of his polemical engagements with contemporary Danish Kierkegaardians such as Olesen Larsen - Løgstrup's enthusiasm for Kierkegaard's understanding of existence waned and his criticisms of Kierkegaard intensified. By the time he introduced his theory of the sovereign expressions of life, Løgstrup no longer saw Kierkegaard as a fellow traveller and ally but rather as his main philosophical adversary, as the title of his 1968 work, *Opgør med Kierkegaard* [Controverting Kierkegaard], suggests. However,

¹⁰ In this respect, Løgstrup's position in the Berlin lectures prefigures his claim in *The Ethical Demand* that one's relation to God is determined at the point of one's relation to the neighbour (ED: 4).

¹¹ Here and in what follows I mostly rely on the forthcoming translation of Løgstrup's Berlin lectures by Stern *et al.*

clearly, this is not to say that the influence of Kierkegaard on Løgstrup's way of thinking simply faded away or that Løgstrup lost interest in the themes and problems that animated Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence. Rather, Løgstrup develops his theory of the sovereign expressions of life expressly in contrast with certain dimensions of Kierkegaard's thought: indeed, in *Controverting Kierkegaard* Løgstrup states his aim as that of 'tak[ing] up Kierkegaard's own concepts to use them against him' (BED: 67). Now, what Løgstrup means when he says this is deeply enigmatic: does he mean, for instance, that he is attempting to immanently critique Kierkegaard's philosophy? Or, does he mean that he will employ Kierkegaard's concepts in a way that stands Kierkegaard on his head, as Marx famously purported to have done to Hegel? We can gain some clarity on this issue by looking to the major points of contestation that Løgstrup articulates in his discussion in *Controverting Kierkegaard*.

Løgstrup begins to elucidate his theory of the sovereign expressions of life in terms of a contrast with Kierkegaard's understanding of how 'the human person [can] accomplish the task of becoming a self' (BED: 54). Thus, Løgstrup's conception of what it is to be a 'true' [*eigentliche*] self capable of realizing the sovereign expressions of life is developed explicitly in relation to Kierkegaard's conception of the self.¹² This, I want to suggest, is crucially important. However, it is equally important to appreciate the nature and scope of Løgstrup's disagreements with Kierkegaard here, where these disagreements helped to shape Løgstrup's own positive account of the 'true' self. The two major points of contestation relevant to our present discussion are the following. Firstly, Løgstrup contests Kierkegaard's imputed claim that becoming a self in truth requires religious reflection. And, secondly, Løgstrup contests Kierkegaard's imputed claim that it is 'decision' alone that renders an individual's life

¹² It is noteworthy that Løgstrup's employment of the term *eigentliche*, here translated as 'true,' has resonances of Heidegger's notion of 'authenticity' [*eigentlichkeit*].

definitive. I shall look at each point in turn. But, firstly, I want to preface my reconstruction with the *caveat* that my aim here is not to judge the incisiveness or veracity of Løgstrup's criticisms of Kierkegaard *as* criticisms. Indeed, Løgstrup's combative and often uncharitable critique of Kierkegaard has been subject to many rebuttals and refutations - I do not wish to enter this debate.¹³ Rather, I am interested in establishing how and in what ways Kierkegaard's thinking on the self influenced - either negatively or positively - Løgstrup's own conception of the self, particularly as it relates to questions of agency.

The first point of disagreement, then, concerns the claim that winning oneself in faith requires dying to immediacy in religious reflection. This, recall, is the task of religiousness A: in order to stand in an absolute relation with the absolute, God, one must overcome one's finite and relative desires and attachments to the world - that is, one must give up one's comfortable conformity within the 'crowd' (i.e. public norms and mores) - in order to stand as an individual before God. Løgstrup's critical response to this is twofold. Firstly, he prosecutes an *argumentum ad ignorantiam*, suggesting that 'Kierkegaard never spared the sovereign expressions of life so much as a thought' (BED: 53). Løgstrup's claim here is that, given Kierkegaard's commitment to the idea that the 'self can only be won in relation to eternity' (BED: 54), he dismisses the worldly and concrete phenomena that comprise the sovereign expressions of life, such as 'natural' love and trust, *a fortiori* as reflecting the kind of relative and finite attachment to the world that the self must overcome in order to win itself.¹⁴

¹³ C.f. Ferreira (2001) Ch. 5, esp. pp. 76-78.

¹⁴ In the 'Polemical Epilogue' to *The Ethical Demand*, Løgstrup explicates this point in relation to Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. There, Løgstrup turns his critical attention to the distinction made by Kierkegaard in *Works of Love* between Christian love, on the one hand, and 'natural' love, on the other. 'Natural' love is associated with the finite, temporal and worldly; it is *preferential* in that it is directed at a *particular* other rather than at the other *qua* neighbour and it is *finite* in that it inevitably comes to an end. Christian love, by contrast, is associated with the infinite; it loves the *neighbour* not the particular other and it is mediated by God, thus giving it eternal stability. When it

In a certain sense, here Løgstrup is not so much attacking Kierkegaard as positioning himself in relation to Kierkegaard. Whereas Løgstrup's Kierkegaard thinks that relating absolutely to the absolute can only occur when the individual, divested of all worldliness, stands alone before God, Løgstrup believes that the individual's relation to the absolute is determined at the point of one's concrete relation with the other, where the sovereign expressions of life are determinative of this mode of relating to the other. Yet, Løgstrup's point does have a critical edge as well. As George Pattison has observed, according to Løgstrup's Kierkegaard 'the self can only become itself in virtue of a *double*-movement between finite and infinite, temporal and eternal, so that, optimally, it learns to relate to itself in its finitude – but infinitely' (Pattison 2017: 89, my emphasis). That is, dying to immediacy is only one part of what it is to become oneself for Kierkegaard. In addition, the self, having renounced the worldly, the finite, and the relative must take them up once again – but now under the aspect of infinity. And Løgstrup takes this second 'finitizing' movement to be impossible on the terms set up by Kierkegaard.

Løgstrup provides many elaborations of this key objection throughout his writings, from the Berlin lectures to *Controverting Kierkegaard*. But, in essence, his objection turns on the following question. How can the 'abstract' (BED: 54) relation to the absolute and the infinite provide us with guidance in our finite and relative

comes to the question of how Christian love expresses itself concretely in relation to the neighbour on Kierkegaard's account, however, Løgstrup sees nothing resembling 'love' – whether 'natural' or Christian. For what Christian love is seen as amounting to on Kierkegaard's account is not caring for the other in a temporal and worldly way according to their needs, but rather in helping them to love God – which, insofar as it consists in breaking down the neighbour's selfishness, for the most part consists in *anything but* caring for the neighbour in a worldly, temporal way. Løgstrup diagnoses Kierkegaard's distorted view of Christian love as being a product of his positing of an abyss between the infinite and the finite: 'The difference between the human and the Christian conception of what love is is therefore infinite. And infinity's difference is expressed through the fact that love must willingly tolerate being hated by the loved one as a reward. [...] Kierkegaard then, defines love of one's neighbour as synonymous with helping one's neighbour to love God, whereas a love which consists in fulfilling the other person's temporal wishes has nothing whatever to do with love' (ED: 224).

relations with concrete others?¹⁵ On Løgstrup's view, Kierkegaard creates an 'abyss' (KHE: 80) between the self's abstract absolute relation to the absolute and their concrete relative relation to relative ends which can only lead to a sort of existential paralysis concerning the worldly and temporal decisions they must make in the run of their everyday lives. In a way that parallels Luther's notion of *Anfectung*, the Kierkegaardian self, on Løgstrup's view, is apt to become fixated on questions concerning whether or not their finite and worldly relations *really are* permeated by the infinite in the correct way; whether they are loving the other as a *neighbour* rather than in terms of their finite preferences and predilections to love the other as a *particular* other.¹⁶ And Løgstrup argues that, to that extent, the individual is irresistibly drawn back into a despairing and obsessive circle of religious introspection. As Løgstrup puts it in the Berlin lectures: 'Religiously speaking there is nothing that can bring this circling of self-analysis to a halt, nothing that can interrupt this cycle of anxiety, dissolution of anxiety and renewal of anxiety' (KHE: 64).¹⁷ At root, then, Løgstrup's major criticism is this. By construing what it is to

¹⁵ As Stern explains Løgstrup's objection: 'For Kierkegaard, to relate absolutely to the absolute we must take ourselves to be nothing before God; but this cannot help us determine how to act in the finite world, or why one action is better than any other' (Stern: forthcoming).

¹⁶ Kierkegaard's discussion of the possibility of going to Deer Park [*Dyrehaven*] in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is taken by Løgstrup to illustrate this problem. Løgstrup takes the animus behind Kierkegaard's discussion to be whether and how an innocent and relative pleasure such as visiting Deer Park can be made compatible with one's absolute relation to the absolute. And Løgstrup takes the prolixity of Kierkegaard's discussion on this point to signify Kierkegaard's failure to bridge the abyss between the infinite and the finite, the absolute and the relative.

¹⁷ C.f. '[Kierkegaard] maintains that eternity alone is able to invest a decision with permanence; only eternity can put an end to the shrinking into oneself...But the difficulty of accepting such assistance is the greatest thinkable, Kierkegaard adds, and [this] is so because the person in need is allowed no say in how he is to be helped; he must leave it all to God, and unconditionally to boot. To be helped he must surrender his self and become as nothing in the hand of the succourer. [...] But this means that the difficulty of accepting religious help is one Kierkegaard has rendered so acute that the needy individual is driven to cling to his distress. The religious remedy as a possible cure is rendered so impossible that it can only serve as an incentive to ever more intensified self-enclosedness. This is the result of making the relation to God abstract, of abstracting from all the opportunities for cure that life presents in the way of opportunities – in the individual's relation to his work, to other people, to the world around him – for spontaneous flourishing. (BED: 60-1)

become a self in faith as involving an ‘abstract’ relation to the absolute, the Kierkegaardian self becomes paralyzed by self-reflection which cuts him off from the finite, the worldly and the relative, thus intensifying – rather than exorcising - his despairing ‘self-enclosedness.’

A second criticism Løgstrup levels against Kierkegaard is this:

Neglect of the sovereign and definitive expressions of life leads to two things: notions of choice determination, and freedom become abstractions, and the choice between existing as an individual in relation to the infinite idea or living a life in conformity takes centre stage, and we are left with existentialism’s vacuous talk of the vacuous self. (BED: 59)

This criticism, again, has its roots in Løgstrup’s objection that the Kierkegaardian self is too abstract – to the point of being ‘vacuous,’ as Løgstrup puts it. However, this time Løgstrup’s focus is not on the possibility of performing the ‘double-movement’ associated with faith, but is rather focused on the worry that by conceiving of the self in such an abstract way, notions such as choice and freedom that are associated with the self on Kierkegaard’s imputed conception become exaggerated and distorted. Thus, Løgstrup argues that

Kierkegaard’s capital error, which the existentialists, both philosophical and theological, have perpetuated, is that he, and they with him, make the individual’s choice, decision, and freedom alone that which renders life definitive – as though our existence were not already and antecedently something definitive in each of its, as it were, anonymous expressions of life. That which is alone subject to the individual’s choice, determination, and freedom is whether to fulfil the definitiveness which, already and antecedently, attaches to the sovereign expressions of life through which the individual realizes himself – or to be guilty of its dereliction. (BED: 59)

In other words, Løgstrup is arguing that the alleged central importance Kierkegaard, and existentialist philosophers and theologians inspired by him, place on an existential choice - for example, the choice putatively exemplified in the leap of faith - in becoming a true self misconstrues human existence: the self is not an abstract self-relation for Løgstrup; it is always already conditioned by ethically qualitative phenomena – namely, the sovereign expressions of life.

It is instructive that Løgstrup turns to Sartre in illustrating his point here.¹⁸

On a Sartrean view, the core of ethics lies in the making of radical choices: Francois Raffoul glosses the Sartrean-existentialist position as follows,

The core of existentialist ethics is responsibility because existentialism recognizes that human beings invent who they are and the values they live by, a responsibility that will be defined by Sartre as universal, hyperbolic, and even absolute... That means, at every moment and without any support, man must invent man. To that extent, he is absolutely responsible, not only for what he does but above all for what he is. (Raffoul 2010: 124)

A similar emphasis on choice and decision can be found in the existential theology of Rudolf Bultmann: Bultmann defines faith as ‘the decision in the face of grace which confronts us in the proclamation of the word’ (Bultmann, quoted in Macquarrie 1973: 181). John Macquarrie explicates Bultmann’s thinking here as follows:

Man is not an object, he exists. If God, therefore, will give to man salvation, he cannot impose it upon him as he might impose a property upon an object – at least, not without taking away man’s distinctively human character, his existence, and so reducing him to the level of an object or an automaton. God’s gift of salvation can only be given as a possibility for which man can decide. The decision itself may be considered to be God’s gift, since God alone makes it possible, yet on the other hand it is also man’s, since he had the alternative of rejecting the possibility which God offers. (Macquarrie 1973: 184)

In other words, Bultmann thinks that the human being ‘exists,’ that is, the human being is not a substance with attributes but rather a relation that relates to itself as possibility. As such, the human being is an issue for itself; we must, in a certain sense, *decide* what and how we are. Salvation (i.e. righteousness, justification), then, is not to be construed as a quality or a property that can be imposed or bestowed on the human being but rather it is a particular kind of *possibility* for the human being which

¹⁸ Indeed, Løgstrup’s criticism here, considered as a criticism of Kierkegaard, is particularly vulnerable to rebuttal: Even in our brief discussion of Kierkegaard in 4.2. it is clear that pinning a form of Sartre-style radical choice on Kierkegaard is to egregiously misinterpret Kierkegaard. The fact that Løgstrup elucidates this criticism by appealing to Sartre perhaps betrays a sense that Løgstrup’s real target here, whether self-consciously or not, is his contemporary Kierkegaardians rather than Kierkegaard himself.

the human being can *choose*. And faith consists in the decision to take up that possibility.¹⁹

What Løgstrup is objecting to here is the thought that becoming one's true self is radically dependent on one's making a decision to affirm or take up a set of values or beliefs that would otherwise fail to have absolute meaning for the self; that the self can only relate to values 'authentically' if they have affirmed them or taken them up through an existential decision. It follows from the existentialist view that the sovereign expressions of life such as trust, love, mercy and so on could only be definitive for a person's selfhood if that person 'chooses' them to be so. By contrast, Løgstrup argues that 'in the most elemental manner conceivable, claims are imposed on human beings: they are implicit already in the definitiveness of the sovereign expression of life' (BED: 54). That is to say, the sovereign expressions of life do not become 'definitive' for the self on the basis of a decision made by the self to take them

¹⁹ A similar notion of faith as decision is operative in Gogarten's theology. As Shiner explains, Gogarten's notion of 'decision' is viewed not as 'a decision *by* the self but *with* the self', where it surely involves a 'free decision of man' but where that free decision does not 'have its origin and ground in man's decision but only in the reality which is believed' (Shiner 1966: 125). Shiner breaks this notion of decision down into three components. Firstly, the decision originates in the 'experience of the mystery as a *passive preparation* for faith in the Word of God' where Shiner quickly adds that 'even this passive preparation has its active aspect since the readiness of man for faith is not a property automatically bestowed on him but a *relation* to the divine mystery' (Shiner 1966: 125). Secondly, the decision of faith involves an awareness or self-consciousness of one's already standing in a relation to the Divine mystery. Thus, Shiner: 'Because faith involves man's relation to the mystery in which he already lives even as he lives against it, his faith cannot have the sense of his producing or establishing this relation but only of his *remaining* in the relation into which he has been called and which he now perceives in hearing his call. This second dimension of the decision expresses the active element in faith, the freedom to refuse at any moment the call out of which man now lives' (Shiner 1966: 128). In other words, if the first – mostly passive – component of the decision refers to the relation to the mystery in which we always already stand, the second more active component concerns the activity of *remaining in* that relation, rather than turning a deaf ear to it or refusing it. Finally, 'the third dimension of Gogarten's understanding of the decision of faith emerges when we recall that the relation between man and the mystery of existence always includes the world...The receptive or God-ward side of this sonship is cared for by faith; the active or worldly side of sonship is cared for by works' (Shiner 1966: 128-9). This is just to say that, as with Luther, faith is a necessary precondition for truly good works. That is; faith consists in the freedom which facilitates the proper or 'authentic' taking up of one's responsibility for the neighbour and the world.

as such, rather they are anteriorly definitive of the self. Indeed, this is what makes them ‘sovereign.’

The two objections Løgstrup levels against Kierkegaard and Kierkegaard-inspired existentialism here can be seen to provide a negative contrast to the two core features of Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology elucidated in the previous two chapters, namely, Immediacy and Human Wickedness. The putative Kierkegaardian emphasis on the need to ‘die to immediacy’ in order to win oneself in faith can be seen to contrast with Løgstrup’s commitment to Immediacy. Indeed, as Kees van Kooten Niekerk has argued, whereas Løgstrup sees in Kierkegaard’s philosophy an aversion to and suspicion of living in immediacy because of the concupiscent self-interestedness Kierkegaard attributes to it, ‘from the beginning of his academic career Løgstrup cherished the ideal of living in immediacy.’²⁰

Løgstrup’s point is: living in immediacy is not wrong in itself; what is wrong is living selfishly in it. We can live unselfishly in immediacy, and often do so, by virtue of the expressions of life. Therefore it is not necessary to die away from immediacy in a self-reflective relation to infinity. (Niekerk 2017: 190)

In other words, one way in which Løgstrup can be seen to ‘controvert’ Kierkegaard is through his valorisation of Immediacy and his suspicion of reflection.

Secondly, Løgstrup’s criticism of the role that notions such as ‘decision’ and ‘choice’ play in Kierkegaard-inspired existentialist theology and philosophy can be seen to parallel Løgstrup’s commitment to Human Wickedness: whilst from a contemporary perspective it strains credibility to pin a form a decisionism on Kierkegaard, in the philosophical *milieu* contemporary to Løgstrup, the Sartrean-existentialist emphasis on radical choice was often seen to have its roots in Kierkegaard’s thought. And for Løgstrup, the notion of radical choice reflects not a

²⁰ See also Niekerk (2007) pp. 63-5.

form of authentic of 'true' existence, but rather a form of human wickedness in which the agent takes herself to be sovereign over her own existence. By contrast, Løgstrup argues that one's life is made anteriorly definitive by the sovereign expressions of life which 'precede' and 'pre-empt' the will (BED: 68) and that any attempt to take over the sovereign expressions of life through an exertion of the will inevitably distorts and corrupts them, generating *ersatz* or, we might say, 'inauthentic' versions of the phenomena.

Baldly stated, then, these two points of contrast appear to pour a good deal of cold water on any attempt to trace a line of influence running from Kierkegaard to Løgstrup – particularly as concerns issues of the self and agency. Whereas for Løgstrup's Kierkegaard and Kierkegaard-inspired existentialists, the self is an abstract self-relation that wins its identity by extracting itself from the 'crowd' and choosing itself, for Løgstrup himself the true self is something given; it is something one seemingly passively receives in one's immediate ethical encounters with others. Indeed, Løgstrup's comment to the effect that 'winning one's identity and becoming a self is something the individual should let happen unawares, by leaving it to the sovereign expressions of life' (BED: 71) can perhaps most readily be interpreted as claiming that there is no agency – no choice - involved in becoming oneself; becoming one's true self is an event that happens, not something the self achieves.

However, I think we have reason to resist this conclusion. Whilst it is clear that Løgstrup's conception of the self is not straightforwardly Kierkegaardian or existentialist, it would be rather flat-footed to then conclude that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is diametrically opposed to Kierkegaard's thought on all counts. In fact, Løgstrup's relation to Kierkegaard can be seen to be analogous Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel: as with Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, Løgstrup's relation to Kierkegaard is marked by polemic, but where that polemic is often actually targeted

at contemporary Kierkegaardians rather than Kierkegaard himself. And beneath the polemic, there remains substantial lines of influence and agreement that ought not to be overlooked.

In expanding on this analogy, sensitivity to the theological *milieu* in which Løgstrup was writing is instructive. At that time, alongside the pre-eminence of existentialism, prominent theologians such as Karl Barth – who decisively influenced the Danish *Tidehverv* movement with whom Løgstrup had a fractious relationship – were emphasizing a notion of God as ‘wholly other.’ For Barth, God’s ‘otherness’ implies ‘exclusive separation,’ that is, an infinite qualitative difference to man.²¹ In contrast to this view, which, for Løgstrup, entails that one’s relation to the absolute must be abstracted from ‘all that is human,’ Løgstrup wants to claim that transcendence, the infinite and absolute source of value – whether we call it God or not, manifests itself in the immanent and seemingly relative, namely, in our loving, trusting, and merciful encounters with other’s. In this respect, Løgstrup’s ‘controversion’ of Kierkegaard and, especially, the Kierkegaardian theologians of his day bares comparison with Levinas’ philosophical project, in the sense that, as Diane Perpich puts it:

Levinas’s notion of alterity is developed in the service of restoring a meaning to the concrete other whereby it cannot be reduced either to dumb materialism or absorbed within an overarching and all-encompassing totality or system. Thus, what we have in Levinas is that greatest transcendence, spoken of by Jean Wahl: a transcendence that transcends transcendence for the sake of saving the immanent from (mere) immanence. (Perpich 2008: 23)

In other words, *contra* Kierkegaard and Kierkegaard-inspired theologians such as Karl Barth, Løgstrup is claiming that not all that is of immanent value to human

²¹ C.f. Barth (1968) ‘God, the pure and absolute boundary and beginning of all that we are and have and do; God, who is distinguished qualitatively from men and from everything human, and must never be identified with anything which we name, or experience, or conceive, or worship, as God...’ (330-1).

life can be dismissed as relative and, thus, a function of the ‘crowd.’ Rather, for Løgstrup, there is a transcendent normativity manifest in our immanent and concrete encounters with others – namely, as the sovereign expressions of life.

As for the underlying lines of influence and agreement, we can see that despite this clear and genuine moment of disagreement, Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology remains decisively shaped by patterns from Kierkegaard’s thought. I want to suggest that this is evident in two places: firstly, Løgstrup maintains a broadly Kierkegaardian *relational* conception of the self. And, secondly, that it can be argued that for Løgstrup the self’s self-relation can be seen to encapsulate the fundamental characteristics of moral agency.

In order to bring out the dimension of the Kierkegaardian self that Løgstrup retains, it is instructive to turn to an important clarification Løgstrup makes concerning his conception of the self in *Controverting Kierkegaard*. Løgstrup appeals to a scene from Goethe’s drama *Götz von Berlichingen* in clarifying his position. In the scene in question, Götz is approached by an enemy, Weislingen. Weislingen is in acute difficulty, and asks for information and advice from Götz. Løgstrup speculates that Götz, being in a position of power, ‘may toy with the idea of exploiting the precarious situation in which Weislingen finds himself to lead him astray, bring about his downfall, and by doing so get him back for his past misdeeds’ (BED: 56). Indeed, he may, for purely pragmatic reasons, withhold important information, knowing that ‘Weislingen will misuse whatever Götz offers him by way of support in word and action’ (BED: 55). Yet, notwithstanding these considerations, ‘he does not take advantage of Weislingen’s present difficulty to procure sweet revenge’ (BED: 56). Thus, Løgstrup asks:

But why does Götz von Berlichingen not do precisely that? We say that it is against his nature to do so, he cannot bring himself to act in that way, he is

not sufficiently without substance to do so. But then how does a person acquire substance? (BED: 56)

According to a Kierkegaardian-existentialist view, Løgstrup imagines an answer to this question would consist in one of two options. Either that Götz was simply conforming to the norms and conventions of his social *milieu* – perhaps norms of truth-telling or honour, for instance - or, conversely, that Weislingen’s request for information constituted a ‘moment of decision’ for Götz, whereby he is ‘removed from the great mass of people, from convention, set apart as a particular individual and rendered a self’ (BED: 56).

By contrast, Løgstrup claims that Götz acquires ‘substance’ by ‘*identifying* [*identificere*] himself with the definitiveness inherent in the expressions of life through which he realizes his life’ (BED: 56). Løgstrup continues: ‘Through his identification with the definitiveness inherent in a complex of expressions of life, the individual becomes a concrete self’ (BED: 56). Løgstrup’s use of the term ‘identification’ is crucial here. For what it implies is that, like Kierkegaard, Løgstrup views the self as a relation – namely, a relation of self-identification.²² We can extrapolate: what it is to be a ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ self for Løgstrup is to come into identity with the fundamental features of one’s existence that comprise the sovereign expressions of life. By contrast, what it is to fail to be a self is to fail to come into identity with one’s existence as rendered definitive by the sovereign expressions of life: for instance, if Götz were to assert his own sovereignty in relation to Weislingen by wielding power over him and refusing to provide him with assistance, or if he were to turn a deaf ear to the needs of

²² Niekerk (2017) has made a similar observation: ‘At first sight it might seem strange that Løgstrup connects selfhood with the sovereignty of the expression of life. Does not this sovereignty mean that it is the expression of life that makes me act in a certain way? Yes, it does. But how, then, can I be myself in having myself ruled by something which is apparently different from me? Løgstrup answers: in surrendering to the expressions of life we *identify* ourselves with them. Therefore we do not experience their realization as being ruled by an alien power. On the contrary, we experience it as a form of self-realization in which we are truly ourselves’ (200).

Weislingen he would be failing to identify himself with the sovereign expressions of life and, thus, be failing to relate transparently to his own existence; he would fail to ‘acquire substance,’ as Løgstrup puts it.²³ Thus, my claim is that Løgstrup is not opposed to a relational conception of the self *per se* – in fact he can be seen to adopt such a conception – rather, he is opposed to a certain way of construing this conception of the self that emphasizes introspection and religious reflection over one’s concrete relations with others.

Can Løgstrup’s adoption of a relational conception of the self be seen to encapsulate a mode of agency? Admittedly, there is some textual evidence in Løgstrup’s writing on the sovereign expressions of life that encourage the thought that the self’s coming into identity with the sovereign expressions of life is something that *happens* to the self – it is an ‘event’ that ‘overwhelms’ or ‘overmasters’ the self’s agency, taking the self ‘unawares’ – rather than something the self ‘achieves’ through his agency. And, clearly, any construal of the self in such a way as to associate it with a mode of agency that involves the making of existential decisions would be rejected by Løgstrup. Thus, we might conclude that the realization of one’s true self in the sovereign expressions of life is not a matter of agency for Løgstrup.

However, this is not the only available way to interpret Løgstrup’s conception of the self in relation to the sovereign expressions of life. For what Løgstrup’s discussion of the scene from *Götz von Berlichingen* reveals is that Götz’s actions were *at least* expressive of a *negative* mode of agency with respect to the self’s relation to the

²³ It might be objected here that it seems entirely reasonable for Götz to show reticence in providing information to his enemy. Løgstrup is alive to this worry: he argues in one place, for instance, that in some circumstances one must ‘suspend’ the sovereign expressions of life: ‘In a dictatorship, being sincere when dealing with the secret police is inadmissible’ (BED: 133). It is often thought that Løgstrup’s comments here and elsewhere are quasi-autobiographical, in that they refer back to his time as an informant for the Danish resistance.

sovereign expressions of life that belies the claim that the sovereign expressions of life or the other simply take over and determine the self. This mode of agency that can perhaps be characterized in terms of *resisting the temptation to defy the sovereign expressions of life*: Götz ‘acquires substance’ by not giving in to the temptation to take advantage of Weislingen. This negative valence of agency in relation to the sovereign expressions of life can be found in other places in Løgstrup’s work: for instance, it appears to be attested to in the above-quoted passage in which Løgstrup likens the realization of the sovereign expressions of life to a ‘decision to surrender oneself to trust and mercy [by the] renunciation of attitudes or movements of thought and feeling that are incompatible with trust and mercifulness...’ (BED: 79), where this remark clearly suggests that the realization of oneself in the sovereign expressions of life involves some form of agency on the part of the self, namely, a ‘spontaneous decision’ (BED: 79).²⁴

What these examples suggest is that Løgstrup allowed that the self has some agential latitude with respect to the sovereign expressions of life – albeit just in the negative sense that we can *resist defiance*, so to speak. Yet, we must be cautious in how we interpret these comments. Clearly, in making these remarks, Løgstrup did not mean to suggest that the self *qua* agent, upon being tempted to defy the claim made upon them by the other, can through their own self-governing efforts resist that defiance and, thus, bring themselves into line with the claim made on them by the other, as this would lead to a conception of agency comparable to that of the Kantian

²⁴ We might also note that Løgstrup’s example of the woman who reins in her inclination to speak openly to the secret police discussed in the previous chapter is relevant here, as are Løgstrup’s comments that ‘in certain cases the conditionality of the action can make it necessary to suspend the expression of life. The only ethically defensible course can be to go against the openness of speech, to put the other person on the wrong track, namely, when the other harbours destructive intent and holds power. The expression of life can therefore be suspended, and it can be necessary, indeed a duty, to do so’ (BED: 133). The important point for our purposes is to note that Løgstrup did not consistently hold that the sovereign expressions of life can ‘seize’ and ‘overmaster’ the agent; there is some agential leeway at play.

Samaritan that he explicitly rejects (see §1). However, I would suggest that it would be a mistake to simply write off Løgstrup's comments here and in other places as aberrations, for what they potentially open up a way of unravelling the mystery of the relations between the self the other and the sovereign expressions of life.

In this respect, it is important to observe that in each of the passages just discussed, Løgstrup does not describe the agency involved in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life in terms of *actively* choosing or deciding but rather favours terms such as 'letting,' 'surrendering,' 'yielding' and 'allowing.' For instance, in his discussion of *Götz von Berlichingen*, he writes that '...it lies with the individual to *let* the definitive expression of life thrust its way through in even the most complicated and unpropitious of situations' (BED: 58, my emphasis); and in his discussion of the 'spontaneous decision' (BED: 79) he talks of deciding to '*surrender* oneself to trust and mercy' (BED: 79). We can add to these examples a further important remark from *Controverting Kierkegaard*:

Either the will, *allowing* itself to be overmastered, *surrenders* to the sovereign expressions of life, or it relies on its own efforts, and though morality's ersatz action we do what we surmise the sovereign expressions of life would have done had it pre-empted our volition. (BED: 68, my emphasis).

Enten lader viljen sig overmande og giver sig livsytringen i vold, eller den forlader sig på sin anstrengelse og i moralens erstatningshandling gør vi det, som vi kan regne ud, at den suveræne livsytring ville have gjort, om den var kommet vor vilje i forkøbet. (OK: 116, my emphasis)

Terms such as these have an ambiguous agential status, being neither fully active nor fully passive: they designate a mode of agency that is not well described in terms of autonomous self-governing activity, yet which is evidently more than being causally moved by a situation or being 'controlled' by the other. Can we clarify the mode of agency encapsulated by these terms? And will doing so provide us with a

conception of moral agency compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology? It is to these questions that I now turn.

4.4. The Sovereign Expressions of Life and Medio-Passive Agency

Let us take stock. We are investigating a possible way of conceiving of a mode of agency compatible with Løgstrup's core commitments to Immediacy and Human Wickedness. The mode of agency under discussion has its roots in a broadly Kierkegaardian relational conception of the self according to which the self is seen as a reflexive relation that describes the fundamental characteristics of human agency. So far I have suggested that this conception of agency can be seen to map on to Løgstrup's moral phenomenology in the following way. The ethical encounter with the other is framed by the 'latent presence' (BED: 125) of the sovereign expressions of life. As we have seen in §2, the sovereign expressions of life are hermeneutic conditions disclosive of what is for Løgstrup the ontological fact of human interdependence. Thus, according to Løgstrup's architectonic, a self becomes a true self by identifying with the sovereign expressions of life in the ethical encounter with the other.

Furthermore, we have seen that Løgstrup sometimes describes this process of identification as involving a peculiar form of agency that Løgstrup designates with terms such as surrendering, letting, allowing and yielding, which terms I shall refer to collectively as 'surrendering,' hereafter. In light of these comments, the question we face is this. How can we understand the mode of agency involved in 'surrendering'? It is natural to suppose that surrendering differs from *self-governing* activity (F²). Yet, it is equally intuitive to think that surrendering is *more than* sheer passivity; more than being controlled by the other or being causally moved by a situation. My suggestion will be that the notion of *medio-passive agency* as developed in the work of Han-Pile

provides an invaluable resource for conceiving of a mode of moral agency that is compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. To be clear: my claim is not that my construal of Løgstrup on this point is the *only* way of interpreting Løgstrup. I readily admit that there is some textual evidence that supports the view that the realization of oneself in the sovereign expressions of life is something that *happens* to the self and is, thus, something in relation to which the self is wholly passive. What I am denying is that *this* is the *only* way to read Løgstrup: as we have seen, there is much evidence in support of the view that the self plays some role *qua* agent in the realization of itself in the sovereign expressions of life. And it is an interpretation in light of this evidence that I am presently pursuing.

A clear benefit of my interpretation will be that it reduces the 'mysteriousness' of Løgstrup's account of the sovereign expressions of life and, thus, increases the plausibility of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. However, I recognize that in developing my argument here, I will need to countenance some obvious worries that potentially attend my interpretation of Løgstrup. Firstly, there is a worry that by conceiving of the mode of agency involved in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works in terms of a broadly Kierkegaardian reflexive self-relation, I risk the accusation of importing a form of self-reflection into my interpretation of Løgstrup that transgresses his commitment to Immediacy. Indeed, as we have seen, a major criticism Løgstrup levels against Kierkegaard, rightly or wrongly, is that he neglects immediacy for the sake of reflection (BED: 53). Secondly, there is a worry that my interpretation might portray the Løgstrupian agent as playing too *active* a role in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life, where this would transgress Løgstrup's commitment to Human Wickedness. As we have seen, Løgstrup was explicitly critical of what he saw as an exaggerated and distorted emphasis on notions such as choice and decision in Kierkegaard and Kierkegaard-

inspired existentialist philosophy and theology. However, as I will presently show, neither of these worries prove to be intractable. In section 4.4.1, I will focus on providing a detailed account of medio-passive agency and demonstrating its relevance for and applicability to Løgstrup's notion of surrender, where, in 4.4.2, I will then draw on this account in giving definition to my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency overall.

4.4.1. *Medio-Passivity*

The term 'medio-passivity' is derived from the 'middle' or 'medial' voice in ancient Greek grammar, which has been characterized as follows:

...the 'original' or 'essential' function of the medial voice was...to denote that a process is taking place with regard to, or is affecting, happening to, a person or a thing; this definition includes also those cases in which we are under the impression that in the eyes of those who once used this category in its original function some power or something powerful was at work in or through the subject, or manifested itself in or by means of the subject on the one hand and those cases in which the process, whilst properly performed by, or originating with, the subject, obviously was not limited to the 'sphere' or the subject. (Gonda, quoted in Llewelyn 1991: ix)

In other words, the middle or medial voice can refer to cases, firstly, in which we the subject appears 'possessed' by some force or power working through them. And, secondly, it refers to cases where the subject is seen to be involved in or participating in an event or process *qua* agent, but where the subject is not the originator or cause of the event or process.

Phillipe Eberhard has provided an illuminating characterization of this latter use of the middle voice:

Instead of focusing on the subject and the object, on the agent and patient, on who affects what/is affected by what, etc., the middle voice brings to language the subject in his or her relation to the process the verb expresses. In the middle voice, as opposed to the active, the subject is within the action which happens to him or her *and* of which he or she is subject. The subject does not control the action from outside. He or she is not in charge of the event. The key of the middle voice is that it allows one to conceive of a nonexclusive subject: the event happens, *and* I am its subject. The paradigmatic verb for this kind of involving action is the Greek middle... "to get married." To get married

is more than actively taking a spouse. It suggests the medial involvement in the process of marriage which happens to the bride and the groom who marry each other. (Eberhard 2004: 2)

In short, the middle voice refers to events or processes which ‘happen’ to the subject, but with respect to which the subject is not merely passive but is rather involved or participates in the event or process that encompasses it. The middle voice, in other words, articulates cases in which the subject is neither wholly active nor wholly passive. Along with Eberhard’s example of marriage, we might think of cases such as trying to get to sleep or trying to concentrate as being illustrative of ‘medial’ processes: for instance, in trying to fall asleep, I am ‘involved’ in the process of falling asleep, yet it is not something I actively cause; sleep comes to me.

Immediately, then, the grammatical middle voice – medio-passivity – looks to be a promising way of capturing the modality of verbs like ‘surrendering,’ ‘letting’ and ‘allowing’ insofar as they intimate a kind of agency that is neither fully active nor fully passive. However, the core meaning of the ‘middle voice’ is notoriously difficult to express in modern English, since – as many commentators have pointed out – the grammatical middle voice has gone out of usage. In a sense, we are condemned to use language which forces us characterize events by either active or passive expressions; we simply do not have the appropriate grammatical scaffolding to express middle voiced phenomena.

Nonetheless, attempts to recapture the core of medio-passivity can be found in the work of many modern philosophers. For instance, Han-Pile has argued that Nietzsche’s notion of *amor fati* (love of fate) exhibits a medio-passive modality. Indeed, with reference to Luther, she writes that *amor fati* can be seen to represent a ‘secularised version of grace:’

[T]he existential transformation [*amor fati*] entails is not dependent on our will (love cannot be willed into existence). What I have called its medio-

passive modality captures the fact that even though we may try to prepare for it, we cannot ensure its coming: like grace (which, in the Lutheran tradition Nietzsche was raised in, cannot be secured by works either), love happens (or not) to us from the outside. (Han-Pile 2011: 242)

Another clear example of an attempt to describe a medio-passive mode of agency can be found in the later Heidegger's interest in the notion of *Gelassenheit* (releasement), a notion he appropriated from Meister Eckhart in attempting to articulate the possibility of 'thinking without willing' (Heidegger 2010: 33). In the characteristically obfuscating language of his later philosophy, Heidegger defines *Gelassenheit* in terms of a 'waiting' whereby one 'let[s] oneself into an involvement in the open of the open-region' (Heidegger 2010: 76-8).²⁵ In elucidating this notion, Brett Davis has described Heidegger's thinking here as follows:

Renouncing his lordship over beings, man opens himself to the free space, the clearing, of being; in guarding the clearing of being, man takes part in letting beings be. In his role of guarding or shepherding, man neither actively creates, nor merely passively suffers, but rather "participates" in the opening up and preserving of a world by "corresponding" to being. In each of these expressions for the essential role of man, "guarding," "shepherding," "watching over," "taking part," etc., what is at stake is hearing a "task" or "commission" that is no longer definable in terms of the opposition of passivity/activity in the domain of the will. (Davis 2007: 220-1)

The core insight of Heidegger's notion of *Gelassenheit* for our purposes is the thought of a mode of agency described in terms of a 'letting beings be' which is

²⁵ More concretely, Heidegger likens *Gelassenheit* to an 'authentic conversation:' for a conversation to come into its own essence – that is, as an *authentic* conversation, Heidegger avers that language needs to be infused with 'the word,' which appears to mean something like the proliferation of a transformative 'meaningfulness' or depth of profundity between interlocutors. How is the word brought to language in conversation? According to Heidegger it is not a matter of 'willing' the word to language. In 'deep' conversations, it is often impossible to simply and bluntly say what's on one's mind - maybe because what one wishes to express is hard to grasp and express, or maybe also because the conversational context disallows such bluntness. What such conversations require is a kind of perambulation in which 'the word' is allowed to come into view, and a patient preparedness to let the conversation 'reach that of which it speaks' – to let 'the word' befall the conversation and transform its essence. *Gelassenheit* operates in this example as a mode of comportment or involvement within the conversation which 'waits' for 'the word' to come to the conversation.

portrayed by Heidegger as being undefinable in terms of the active/passive binary in the domain of the will.

Yet another example can be found in Simone Weil's notion of 'attention,' which she describes as 'perhaps the greatest effort of all...but it is a negative effort' (Weil 1950: 71):

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by the object, it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a low level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts, as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him, without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object which is to penetrate it. (Weil 1950: 71)

As with Nietzsche's notion of *amor fati* and the later Heidegger's notion of *Gelassenheit*, the notion of attention seeks to capture a mode of agency that is neither fully active; it does not involve 'a kind of muscular effort' (Weil 1950: 70), as Weil puts it. But neither is it fully passive either; the agent is not simply overtaken or causally moved by outside forces. It is interesting to compare this passage from Weil to Murdoch's example of the kestrel quoted in the previous chapter as part of my discussion of the split-self view, since Murdoch's thinking was, arguably, influenced by Weil on this point. What Weil emphasizes is that the capacity to 'be penetrated by the object,' say, the capacity to be drawn out of oneself by the kestrel, requires some form of agency on the part of the subject. But this agency should not be understood in terms of a self-governing act of the will; rather, it requires a certain mode of comportment, 'attention,' that is not well described by the active/passive binary.

As a final example, one is tempted to venture the thought that, *pace* Løgstrup, Kierkegaard's 'theory of the leap' exhibits a medio-passive structure: Ferreira's description of the leap as a 'captivating yet free engagement,' which consists in both

a sense of letting go of one's attempts to grasp the absolute paradox along with a sense of *passion* whereby one embraces the paradox, could be seen to lend itself to medio-passive formulations.

The point of presenting these examples of what I am calling medio-passive agency is to bring a sense of what is designated by the term medio-passivity into view, albeit in a preliminary and unsystematic way. And there are many other examples which could be appealed to in this regard.²⁶ For our purposes, however, Han-Pile's discussion of medio-passive agency in relation to the Heidegger of *Being and Time* provides perhaps the best substantive introduction to the notion of medio-passivity as a conception of agency: not only because, as we have seen, the Heidegger of *Being and Time* had direct influence on Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics (see §2), but also because Han-Pile's discussion focuses on the mode of agency involved in becoming one's 'true' or 'authentic' self.

In her article 'Freedom and the 'Choice to Choose Oneself in *Being and Time*,' Han-Pile is concerned to defuse an impending paradox concerning the putative

²⁶ For instance, another illuminating example can be found in the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer discusses 'mediality' in describing his core notion of 'play.' For Gadamer, play is 'a process that takes place "in between." ...play does not have its being in the player's consciousness or attitude, but on the contrary play draws him into its domain and fills him with its spirit' (Gadamer 2004: 113). On Gadamer's view, the mediality of play consists in the sense that it is a 'process' or 'event' *within* which the subject finds herself but which also requires the participation of the subject in order to keep the play going. Gadamer elucidates the mediality of play with reference to what he calls the 'sacred seriousness' of play: 'Play fulfils its purpose only if the player loses himself in the play. Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play. Someone who doesn't take the game seriously is a spoilsport.' (Gadamer 2004: 107). In other words, Gadamer is suggesting that play proper only occurs when the players are filled with the 'spirit' of play. There is an element of passivity here: For play to be play the subject must 'lose himself in the play' and this, Gadamer suggests, is something that *happens* to the subject – it is not something the subject 'intends.' Yet, by the same margin, Gadamer avers that part of what it is to be lost in play is to take the game seriously. That is, only if the player comports himself in relation to the game in such a way that, for example, is expressive of his commitment to the game and its rules can the play be wholly play. There is an element of activity here. The player is *involved* in or *participates* in the game: he keeps the game going through his taking the game seriously. We might imagine, counter-factually, that at any moment a player can 'give up' and destroy the spirit of play.

freedom of Dasein: according to Heidegger's existential analytic of Dasein as 'being-in-the-world,' Dasein '*must* be free' (Han-Pile 2013: 291) insofar as it belongs to the structure of Dasein to transcend towards the world (Heidegger's definition of freedom). Yet, in a way that recalls Luther's notion of *incurvatus in se*, Heidegger often pictures Dasein as 'anything but free: it "ensnares itself", is "lost", "alienated," and needs to be "liberated"' (Han-Pile 2013: 291): Dasein's existence is defined by *possibility*, but Dasein, for the most part, falls into and is ensnared by the conventional postures of *Das Man*. Thus, there is a puzzle inherent in Heidegger's conception of Dasein as the kind of being that *must* be free, yet where his phenomenological analyses show Dasein to be unfree: how can Dasein realize the freedom that defines its mode of being?

In order to solve this puzzle, Han-Pile focuses on Heidegger's perplexing notion of the 'choice to choose oneself' as providing the key to understanding how Dasein's freedom is realized. The choice to choose oneself, which is closely related to the possibility of authenticity, is described by Han-Pile as the 'transparent self-ascription of responsibility' (Han-Pile 2013: 301) whereby

Dasein is called to realize that although...projection is not fully under its control, it is not either something that simply happens to it...[E]ven though [Dasein] is aware that it does not have full control over its projection, Dasein is still prepared to *own up* to it. This means, inter alia, that it is still prepared to take the negative consequences of its pressing ahead into the possibility (if any) as consequences rather than accidents that befall it and about which it could complain...Such pre-reflective moral appropriation, in turn, transforms the meaning of Dasein's comportment: its very pressing ahead into the relevant possibility becomes the implicit endorsement of its responsibility for doing so. (Han-Pile 2013: 310)

In other words, choosing to choose oneself involves a mode of Dasein's comportment in relation to its existence as that which, in its finitude, has to project into particular possibilities and, thus, foreclose on others that *owns up* to or *takes*

responsibility for its existence – despite, or, perhaps, in light of, the fact that Dasein’s projection is not fully in its hands.

How, then, is this choice to choose made? Han-Pile notes that, as Heidegger describes it, the choice to choose oneself cannot be understood in ‘voluntaristic’ terms as a ‘rationalistic model of decision-making’ nor can it be understood as a ‘primordial act of willing.’ Rather, for Heidegger the choice to choose oneself is characterized in terms of Dasein ‘understandingly letting itself be called forth’ (SZ: 287) by what he terms the ‘call of conscience.’²⁷ the possibility of choosing to choose oneself is *dependent* on Dasein’s hearing the call of conscience. But, crucially, hearing the call of conscience is not fully in the power of Dasein. Thus, on Han-Pile’s reading, there seems to be a significant degree of passivity integrated into the choice to choose oneself: the choice, Han-Pile suggests, is ‘halfway between possession and abandonment (‘letting oneself’);’ it ‘seems made *in me* almost as much as *by me*’ (Han-Pile 2013: 308). And the important sense of passivity integrated in the choice to choose oneself, for Han-Pile, can best be understood in terms of a medio-passive conception of agency: ‘ultimately, hearing the call [of conscience] is not up to me: yet I can take some responsibility for doing so in the sense that unless I try to attune myself in the right way it may never be heard at all’ (Han-Pile 2013: 309).

²⁷ According to Mark Wrathall and Max Murphey, ‘conscience “shows” me myself, directs me to my own factual basis for decision, and not only enables authenticity but “demands it” of me...[The call of conscience] articulates the situation within which I find myself, and draws my attention to certain definite features of that situation...’ (2013: 27). An obvious modification to be made to this definition from a Løgstrupian perspective would be to say that the *other person* is the source of the call of conscience. As Han-Pile interprets it, hearing the call of conscience ‘does not enable Dasein to give itself its own laws nor to have full control over itself or its life – it does not make it autonomous. On the contrary, it reveals the vacuity of the rationalist ideal of absolute self-mastery and the pernicious way it denies the constraints of finitude by blinding us to the medio-passive character of some of the most important aspects of our lives. It shows that Dasein needs to give up on freedom as total control to realize that, in Freud’s words, it is not the master in its own house and needs the call of conscience that brings the choice home to it. Yet by developing its receptivity to the pull of possibilities that cannot be disclosed without a greater degree of ontological transparency, the double choice gives Dasein more *Spielraum*, more room to manoeuvre’ (Han-Pile 2013: 312).

In sum, Heidegger's notion of the choice to choose oneself is expressive of a medio-passive mode of agency insofar as it consists in an existential modification of Dasein's mode of comporting itself in relation to its finitude in such a way that owns up to its finitude. That is, it is a way of comporting itself *transparently* in relation to its existence as a thrown project fallen into the world (see §2). Importantly, this mode of comportment is not something that Dasein can straightforwardly *do*, rather it is dependent on the hearing of the 'call of conscience.' And the medio-passive dimension of the choice to choose oneself consists in the fact that it integrates this sense of passivity *in* the way in which it comports itself to itself, *viz.* letting oneself be called forth.

Clear parallels can be seen between Heidegger's notion of what it is to transparently ascribe responsibility to oneself in making the choice to choose oneself, at least on Han-Pile's reading, and Løgstrup's notion of the 'spontaneous decision' to surrender oneself to the sovereign expressions of life.²⁸ As an initial point, it is worth noting Han-Pile's description of the choice to choose oneself as being an existential modification of a 'pre-reflective' mode of comportment.²⁹ With this designation, Han-

²⁸ Indeed, we can add that there are significant parallels between Heidegger's notion of the choice to choose oneself and Kierkegaard's ontology of the self, as Han-Pile herself points out: for instance, both are centrally concerned with a notion of choice as transformative self-relation. However, Han-Pile also notes that there are significant differences between Heidegger's and Kierkegaard's respective construals of this choice. One of which is Heidegger's doubling up of the choice as a choice to choose. Another is the theological presuppositions underlying Kierkegaard's conception. On this latter point, Kosch notes that: 'Although Kierkegaard clearly intends this claim as one about the relation of human beings to their divine creator, the phenomenological fact that is its basis can be taken (as Heidegger and Sartre take it) as brute. What the condition means is just that the self has some degree of power over what it is or will become, but not over the fact that it is, nor over that it has the sort of structure which gives it power over what it will become' (Kosch 2006: 203). In this relation, we might venture the thought that Løgstrup can be seen to lie somewhere between Kierkegaard and Heidegger: on the one hand, the reflexive self relation Løgstrup describes is a relation to an 'outside' source of norms that define its being and orient it in a particular way, and is, thus, not *merely* 'brute,' as with Heidegger. Yet, on the other hand, this outside source of norms, whilst 'suggesting a religious interpretation' is not theistic, but ontological.

²⁹ In a separate paper, Han-Pile defines 'pre-reflective' as denoting that 'the content of the awareness [that] while not immediately available to the agent, is not hidden from her either' (Han-Pile: forthcoming). She continues: 'by analogy, in standard conditions we are not (or very marginally)

Pile signals that the choice to choose oneself is not to be understood in terms of a ‘stepping back’ and thematically reflecting on one’s existence. Rather, plausibly, in using this term, Han-Pile has a Heideggerian notion of reflection in mind. In an oft-quoted passage from *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger writes that

The way in which the self is unveiled to itself in the factual Dasein can...be fittingly called reflection, except that we must not take this expression to mean what is commonly meant by it – the ego bent around backward starting at itself – but an interconnection such as is manifested in the optical meaning of the term “reflection”. To reflect means, in the optical context, to break at something, to radiate back from there, to show itself in a reflection of something...[The self] finds *itself* primarily and constantly *in things* because, tending them, distressed by them, it always in some way or other rests in things. (BP: 158-9)

In other words, the idea is that in all pre-theoretical comportment my own being is reflected back to me whenever I disclose the being of worldly entities. For instance, when a philosophy teacher walks into the seminar room, her comportment allows the equipment in that room to show up as useful in the particular way that serves her goals as an instructor – and so simultaneously reflects back to her, her practical self-understanding as a philosophy teacher: in pre-reflective life, the disclosure of entities is always self-disclosure.³⁰ Choosing to choose oneself is an existential modification of this pre-theoretical mode of comportment, rather than a reflective interruption of it: it means being ‘resolute’ and self-transparent *in* one’s pre-theoretical comportment.

This point is important because it helps us to deflect the potential objection that by conceiving of the self in relational terms, we automatically incorporate a form of thematic self-reflection into the process of identifying with the sovereign expressions of life that is alien to Løgstrup’s ethics. Identifying oneself with the

aware of the perceptual content of our peripheral vision; however, if need be we can refocus on such content and bring it to full awareness’ (Han-Pile: forthcoming).

³⁰ I am indebted to Matt Burch for providing me with this example.

sovereign expressions of life does not involve stepping back into self-enclosing reflection on oneself and one's existence – quite the opposite: in pre-reflective life one relates to oneself *pre-theoretically* in one's dealings with things. Or, to paraphrase Løgstrup, we might say that the point of one's relationship to the sovereign expressions of life (and, thus, one's relation to one's fundamental interdependence) is determined at the point of one's relation to the other. What is at stake is the *way* in which one's pre-reflective or pre-theoretical comportment towards entities (Heidegger) or others (Løgstrup) is modified.

An even more significant parallel, however, can be seen in the way that both Heidegger and Løgstrup start with the problem that whilst at a certain level human existence is defined by freedom – indeed, Løgstrup refers to the sovereign expressions of life as being expressive of the 'freedom of existence' (BED: 67) – their phenomenological analyses show the self to be for the most part 'alienated' from this freedom in 'inauthenticity' (for Heidegger) or inturnedness (for Løgstrup).³¹ Given this, what Han-Pile's medio-passive analysis of Heidegger helps us to see is a way that agency can be seen to participate in the 'transition' from inauthenticity or inturnedness to authenticity or 'truth,' namely, through a *medio-passive* mode of comportment. Crucially the notion of medio-passive agency captures the sense in which the transition from inauthenticity to authenticity involves a *choice*, and is thus related to agency, but that this choice is qualified by a significant element of passivity; the substance of the choice is a medio-passive dependency on hearing the call of conscience. The medio-passive mode of agency described by Han-Pile here, then, looks initially promising as a way of conceiving of a mode of agency compatible with the realization of the sovereign expressions of life.

³¹ For a further discussion on the self's freedom with respect to the sovereign expressions of life see §5.

Yet, it might be objected that the medio-passive conception of agency as a choice to choose remains *too active* to be compatible with Løgstrup's commitment to Human Wickedness. As Stern has argued,

[I]f we now allow Løgstrup to be understood in this [medio-passive] manner, there is a worry that it would compromise his commitment to the model of human wickedness with which we began, and which he seems to inherit from Luther: namely that 'nothing can be subtracted from the wickedness of man. The self brings everything under the power of selfishness. Man's will is bound in this' [ED: 141, translation modified by Stern]. For, if we take this claim seriously, how can the self or the will *surrender itself* to the sovereign expressions of life, which break through its selfishness? (Stern: forthcoming)

In other words, the worry is that insofar as medio-passive agency might be seen to in some way rest on the thought that the realization of the sovereign expressions of life is in some way dependent on or initiated by the intuned self's surrendering itself, where this then allows that the self is justified in taking some credit for realizing the sovereign expressions of life, then the sovereign expressions of life will *ipso facto* be corrupted and distorted. Han-Pile's remark that 'I can take some responsibility...in the sense that unless I try to attune myself in the right way it may never be heard at all' perhaps encourages this kind of worry with respect to Løgstrup's moral phenomenology.

In response, however, it must firstly be observed that the quote Stern appeals to here is taken from Løgstrup's earlier construal of human wickedness in *The Ethical Demand*. And, as Løgstrup himself admits, his position on human wickedness altered in his latter writings on the sovereign expressions of life. As we have seen, in part thanks to the split-self view itself, the *way* in which Løgstrup's construal of human wickedness changed is in allowing for a 'true' self capable of performing the good works of the sovereign expressions of life. Given this, we are compelled to ask: in what way is the 'true' self involved in the performance of good works? And this is the question I am seeking to answer in terms of a broadly Kierkegaardian account of the

structural characteristics of human agency. Stern's objection, I submit, rests on the assumption that it is the *inturned* self that surrenders, where this seems to be linked to the idea of a substantive self in a state or condition of inturnedness that, as it were, lies behind surrendering considered as an action. By contrast, on the view shared by Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and, I would argue, Løgstrup, the self is conceived in *modal* terms as an ongoing process of becoming. A crucial implication of this is that the inturned self and the true self are seen as *modes* of being a self rather than as states or conditions of an entity. On the interpretation I am prosecuting, then, the *inturned* mode of being a self *just is* a function of one's not surrendering to the expressions of life but rather asserting oneself in relation to them. And, conversely, the mode of being a *true* self *just is* to come into identity with the sovereign expressions of life by comporting oneself *surrenderingly* in relation to them, as we might put it. So it is not the case that the *inturned* self surrenders and, thus, becomes a true self, but rather that what it is to realize one's true self is to comport oneself *surrenderingly* in the encounter with the other.³²

Even so, it might still be objected that the medio-passive mode of agency presented here places too much initiative in the hands of the self in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life, where Løgstrup is keen to emphasize that the sovereign expressions of life 'overwhelm' or 'overmaster' the self. In order to respond to this worry, it is important to further clarify the specific configuration of activity and passivity at play in the medio-passive mode of agency. With this agenda in mind,

³² Daniel Watts has captured this difficult thought well in his discussion of Kierkegaard's 'theory of the leap' as a way 'in which a new capacity seems to be acquired only through its very exercise' (Watts 2017a: 11). The point is that surrendering is not a preparatory move made by the inturned self, a la religiousness A, but rather the seemingly 'spontaneous' realization of one's true self in the way one responds to a situation.

I will turn to Béatrice Han-Pile's reconfigured conception of medio-passive agency in her recent paper 'Hope and Agency.'

In the paper, Han-Pile defines medio-passive agency as descriptive of those cases in which '...an agent responds to an experience of agential limitation in a manner that integrates this experience as presently ineliminable, and acts without trying to assert control' (Han-Pile: forthcoming). Or, stated differently, medio-passive agency describes cases where '...agents can only act if they understand themselves as also passive *in the acting itself*: their acting integrates the perceived agential limitation into their agency' (Han-Pile: forthcoming). Elaborating on this definition, Han-Pile delineates three defining moments of medio-passive agency: (1) medio-passive agency describes cases in which one understands oneself to be *responding* to a situation, rather than simply being causally moved; (2) the *way* in which the agent responds in such cases is best described as 'letting go,' which Han-Pile characterizes negatively as a refraining from trying to assert oneself or take control of the situation; (3) this 'letting go,' however, is experienced as *forcing* itself on the agent, given their agential limitation in relation to the situation. Han-Pile appeals here to Merleau-Ponty's notion of a 'motive' in further defining this experience of 'having to let go,' where a 'motive' '...is neither a reason nor a cause: it picks out the manner in which our body influences how we experience and respond to the solicitations of the world' (Wrathall 2005: 113). In other words, a 'motive' describes the way in which responses are experienced as being 'drawn out' of the agent in virtue of 'the way our environment and body work together to dispose us to particular ways of acting and experiencing' (Wrathall 2005: 121).

Han-Pile develops this conception of medio-passive agency with experiences of powerlessness in mind. Thus, her leading example of medio-passive agency is the

‘strong hope’ shown by a sufferer of a severe illness. In this respect, Han-Pile’s conception speaks to a different kind of case than the kind of case Løgstrup has in mind with the sovereign expressions of life. Moreover, whereas Han-Pile emphasizes the role of the body as a motive in her discussion, as far as I am aware Løgstrup pays little attention to the body in his phenomenology. Nonetheless, Han-Pile’s emphasis on the experience of agential limitation in her definition of medio-passive agency as a mode of agency that *integrates* this experience of passivity *into the acting itself* is instructive. For it helps us to elucidate the following distinction. What is distinctive about *surrendering* in contrast to other, more active, modes of agential comportment is precisely the sense of agential limitation it evokes. Surrendering to the sovereign expressions of life is not the same as taking up an incentive as a principle for action. Nor is it the same as - perhaps akratically - giving in to a desire to drink more coffee, for instance. Rather, it describes an experience of feeling *as if one has no choice but to X*, where this experience of agential limitation is integrated into the acting itself. One is reminded of Luther’s - perhaps apocryphal - cry: ‘Here I stand; I can do no other!’ More positively, we might think of the phenomenology of love, where it is natural to suppose that letting oneself fall in love is expressive of one’s having made a choice or a commitment - there is always the possibility of resisting one’s love - but that, first personally, there is a sense of inexorability involved in the process of falling in love. As with Heidegger’s choice to choose, falling in love is, arguably, experienced as a choice made *in me* rather than *by me*.³³

In relation to Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology, we can readily see how this experience of agential limitation plays out in the face-to-face encounter. Recall my

³³ Alternatively, perhaps more in keeping with Løgstrup’s focus on the other, we might think of the modality of this decision along Derridean lines as ‘the other’s decision in me,’ which Derrida describes as a ‘passive decision...of the absolutely other in me, of the other as the absolute who decides of me in me’ (Derrida, quoted in Critchley 1999: 263).

discussion in chapter two: on Løgstrup's view, the presence of the other breaks down one's pictures and theories; the other overflows or escapes categorization within one's conceptual scheme. There are different ways that we can respond to this kind of encounter: we can try to cling on to our pictures, theories and concepts in attempting to reduce the other we encounter to a caricature, or we can let go of our pictures, theories and concepts. On Løgstrup's view, clinging on to our pictures, theories and concepts is something we can actively try to do, but letting go of them is not: the possibility of letting go of or surrendering our attachment to our pictures, theories and concepts depends on our being called into question in the face-to-face encounter, which is experienced as overwhelming or encompassing. Yet, this is not to say that letting go of or surrendering our pictures, theories and concepts in the encounter with the other is something in relation to which the self *qua* agent is entirely passive. Rather, on a medio-passive conception, agency is expressed in the way that the self comports itself in relation to experiences of ineliminable agential limitation: rather than trying to actively assert oneself in the face of such experiences, the medio-passive agent integrates those experiences *in* the way they act. In a word, the agency involved in the true self's realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works can be captured in terms of an existential modification of one's mode of comporting oneself in the face-to-face encounter, whereby in comporting oneself *surrenderingly* (rather than *self-assertively*) in that encounter, one thereby integrates one's perceived agential limitations within the overwhelming, encompassing encounter *in* the way one responds to it.

To sum up, in this section I have presented the medio-passive conception of agency as it has been developed in the work of Han-Pile. In the process, I have attempted show its applicability to Løgstrup's notion of surrender and to deflect some obvious objections to this interpretive move. In what follows, I will take an overview:

drawing on my discussion here, as well as my discussion in 4.3., I will present a consolidated picture of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology in terms of a medio-passive conception of agency.

4.4.2. *The Self, the Sovereign Expressions of Life and Medio-Passive Agency*

In this section, my aim is to bring together my argument concerning Løgstrup's conception of the self and my discussion of medio-passive agency in presenting a medio-passive agency as a mode of agency that is compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. A good starting point here is to recall the ambiguities with which I began the chapter, namely, the ambiguities concerning the nature and conception of the 'two' selves operative in Løgstrup's later phenomenology, and their respective relations to the sovereign expressions of life and the other. In parsing these conceptions and relations, I have, firstly, sought to avoid the potential 'mysticism' associated with granting the sovereign expressions of life themselves a quasi-agential status and, secondly, I have sought to avoid leaving the operations of the two selves in relation to the other and the sovereign expressions of life 'mysterious.' The *way* that I have attempted to clarify these two ambiguities is to argue for an account of the structural features of moral agency compatible with Løgstrup's commitments to Immediacy and Human Wickedness, *viz.* a *medio-passive* mode of agency.

The first argumentative move I made in this regard was to suggest that Løgstrup's conception of the self can be fruitfully understood in broadly Kierkegaardian terms as a reflexive self relation. Like Kierkegaard, for Løgstrup this reflexive self relation involves relating to an 'outside source of norms' or a 'power that established it.' Unlike Kierkegaard, however, for Løgstrup, this 'outside' source of norms is not (straightforwardly) *God*, but rather the fundamental ontological fact of

human interdependence as disclosed by the sovereign expressions of life. There are two significant upshots from this. Firstly, as I have argued in chapter two, the sovereign expressions of life *qua* hermeneutic conditions ‘constitute’ the way in which the other shows up to the self in the face-to-face encounter as the other that they are. That is, the sovereign expressions of life, in their latent presence, frame the self’s encounter with the other in such a way that one’s encounter with the other is always already oriented in a particular way: the other shows up as *mattering* to the self in a way that, say, ‘entities’ do not. Secondly, as Løgstrup’s emphasis on the basicness of interdependence to human existence suggests, the reflexive self relation, for Løgstrup, is not ‘won’ by the self by abstracting from worldly and seemingly relative relations with others, but rather the self’s self relation is determined at the point of the self’s relation to the other.

The second argumentative move I have made is to suggest that, given my observations concerning Løgstrup’s conception of the self, it is plausible to think that there are two structural possibilities available to the Løgstrupian self: either turning *towards* one’s fundamentally interdependent existence by *identifying* with the sovereign expressions of life or, conversely, turning away from one’s existence in *inturnedness*. The question that naturally arises in light of this interpretation is the following. What role, if any, does the self play *qua* agent in effecting its mode of being a self? Answering this question is a delicate matter for, on the one hand, if it is argued that the self *qua* agent plays *no* role in this process, then we risk courting the above-mentioned worries of mysteriousness and mysticism. Yet, given Løgstrup’s commitments to Immediacy and Human Wickedness, it seems that any form of agency that could be seen to fall under the description of self-regulating, self-governing activity must be rejected. Is there a way to navigate between these two eventualities?

By focusing on Løgstrup's use of terms such as 'surrender' in his descriptions of what it is to realize one's true self in the sovereign expressions of life, I have argued that Løgstrup's phenomenology of ethical comportment can be seen to be compatible with a medio-passive mode of agency. According to this interpretation, the true self can be seen to *participate* or *be involved* in the realization of a process or action called forth in the encompassing or overwhelming encounter with the other by integrating this experience of agential limitation, this experience of feeling *as if one has no choice but to X*, in the way responds to the other and their situation. In this relation, the self has a primitive awareness of itself as an *agent* and, thus, as not simply being causally moved. But this awareness integrates both an experience of *passivity* in the face of a situation that is felt as encompassing and overwhelming, as well as an experience of (inter)*dependency* in that, in the encounter the self confronts the inadequacy of its pictures, theories and moral rules which, thus, discloses its dependence on an 'outside' source of norms for its capacity to act well, *in* the way that the self responds to the other and their situation. To use Ferreira's phrase, this mode of agency is well expressed in terms of a 'captivating yet free engagement' whereby the self is, in a sense, *captivated* by the other and their situation – the self is *drawn* to the other and their situation. But through its way of comporting itself in relation to this captivation, *viz.* surrendering, the self is freed up to respond 'spontaneously' to the other and their situation.³⁴ By contrast, the *inturned* self attempts to actively re-assert itself in its

³⁴ Arguably, this is one way of fleshing out Løgstrup's idiosyncratic definition of 'spontaneity' as meaning 'what persons do, they do in accordance with the nature of things and of their own accord. In other words, what persons do spontaneously they do unconstrainedly and without ulterior motives' (BED: 85). On this view, Løgstrup's use of the term 'spontaneity' parallels Luther's understanding of the will. As J. Packer and O.R. Johnston put Luther's view, in their introduction to *The Bondage of the Will*, 'human actions are genuinely spontaneous, and authentically express each man's nature, for God works in all things according to their nature; but the fact that it is God who works all man's works in him means that human action can never be independent of God in the sense required for it to acquire merit...Man cannot put God in his debt because man does not stand apart from God as a free independent agent. Luther thus undercuts the whole conception of merit by affirming the direct sovereignty of God' (Packer and Johnston 1957: 51). By analogy, in surrendering

encounter with the other, perhaps by re-asserting its pictures, theories and moral principles, thereby cutting itself off from the immediacy of the encounter (the despair of defiance), or else by sinking back into ‘encircling’ and paralyzing self-reflection (the despair of weakness).

Is this construal of moral agency compatible with the two core aspects of Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology, Immediacy and Human Wickedness? With respect to Immediacy, what I have tried to stress in my characterization of medio-passive agency is that the mode of being a true self *surrenderingly* in the ethical encounter with the other precisely involves a letting go of one’s attempts to subsume the ethical encounter with the other under one’s mediating pictures, theories and concepts: it is a way of responding to the experience of having one’s pictures, theories and concepts put into question by the other’s living vulnerability that does not try to re-assert oneself in the encounter. Rather, the self that surrenders to the sovereign expressions of life in the encounter with the other lets the other and their living vulnerability ‘hold sway.’ Moreover, I have tried to block the worry that by conceiving of the medio-passive mode of agency in terms of a reflexive relation of the self, I surreptitiously import a form of ‘encircling’ self-reflection into my interpretation of Løgstrup that is alien to his thought. In contrast to Løgstrup’s Kierkegaard, Løgstrup’s self does not become a true self in identifying itself with the sovereign expressions of life by dying to immediacy and engaging in religious reflection. Rather, the mode of agency I have developed in relation to Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology is what we might refer to as a *decentred* mode of agency: the self’s relation to the sovereign expressions of life –

to the *sovereign* expressions of life, the self is acting spontaneously in the sense that its actions are an expression of its will, but its actions are *also* expressive of its having come into identity with the sovereign expressions of life that are definitive of its existence. I discuss this further in §5.

the ‘outside source of norms’ definitive of its existence – is determined at the point of its relation to the other.

As concerns Human Wickedness, in my account of medio-passive agency I have tried to emphasize that the process of coming into identity with the sovereign expressions of life is not the product of a self-governing choice; it is not the product of deliberate effort. Rather, it is a mode of agency that precisely integrates an experience of having one’s autonomy called in to question *in* the way that the agent responds to the other and their situation. In developing this point, I also deflected the objection that by allowing that the self plays *some – any –* role in the realization of the sovereign expressions of life and their good works, the self will irrepressibly claim the sovereign expression of life as its own achievement, thus corrupting and distorting them. For what is distinctive about the medio-passive mode of agency is that it *constitutively involves* an awareness – however pre-reflective and un-thematic – on the part of the agent of their agential limitation and passivity with respect to their encounter with the other. Thus, in comporting oneself *surrenderingly* one’s agency is *ipso facto* expressive of an awareness that one’s ability to respond to the other and their needs is dependent on factors outside of one’s control.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology is compatible with a medio-passive mode of agency, where this constitutes my answer to the question of moral agency for Løgstrup’s ethics. I have argued, firstly, that Løgstrup’s conception of the self can be fruitfully read in terms of a broadly Kierkegaardian *relational* conception of the self. On this view, the ‘true’ self and the ‘inturned’ self reflect two different modes of being a self; the former is a mode of being a self that transparently comes into identity with its existence as fundamentally

interdependent, the latter is a mode of being a self that tries to assert its own independence, as manifest in various forms of selfishness. Secondly, I have suggested that by interpreting Løgstrup in this way, we are able to see a possibility for a conception of moral agency that is compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. More precisely, I have focused on Løgstrup's use of terms such as 'surrender' in describing what it is to come into identity with the sovereign expressions of life, arguing, in light of this, that Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is compatible with a *medio-passive* mode of agency. Whilst, in my discussion, I have tried to deflect some obvious objections to my account of Løgstrupian moral agency, many questions remain concerning (1) the overall plausibility of my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency and (2) whether my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency is genuinely compatible with Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. I will take up these questions in defending my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency in the next and final chapter.

5. Defending Løgstrupian Moral Agency: Between Radical Passivity and Moral Negativism

In this concluding chapter, my aim is to clarify and defend my medio-passive interpretation of Løgstrupian moral agency against some likely criticisms. I shall frame my discussion with two basic questions: is my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency plausible as a conception of moral agency? And: what, if anything, is genuinely distinctive about the Løgstrupian conception of moral agency as I have construed it? These two questions are designed to stand in dialectical tension with one another: in defending my conception of Løgstrupian moral agency against charges of implausibility, I risk courting objections that I am deflating the distinctiveness of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, and *vice versa*. My aim is to employ this dialectic in a productive way as a means of clarifying and defending my conception of Løgstrupian moral agency.

I will begin the dialectic, in section 5.1., by providing a *précis* of my conception of Løgstrupian agency. I will focus on showing how Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment can be seen to provide a structural account of moral agency that can compete with the two core features of the standard view as defined in chapter one, where immediacy can be contrasted with self-regulation (F¹) and surrender with self-governance (F²). I will then appeal to a case study in order to illustrate how the Løgstrupian conception of moral agency can plausibly account for certain cases of moral action that cannot easily be accommodated by the standard view.

In section 5.2., I will make a second step in the dialectic by raising the charge that the structural isomorphism drawn between my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency and the standard view in 5.1. in fact reveals that my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency has failed to capture the radical distinctiveness of Løgstrup's moral

phenomenology. More specifically, the objection here will be that my conception of Løgstrupian moral agency remains *too active* and that it fails to take seriously the radical passivity of the self in relation to the other as implied by Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. I shall frame this objection in terms of a Levinas-style objection, where my aim will be to defend the distinctiveness of my conception of Løgstrupian moral agency not only in relation to the standard view, but also against a comparator who can be seen as holding a non-standard conception of moral agency that is in some ways similar to Løgstrup's.

In a similar vein, in 5.3., I will raise what I shall call an Adorno-style objection to my Løgstrupian conception of moral agency. This objection will take the dialectic a step further: that is, in countenancing my response to the Levinas-style objection, it will contend that my conception of Løgstrupian moral agency ends up being *too passive* to count as a plausible conception of moral agency. I shall attempt to resolve this worry by clarifying the notion of surrender at the core of my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency, focusing on how it captures a plausible sense of agency whilst being genuinely distinct from the standard view. In concluding the chapter, I shall gesture towards an area of Løgstrup's philosophy that requires further investigation, namely, Løgstrup's conception of life.

5.1. Is Løgstrupian Moral Agency Plausible?

The central task of this thesis has been to investigate what, if any, plausible conception of moral agency is compatible with Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment. This question arises out of Løgstrup's rejection of the two features (F¹ and F²) that constitute the core of a wide variety of different conceptions of moral agency as being able to account for a class of moral actions central to his moral phenomenology, *viz.* spontaneous moral actions or good works. On the premise that

all moral actions require a moral agent (Premise¹), I raised the question of moral agency for Løgstrup's ethics: if the standard view of moral agency cannot accommodate spontaneous moral actions or good works then what, if any, conception of moral agency can? In the previous four chapters, I have considered a wide variety of possible responses to this question. The response I have sought to defend is that Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment is compatible with a medio-passive mode of agency. But is this response plausible?

Now, I hope that the previous three chapters have served to increase the plausibility of Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment. And I especially hope that my medio-passive construal of Løgstrupian moral agency has illuminated the distinctiveness of Løgstrup's position *vis-à-vis* the question of moral agency. Here, I shall *précis* my findings from the previous three chapters with the aim of presenting an integrated and maximally plausible iteration of my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency. In particular, I am concerned to show, firstly, how on my construal Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment can be seen as offering distinctive account of moral agency that can compete with the core features of moral agency to that of the standard view. This will help clarify the plausibility of Løgstrupian moral agency at a formal level as providing a satisfying structural account of moral agency. Secondly, I will appeal to an example in illustrating how the Løgstrupian conception of moral agency can plausibly account for cases of moral agency that the standard view struggles to accommodate. This will increase the phenomenological plausibility of Løgstrupian moral agency.

I began my analysis of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology in chapter two, where I proposed a reading of Løgstrup's sovereign expressions of life as hermeneutic conditions. My aim there was to show how Løgstrup's commitment to Immediacy, namely, a mode of interpersonal encounter that is not mediated or regulated by

pictures, theories and moral principles, is compatible with a first-personal experience of normative motivation. According to F¹, a situation or encounter only gives rise to normatively motivating reasons if those reasons have been approved of or endorsed according to one's moral insight. Christine Korsgaard, for instance, holds that '[i]f we [*qua* moral agents] find upon reflecting upon the true moral theory that we are still inclined to endorse the claims that morality makes on us, then morality will be normative' (Korsgaard 1996: 59-50). By contrast, Løgstrup's commitment to Immediacy is recalcitrant to any form of regulation, approval or endorsement according to the agent's moral insight. Rather, in one's immediate face-to-face encounter with the other one is confronted with a primitive normative claim that arises just in virtue of the living vulnerability of the other. One wonders, however, whether an implication of Løgstrup's view is that the agent is simply coerced by the other or else given over to heteronomous desires and impulses. I have suggested, in response to this, that according to Løgstrup, the agent is not beholden to the wishes and desires of the *particular* persons they encounter nor are they simply enthralled by their own impulses for sympathy or pity. Rather, on my interpretation, the sovereign expressions of life are existential conditions constitutive of the particular way other's show up in the normatively soliciting way that they do, where it is the living vulnerability of the other - to which the sovereign expressions of life give us access - rather than one's moral insight, the wishes of the particular other or one's sympathetic impulses that gives rise to normatively motivating reasons. Thus, Løgstrup's moral phenomenology can be seen to allow for a form of moral awareness, but one that differs from those collected under that label F¹.

As I mentioned in chapter one, some variant of (F²) self-governance is often implicit in standard construals of F¹. According to this feature, the moral agent is seen to have the capacity to act on the basis of or in light of one's moral insight. That is,

the moral agent is seen to have ‘volitional powers’ that render her capable of taking up a normative reason as her principle or motivating reason for action. Løgstrup, as we have seen, is highly sceptical of the valorisation of the will in the standard view. Part of Løgstrup’s scepticism here arises as a consequence of his phenomenology of ethical comportment: this class of actions called forth by the sovereign expressions of life, being spontaneous, cannot be deliberately *willed* on the basis of one’s approval of the normativity of a given incentive for action. Rather, as Patrick Stokes neatly puts it, ‘[t]he impetus to moral action must be a spontaneous and non-reflective move to fulfil that demand that has as its object not the demand itself but the other who is the object of one’s concern’ (Stokes 2016: 145-6). However, more controversially, Løgstrup is sceptical of self-governing acts of willing given his Lutheranism. According to this dimension of Løgstrup’s thought, the will is ‘in the power’ (ED: 141) of the self’s inturnedness, where, as a consequence, self-governing wilful activity is said to irrepressibly ‘steal’, and thereby corrupt and distort, the original and spontaneous impetus for action by, for instance, claiming credit for it as the self’s own achievement and as something for which the self deserves merit or, conversely, by facetiously trying to talk oneself out of the need to act. Yet, in rejecting self-governance, we are forced to wonder whether the self that realizes the sovereign expressions of life in spontaneous moral action is not simply *determined* by the sovereign expressions of life or the other on Løgstrup’s view, where there thus appears to be no conceptual space for a substantive conception of agency at all.

In response to this worry, I have suggested that the self-governing feature of the standard view is matched by Løgstrup’s notion of surrender. It is important to be precise in characterizing the notion of surrender. Surrender does not consist, for instance, in an active attempt by the inturned self to *give up* its wilful self-assertiveness, in the manner of the *via purgativa* or the Kierkegaardian notion of dying

to immediacy, as, on Løgstrup's view, such attempts will be self-defeating. Rather, the surrendering self is one who, in their absorption in encounter with the other, integrates their experience of agential limitation and the inadequacy of their pictures and theories, and their moral principles and rules *in* the way they respond to the other and their situation: confronted by the other, they feel as if they have to let go of their attachment to their pictures, theories and moral principles. And their responsiveness to the other and their situation is expressive of the agent's absorption by the other and detached or loosened relation to their pictures and theories. By contrast, the inturned self attempts to re-assert control through moralistic reflection, where this can manifest in turning a deaf ear to the situation (e.g. 'It's not my business' or; 'I don't want the situation to be framed in this way') or in attempting to master the other through paternalistic encroachment. Surrendering, then, describes a mode of comportment; it is a mode of responding to the other and their situation, rather than of being causally moved. But it differs substantively from modes of agency that involve a sense of self-regulation and self-governance: the surrendering self does not take itself to be the autonomous cause of their actions, nor is their agency expressed by a perceived sense of self-restraint. Rather, their agency is expressed in the surrendering way that they comport themselves within the encounter with the other that absorbs and captivates them. This mode of agency, I have argued, is best described as *medio-passive*.

In sum, then, on my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency, moral agency is not constituted through the self's deliberative making of choices but rather thorough the surrendering self's coming into identity with its interdependent existence - as disclosed by the sovereign expressions of life - in its encounter with the other. At the structural level, I have shown that on my construal Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment can be viewed as a plausible and satisfying account of moral

agency that can compete with the standard view. But, we might wonder, does this Løgstrupian conception of moral agency plausibly depict the way real moral agents – the ones we know and strive to be – actually experience their moral agency in the world? That is, is the Løgstrupian conception of moral agency *phenomenologically* plausible? Might it be the case that, in the end, the standard view of moral agency remains a much more intuitive and plausible description of what the moral agents we know are actually like than that described in Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology?

As a first defensive move, I want to register the fact that the apparent plausibility of the standard conception of moral agency is increasingly coming under critical scrutiny. In analytic philosophy, the current revival of interest in Iris Murdoch’s ethics is a case in point. For part of the growing interest Murdoch lies in the way that she brings in to question the emphasis on deliberative choice and ratiocinative decision making as accurately reflecting our experience of agency, favouring instead what she terms ‘moral vision.’¹ More pointedly, we might think of recent interventions made by thinkers of a continental background within contemporary debates about moral agency. Stephen Crowell, for instance, has taken Korsgaard’s conception of moral agency to task for ‘rationalistically distort[ing] the phenomenology of action’ (Crowell 2013: 256). According to Crowell, Korsgaard conceives of moral agency as being ‘wholly governed by the concept of reflection; by the *deliberating* agent “distanced” from its animal identity’ (Crowell 2013: 256). As

¹ C.f. ‘When we apprehend and assess other people we do not consider only their solutions to specifiable practical problems, we consider something more elusive which may be called their total vision of life, as shown in their mode of speech or silence, their choice of words, their assessment of others, their conception of their own lives, what they think attractive or praiseworthy, what they think funny: in short, the configurations of their thought which show continuously in their reactions and conversation. These things, which may be overtly and comprehensively displayed or inwardly elaborated and guessed at, constitute what, making different points in two metaphors, one may call the texture of man’s being or the nature of his personal vision’ (Murdoch 1997: 80-1). We might also think here of Bernard Williams’s ‘one thought too many’ argument (see Williams 1981a).

such, Korsgaard's conception of moral agency cannot account for so-called 'non-deliberated action,' since *ex hypothesi* such action 'either...must be seen as a reversion to mere animal instinct, or the structure of deliberation must be smuggled back into it' (Crowell 2013: 256). The suppressed premise here is that upon reflecting on our everyday engagement with the world as agents, so little of it seems to have a deliberative structure in a Korsgaardian sense. And it hardly seems accurate to reduce this whole diverse sphere of non-deliberated action to animal instinct. Thus arguably, the plausibility of the standard view of moral agency is not self-evident.

Admittedly, some variants of the standard view of moral agency may be less susceptible to this kind of criticism. Yet, it is nonetheless instructive to think of Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment as being responsive to the contemporary concerns of philosophers such as Crowell who, in the name of phenomenological assiduousness, are seeking to understand 'the kind of subject who can be an agent while being absorbed in the world' (Crowell 2013: 260). Indeed, Løgstrup's avowed mission to account for a 'third possibility [of moral agency], namely, [a] determining [of] the will that is neither purely formal (as is that of reason) nor through natural causation (as is that of inclinations)' (ED: 290) is highly germane in this regard.

Of course, it is a further question as to whether Løgstrup's account of this 'third possibility' itself is phenomenologically plausible as an account of moral agency. One way of establishing this sort of plausibility is through illustration. As is evident from our discussion so far, Løgstrup's writings are replete with illustrations and examples taken from literature, the bible and even his experiences during the second

world war.² Here I provide my own. My illustration comes from an interview with the comedian Louis C. K. in which he reflects on his experience of becoming a father:

It was a huge thing for me, because I always thought that life should be poured into work and doing what I want to do. [...] I've always been obsessed with the projects I'm doing. [...] When I had my daughter – when her mother had her in front of me – everything changed. I just fell in love with this kid.

[...]

You just don't know until you see the kid's face that there's going to be another person with you for the rest of your life. And I didn't know how that was going to feel. But when she came out, it wasn't about my feelings. [...] I didn't understand I had a role in this kid's life until that moment. And so it became about the kid. And she changed everything. I just had huge sympathy for this kid...and everything started to flow from that. I mean, I don't like babies; I'm not wired for that. And before I had kids, I was really worried about having kids because I don't like being around babies – I don't like them. I didn't feel sympathy for babies in the past. I thought it would just be taxing to have someone screaming and crying – things that, on paper, you know about being a parent; you don't sleep very much, they get you up in the middle of the night...And I was like; 'I *can't* do that.' [...] What I learned was that I could do it all: I didn't mind getting up; I didn't mind being bleary and sleepy; I didn't mind her screaming and crying because I just had sympathy for her, because I wanted her to be OK. [...] And all this stuff about my own anxiety about my own life just went away...I instantly knew that I was going to get old and die and I wasn't afraid of it anymore, because it's about her now. It's about giving her a chance to be happy and have her own confidence in her own life. That's what it became about. (Louis C.K., Interview with Marc Maron)

For our purposes, the focal point of this example is how Louis describes his experience of agency in responding to the primitive claim made on him by his infant daughter. And the questions arising from this are: is Louis' responsiveness to his daughter a case of moral agency? Or is it, for instance, a manifestation of animal instinct? And: if we accept that it is a case of moral agency, how is that agency constituted?

Now, concerning the first question, some may argue that Louis' responsiveness to the needs of his daughter falls outside of the remit of moral agency. It might be argued, for instance, that Louis' responsiveness reflects the hardwired

² For a discussion of the significance of literature for Løgstrup's way of thinking about ethics see David Bugge (2017).

biological instincts of paternity within our species and, thus, is an expression of his animal nature rather than moral agency. Yet, it is worth noting that even such a steadfast defender of the standard view of moral agency as Korsgaard would likely be inclined to see Louis' responsiveness to his daughter in terms of moral agency. Recall in this respect the cases of the Lioness protecting her cubs from a marauding male Lion and Jack's visiting his ailing mother in Chicago contrasted by Korsgaard and discussed in chapter one. An implication of Korsgaard's discussion is that there is something morally appraisable about Jack's actions, *qua* expressions of *human* agency, that put them above and beyond mere instinctual responsiveness born of his biological connection to his mother. Indeed, it is natural for us to suppose that cases such as Louis' and Jack's are expressive of more than merely biological instinct: we talk, for instance, of being a responsible or irresponsible father and of being a good or bad son. This is not the place to fully defend the view that Louis' responsiveness to his daughter is a case of moral agency; all I am suggesting is that it is natural and plausible to suppose that it is. In accepting this, then, we face the question concerning how moral agency is constituted in cases such as Louis' and Jack's.

We have already seen how Korsgaard would respond to this question: according to Korsgaard, the reason Jack's actions are expressive of moral agency lies in the claim that the motivational structure prompting Jack's actions was such that it was 'essentially conscious of its own appropriateness' (Korsgaard 2008: 214). That is, Jack's actions count as expressions of moral agency on the understanding that Jack reflectively endorsed the incentive prompting him to visit his ailing mother as being a good and worthy course of action, thus making that incentive efficacious. Presumably, a similar kind of interpretation could be applied to Louis. Yet, it seems that it is precisely such kinds of analysis that are vulnerable to Crowell-style charges

of rationalistic distortion and the smuggling in of a deliberative structure that is, arguably, not evident in the examples.

Like Korsgaard, Løgstrup too would likely consider Louis' responsiveness to the needs of his daughter in ethical terms. Indeed, as we have seen, Løgstrup was keen to emphasize the ethical significance of 'natural' love and trust, as manifest in familial relations. How, then, would a Løgstrupian describe the constitution of moral agency in Louis' case?

In the first place, a Løgstrupian would draw attention to Louis' emphasizing of the presence of 'the kind's face,' as Louis puts it: the sheer living vulnerability and dependency of his infant child *drew* Louis out of himself and his inturnedness. In contrast to a Korsgaardian account, there was no space in Louis' head from 'standing back,' reflecting and forming a judgment about how to respond. He was 'captivated' by his daughter. However, clearly, this is not to say that Louis was simply taken over and controlled by his daughter. Rather, his experience of being captivated by his daughter was matched by a re-configured sense of his own agency. Consider, in relation to this point, Louis' description of his 'understanding of life' prior to becoming a father: he previously held the belief that the purpose of life consisted in self-striving; in pouring himself into his work and projects. Indeed, it is in relation to this self-understanding that the prospect of becoming a father was a source of considerable anxiety for Louis. He hated the thought that his work and his projects would be compromised by fatherhood, and, moreover, he just did not think he had the capacities for the kind of selfless care he knew parenthood would require of him. Yet, he did not attempt to allay these anxieties by trying to restrain his ego. Nor did he try to overcome his anxiety by re-asserting control and integrating his daughter into his world-view as another project that he should pour himself into, i.e. the project of being a father. Rather, in his encounter with his daughter he was impelled to let go of his

understanding of life: his attachment to his projects and his anxieties about his own life no longer seemed so important – as Louis puts it, ‘it became about her.’

On the Løgstrupian view I am defending, then, Louis’ responsiveness to the needs of his daughter is expressive of a mode of agency in which the experience of having to let go of one’s world-view – one’s pictures, theories and concepts – is integrated in one’s understanding of oneself as an agent and, thus, the way one responds to the situation as an agent. We might say, in the case of Louis, that in his encounter with his daughter his conception of himself as an agent was de-centred; he writes that it became ‘about giving her a chance to be happy and have her own confidence in her own life.’ These remarks suggest that Louis still saw himself as an agent; he was *responding* to the needs of his daughter rather than being causally moved by biological instinct. Yet, to extrapolate, his mode of responsiveness to his daughter was expressive of a sensitivity to her as an autonomous living being who cannot simply be mastered by theories and concepts. In this respect, Louis’ moral agency was constituted through the immediacy of his relation with his daughter – her living vulnerability - that challenged Louis’ world-view, where this experience of agential limitation and passivity in this encounter was integrated in his mode of responsiveness to his daughter.

5.2. Too Much Activity? A Levinas-style Objection

In the previous section, I tried to present a picture of my construal of Løgstrupian agency such that could be seen to be both philosophically satisfying and phenomenologically plausible. In this section, I will consider two likely objections to my presentation of Løgstrupian moral agency above. These objections will centre around the following major worry: that in making Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology appear compatible with a plausible conception of moral agency, I have reduced the

distinctiveness of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. More specifically, in making Løgstrup's moral phenomenology appear compatible with a *medio-passive* mode of moral agency, I have deflated the *radical passivity* of Løgstrup's phenomenology of moral comportment by smuggling an element of activity back into it. I will draw on ideas from the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas in articulating these two objections, since, like Løgstrup, Levinas was keen to emphasise the ethical passivity involved in encountering the other. In so doing, I hope to show that my interpretation of Løgstrupian moral agency is not only genuinely diverse from the standard conception of agency, but also how Løgstrup's moral phenomenology differs from a relevant comparator.

The first of the two objections concerns my construal of the sovereign expressions of life as hermeneutic conditions. On my interpretation, the sovereign expressions of life are existential conditions constitutive of the way the other shows up in their otherness; as making a claim on the self just in virtue of their living vulnerability. An obvious Levinas-style objection is this: how can Immediacy ever be consistent with the thought that the other's otherness is 'constituted' by the sovereign expressions of life *qua* hermeneutic conditions? Are the sovereign expressions of life *qua* hermeneutic conditions not simply another kind of 'picture' or 'theory' that mediates one's relation with the other? The second of the two objections concerns my construal of surrender. The worry here is that on my construal, the sovereign expressions of life are only realized *if* the self surrenders to them, and that, so construed, my conception of Løgstrupian moral agency is only superficially diverse from the standard conception of moral agency, as it reflects a merely verbal solution to the problem of agency rather than a substantive one: the realization of the sovereign expressions of life in action appears still to be *dependent* on the agent's

approval of the normative claim they elicit, where I then seem to have simply replaced the word ‘approval’ with the word ‘surrender.’

The two objections outlined above are interrelated. In order to see why – and in order to home in on the targets of these objections more precisely – it is instructive to bring Løgstrup into dialogue with a Levinasian perspective.³ An initial point of apparent convergence between Løgstrupian and Levinasian approaches to ethics consists in the central role they both give to the face-to-face encounter. For Løgstrup and Perpich’s Levinas, in the face-to-face encounter, the other’s singular and concrete vulnerability makes a normative claim on me that is more primitive than my moral concepts and rules. Indeed, the face of the other *challenges my very right or entitlement to frame the world in terms of those concepts and rules*. Thus, on Diane Perpich’s reading, the ‘fundamental thesis’ broached by Levinas’ discussion of the ‘face’ *Totality and Infinity* ‘is the difference between the way in which objects are given to consciousness (the order of ontology) and the way in which human beings are encountered (the order of ethics)’ (Perpich 2008: 55).⁴ In essence, this difference is captured as follows: ‘whereas the transcendental ego retains its freedom and spontaneity in relation to the objects or world that it thinks, the “I” who encounters a face loses its naïve being at home in the world and discovers itself bound by the other in ethical responsibility’ (Perpich 2008: 58). Similarly, as we have seen, for Løgstrup the encounter with the other ‘breaks down’ and ‘erases’ my pictures and theories in a way that is ‘anterior to all

³ For comparisons of Løgstrup and Levinas, see Bauman (1993, 2007), MacIntyre (2010), Critchley (2012), Grøn (2017), Dews (2017), Stern (forthcoming). In what follows, I will draw mostly on Diane Perpich’s study of Levinas (Perpich (2008)) in my presentation of the Levinasian perspective.

⁴ Levinas’ notion of ‘the face’ is notoriously slippery. However, the following passage from *Totality and Infinity* (2012) captures the basic idea Levinas uses the term face to denote: ‘The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure and to the measure of its *ideatum* – the adequate idea. It does not manifest itself by these qualities...it *expresses itself*. The face brings a notion of truth which, in contradistinction to contemporary ontology, is not the disclosure of an impersonal Neuter, but *expression*: the existent breaks through all the envelopings and generalities of Being to spread out in its “form” the totality of its “content,” finally abolishing the distinction between form and content’ (51-2).

morality and convention' (ED: 13) and which 'forces upon us the alternative: either we take care of the other person's life or we ruin it' (ED: 18).

Furthermore, for Levinas, on Perpich's reading, the logical terminus of this approach to ethics is an 'inverted' conception of moral agency in the sense that

[I]f usually one can be held responsible only for actions done voluntarily or for events connected to the agent's agency through the right channels, we are told of a responsibility that goes beyond anything I have done or freely committed to and of a responsibility for which the voluntary/involuntary distinction does not matter...From these inversions Levinas pushes still further: responsibility is so far from being an active commitment of a free ego that it is a passivity more passive than the passivity of receptivity – receptivity, after all, being still a *capacity* to receive. Responsibility is a passion undergone without there yet being anyone who submits to it or undergoes it. (Perpich 2008: 119-120)

This statement reflects the so-called 'radical passivity' of Levinas' conception of moral agency.⁵ And it constitutes a logical terminus for a Levinasian approach to ethics in that in maintaining that the normativity of the face-to-face encounter is anterior to representational intentionality, it follows that the face-to-face encounter must be normative for the agent prior to the agent's commitment to or endorsement of the claim made by the other in the face-to-face encounter as being normative. A similar view can be attributed to Løgstrup, as we have seen. Namely, that the self is passively *drawn* out of itself by the other when the self is seized by the sovereign expressions of life.

We can now state the two objections iterated above with more precision. On my interpretation of the sovereign expressions of life as hermeneutic conditions, it might be objected that the sovereign expressions of life are cast as modes of

⁵ Cf. Levinas: 'The responsibility for the other can not have begun in my commitment, in my decision. The unlimited responsibility in which I find myself comes from the hitherside of my freedom, from a "prior to every memory," an "ulterior to every accomplishment," from the non-present par excellence, the non-original, the an-archival, prior to or beyond essence. The responsibility for the other is the locus in which is situated the null-site of subjectivity, where the privilege of the question "Where?" no longer holds' (Levinas 2011: 10).

representing the other *as* a vulnerable living being, where the normative claim made on the self by the other is then, arguably, no longer primitive but rather constituted by a mode of representational intentionality.⁶ This is the first objection. And the second objection is an upshot of the first. For it could be objected that, on my reading, representing the other in this way is remains a function of the agent's activity: the other is only represented as a vulnerable living other if the agent 'lets' them be represented in this way, *via* surrendering. When viewed in this way, it could be argued, firstly, that my construal of Løgstrupian agency is incompatible with Løgstrup's Lutheran presuppositions in that the possibility of realizing the sovereign expressions of life is portrayed as being to some degree an achievement of the agent. And, secondly, it could be argued that my construal of Løgstrupian agency is only superficially different to the standard view, as it represents a merely verbal solution to the problem of agency and not at substantive one: I have simply replaced words such as 'approval' and 'endorsement' with 'surrender.'

In responding to these objections, I need to clarify what distinguishes the sovereign expressions of life as hermeneutic conditions from representational intentionality and what distinguishes surrender from notions such as approval and reflective endorsement. Pursuant of such clarifications, it is worth briefly noting that the Levinasian conception of moral agency in terms of radical passivity is not itself unproblematic. Benda Hofmeyr, for instance, wonders 'whether any moral significance can be attributed to radical passivity, if it does not coincide with at least

⁶ This Levinasian-style objection is certainly exacerbated by my construal of sovereign expressions of life along Heideggerian lines as hermeneutic conditions or 'existentials,' since the alterity of the Other for Levinas consists precisely in its alterity to the horizon of intelligibility that the 'existentials' purportedly constitute for Heidegger. Thus, Levinas would almost certainly claim that the sovereign expressions of life reduce the Other to 'the Same.' However, as I hope my following argument shows, we have good reason to resist *this* kind of Levinasian criticism.

a minimum of radical freedom, instead of merely incapacitating it' (Hofmeyr 2009: 28).

And Simon Critchley, thinking along similar lines, has suggested that

[W]hat you get in Levinas is a wonderfully rich description of the ethical demand, indeed the infinite demand of the other's face in all its precariousness, but no account of the approval that would bind a subject freely to that demand. If ethics does not include some dimension of conscious agency, then it risks becoming sheer coercion. (Critchley 2015: 88)

Given these worries concerning the Levinasian view, we can sharpen the problem space at issue here. On the one hand, radical passivity looks to be flatly incompatible with moral agency and even can be seen to lead to sheer coercion. So, this would represent an unsatisfying response to the problem of agency from Løgstrup's ethics. But on the other hand, it seems that by including an element of freedom in explaining the self's relation to the sovereign expressions of life and the other we *ipso facto* deflate his phenomenology. And I wish to retain the distinctiveness of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. In this thesis, I have sought to show that, whilst Løgstrup is certainly interested in the agent's passivity in relation to the primitive normative claim made on them by the other, he nonetheless has resources to make this observation compatible with a plausible conception of moral agency that can, thus, avoid the difficulties attending the Levinasian position.

Stern has proposed a way of marking the difference between the Løgstrupian and Levinasian positions by making the following Løgstrupian response to the above-mentioned worry raised by Critchley:

It certainly seems right that for a demand to be anything but coercive and hence as compatible with their autonomy, the agent who falls under the demand must be able to see it as legitimate, and thus conforming to the good – but the agent does not have to see it as conforming to *their own* conception of the good conceived of as anything distinct from the good *as such*, from the agent's perspective. (Stern: forthcoming)

The distinction Stern is leveraging here is between a model of agency that constitutively requires an approval of demand's legitimacy according to the agent's

conception and representation of the good, and a model of agency whereby the agent, having been ‘overcome by the ethical task at hand’ (*ibid.*), approves of the demand according to a more ‘impersonal’ or agent-neutral conception of the good, namely, the goodness of life. Thus, as distinct from the Levinasian position, where the agent is seemingly coerced by the other, the Løgstrupian position can accommodate the premise that some conception of the good is at play in the encounter with the other. But rather than that conception of the good being indexed to the self or the particular other that they are encountering, it is indexed to life.

Now, whilst I am in agreement with Stern that moral agency does not require that the agent approves of the claims made on her by the other according to her conception of the good – and that this certainly isn’t a requirement adopted by Løgstrup – I have reservations that the distinction between agent-relative and agent-neutral conceptions of the good properly captures the distinctiveness of Løgstrup’s position. After all, one can imagine a figure such as Korsgaard protesting that having an agent-neutral conception of the good *just is* what it is to be in possession of the ‘true moral theory,’ as she puts it, where Løgstrup then appears to be closer to Korsgaard and, thus, the standard conception of moral agency than initially thought. By contrast, what I want to suggest is that what my conception of the sovereign expressions of life as hermeneutic conditions allows for is a mode of relating to the other that is normatively qualified, and thus not coercive, but that is equally not qualified by one’s conception of the good – whether conceived of agent-relatively or agent-neutrally. Rather, the sovereign expressions of life open the self up in its relation to the other to a sense of normativity that transcends the self’s finite concepts and representations of the good. It is a normatively inflected mode of relating to other without a *determinate* conception of the good.

Before proceeding to develop this thought, I want to make a *caveat*. The issue under discussion here, namely, whether my conception of sovereign expressions of life *qua* hermeneutic conditions is incompatible with Immediacy, touches not only on questions concerning moral agency, but also questions concerning justification, questions like: how is the claim made on the agent by the other normatively justified? I want to reassert that my aim in this thesis has not been to answer questions of justification. What I am interested in here is whether my construal of the sovereign expressions of life as hermeneutic conditions implies a sense of agential activity that is alien to Løgstrup's moral phenomenology. However, by framing the issue in this way, my aim in this concluding chapter is to begin to probe the question of justification for Løgstrup's ethics as an area for future research.

With this *caveat* in place, I will now attempt to flesh out my claim that what is distinctive about the expressions of life *qua* hermeneutic conditions is that they allow for a receptivity to a primitive normative claim made on the self by the other *without* a *determinate* conception of the good. In order to do so, I will appeal to two models. I take the first model from Johnathan Lear's book *Radical Hope*. In the book, Lear offers a detailed interpretation of the actions of the Chief of the Crow tribe, Plenty Coups, in the face of the collapse of the Crow way of life, *viz.* his decision to cooperate with the American government rather than to fight it. Although Plenty Coups knew that such cooperation would change the Crow way of life beyond recognition, he held out hope for some unknown good to come. On Lear's interpretation, Plenty Coups' decision to cooperate is reflective of a kind of reasoning which:

...acknowledges that one is at some kind of practical horizon *without* thereby trying to peek over it. It is willing to reason into the future while at the same time admitting that it has no real conception of the good to work with. It is committed to the bare idea *that something good will emerge*. (Lear 2006: 94)

Based on this interpretation, Lear develops a conception of ‘radical hope.’ Namely, an orientation towards a future good which transcends one’s finite horizon of intelligibility. Thus, Lear:

[W]hat makes this hope *radical* is that it is directed towards a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is. Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it. (Lear 2006: 103)

In other words, radical hope names a mode of being comported in a situation of un-certainty and conceptual break-down that, rather than attempting to cling on to and re-assert one’s conceptual scheme, or else despondently giving up on the possibility of being able to orient oneself within a radically fluctuating situation, holds out hope for some unknown good that is yet to crystallize.

Lear anticipates some objections that placing radical hope in an unknown, transcendent good is either surreptitiously theological, in the sense of being messianic or eschatological, or else unjustifiably optimistic. He responds to the first worry by reasserting that

The emphasis here is not on some mysterious source of goodness but on the limited nature of our finite conceptual resources. This, I think most readers agree, is an *appropriate* response for finite creatures like ourselves. Indeed, it seems oddly inappropriate – lacking in understanding of oneself as a finite creature – to think that what is good about the world is exhausted by our current understanding of it. Even the most strenuously secular readers ought to be willing to accept this form of transcendence. (Lear 2006: 121-122)

Even so, Lear’s conception of radical hope may still face criticisms for being unjustifiably optimistic. In response to *this* worry, Lear argues that the radical hope manifested by Plenty Coups contrasts with ‘mere optimism’ to the extent that it constitutively involved the virtue of *courage*. Courage is defined by Lear as an excellence in responding to the risks that inevitably attend human existence, where according to this definition ‘courage would have to include the ability to live well with the risk of conceptual loss’ (Lear 2006: 193). Plenty Coups’ radical hope, then – insofar

as it was well deployed – ought to be seen as a manifestation of courage insofar as it reflected a phronetic response to the cultural devastation and conceptual loss facing the Crow way of life.

Returning to Løgstrup, this discussion of radical hope can help clarify the following thought. The sovereign expressions of life, such as trust, mercy, openness of speech and, indeed, hope, can be seen to operate in a way similar to Lear's notion of radical hope: in the encounter with the other, the other calls one's pictures, theories and concepts – including one's conception of the good – into question. The sovereign expressions of life are phenomena through which one can respond to a situation of conceptual loss without trying to reassert one's limited pictures, theories and concepts. That is, the sovereign expressions of life designate phenomena through which one can orient oneself in relation to a good that one cannot grasp or comprehend in terms of one's existing conceptual scheme. Thus, far from being a form of representational intentionality in which one projects a framework of understanding on to the other, the sovereign expressions of life are phenomena sensitive to the inadequacy of one's representational intentionality in the encounter with the other.

Now, clearly there are some important disanalogies between Lear's notion of radical hope and my construal of the sovereign expressions of life as hermeneutic conditions. We might observe, firstly, the difference between the situations with respect to which Lear develops his notion of radical hope – the experience of facing an unknown future in light of cultural devastation – and Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life – an encounter with the other. More importantly, however, we may note that Lear justifies the moral appraisability of Plenty Coups' agency as an instance of *moral* agency by appeal to the virtue of courage, where, as we have seen, Løgstrup was strident in his criticism of virtue. Thus, we might worry that when applied to Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life, Lear's notion

of radical hope leaves us with one of two conclusions: either the sovereign expressions of life a form of unjustifiably optimistic confidence in life's goodness or else the agent still appears to be coerced by the other. I shall return to some of the implications of this worry in more detail in the following section. However, in order to further clarify the position being argued for here, I will turn to a second model, this time coming from a recent article by Daniel Watts entitled 'Kierkegaard and the Limits of Thought.'

Watts' paper is concerned with the philosophical paradoxes generated by positing a limit of thought. For our purposes, the interest of Watts' article lies in his delineation of two modes of thinking described in Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship, namely, 'aesthetic-intellectual' representation and 'ethico-religious' thinking. Aesthetic-intellectual representation is a mode of representation that is 'apt to sustain an attitude of disinterested contemplation' (Watts: forthcoming). That is, aesthetic-intellectual representation describes a mode of thinking in which the thinker thinks '*about* a thought or proposition, as when I think about the thought that just crossed my mind.' (Watts: forthcoming). 'Ethico-religious' thinking, by contrast, describes a mode of thinking '*directly...of or about* some particular thing as thus-and-so, as when I think of a particular person as a friend' (Watts: forthcoming). More specifically, Watts writes that

[I]t is constitutive of ethico-religious thinking to represent certain things precisely *as* such as to resist aesthetic-intellectual representation. It is part and parcel of such thinking to represent death, for example, as resisting any image or expression or symbol that is apt to sustain disinterested contemplation. (Watts: forthcoming)

Taking thinking about death as paradigmatic of ethico-religious thinking, the point is that the ever-present possibility of one's death 'challenges us to rethink what it means to be human' (Watts: forthcoming). But it only does so if thought *concretely*, that is, as a matter pertaining directly to your own individual existence; your own

‘ethical actuality.’ In this respect, the existential meaning of death defies or resists exclusively aesthetic-intellectual *abstract* representation: to represent death *in abstracto* is to miss the phenomenon. As Watts puts it: ‘the essentially human cannot be thought about in a merely abstract way; in this area, one’s thinking must also be concrete,’ where ‘to think in the appropriately concrete way in this domain must involve trying to delimit the proper domain of disinterested contemplation as such’ (Watts: forthcoming). In summarizing, Watts concludes that

Kierkegaard’s view...does not imply two sorts of entities or ontic realms, the thinkable and the unthinkable. Rather, it relies on the idea of two spheres of human agency: viz. the aesthetic-intellectual and the ethico-religious. Genuine thinking about the essentially human, on this account, involves as it were keeping watch over the boundary between the two spheres; making room for the ethico-religious by delimiting the aesthetic-intellectual...What this means, I take it, is that we should resist any temptation to posit a realm of unthinkable things – McDowell’s ‘ineffable in itself’ – but think instead in terms of a modality or ‘sphere’ of human comportment, the first-personal sphere of an individual’s ‘ethical actuality.’ (Watts: forthcoming)

The key insight to draw from this for our purposes is that some phenomena resist abstract, aesthetic-intellectual representation. One species of this set of phenomena concerns the ‘essentially human,’ where to say that the ‘essentially human’ resists aesthetic-intellectual representation is not equal to saying that it is unthinkable as such. Rather it is to say that it requires *concrete* thinking about one’s ethical actuality, where ethico-religious thinking names a mode of comportment that, in delimiting the sphere of aesthetic-intellectual representation, is sensitive to those phenomena that resist abstract representation.

In terms of our discussion of Løgstrup, then, we can make the following analogy. The encounter with the other in their concrete otherness resists certain kinds of representation. Namely, those that subsume the other and their situation under moral principles and rules. However, this is not to say that the other in their otherness is recalcitrant to thought or understanding *per se* – as with Levinasian radical alterity.

Rather, relating to the other in their otherness calls for a certain kind of understanding; a practical understanding that is sensitive to the fact that the other and their situation resist being represented solely in terms of moral principles and rules. And the sovereign expressions of life *qua* hermeneutic conditions are existential structures that are expressive of this kind of sensitivity. For example, it is plausible to think that love involves attending to the beloved in a way that – as Løgstrup himself puts it – ‘must necessarily manifest itself in openness’ (ED: 35) in the sense that love ‘insists unconditionally on allowing the other person to be a self and to remain free’ (ED: 72). Similarly, as suggested in §2, phenomena such as trust and mercy can likewise be seen to constitutively involve embracing, rather than trying to negate, indeterminacy with respect to the other. In sum, then, the sovereign expressions of life *qua* hermeneutic conditions are not equivalent to forms of representational intentionality, such as those captured by the terms ‘picture’ and ‘theory.’ Rather, they are modes of relating to the other that are sensitive to the way that the other and their good transcends one’s capacities for representational intentionality.

How does this clarification help us with respect to the second objection posed above? That is, does this clarification of my construal of the sovereign expressions of life help disambiguate the notion of ‘surrender’ from notions such as ‘approval’ and ‘endorsement?’ I have been describing ‘surrender’ as a mode of agency whereby the agent integrates their experiences of passivity and agential limitation in the way they respond to the other and their situation. The first aspect of this description that we can clarify is the nature of the experience of passivity and agential limitation. This experience is the experience of being absorbed or captivated by the other and their situation. More specifically, it is the experience of being in a situation that resists certain kinds of reflection or deliberation; it disarms the agent’s capacity to frame the

situation in terms of disinterested rules or principles or even in terms of one's subjective pictures and theories, where this capacity might be construed in terms of 'reflective endorsement' or 'approval:' the other's singular and concrete living presence calls any such attempts to take a disinterested stance in relation to them and their situation into question. It is in this sense that the realization of the sovereign expressions of life in good works can be seen to fall under the purview of Crowell's description of 'non-deliberated action,' mentioned above.

Furthermore, our present discussion helps clarify how my construal of the notion of surrender is compatible with the Lutheran presuppositions of Løgstrup's thought. Recall, that Lutheran dimension held that the inturned self is apt to either claim credit for its actions as being its own achievement or else resist the claim made on them by the other. The surrendering self, by contrast, has integrated her experience of agential limitation and passivity in the way she responds to the other and their situation. That is to say, the surrendering agent is responsive in a way that is expressive of an understanding that her agency is not 'sovereign;' that her conception of the good is limited; and that she is dependent on the other for the constitution of their ability to respond appropriately in the given situation. We might say that there is a sense of humility in the surrendering agent's mode of responsiveness, but this humility is not self-wrought, rather it is a humility born of having one's sovereignty decisively brought into question.

5.3. Too Much Passivity? An Adorno-style Objection

In this section I will take a further step in the dialectic. That is, I will consider some objections to the effect that in my responses to the Levinas-style objections above I have rendered my construal of the Løgstrupian agent *too passive* to count as a plausible conception of moral agency. Here I will focus two worries: the first concerns

whether my construal of Løgstrupian agency implies *irrationalism*, the second concerns whether the ‘surrendering’ agent, on my conception, is *unfree*. Following the format from the previous section, I will proceed by bringing Løgstrup into dialogue with another relevant comparator: Theodor Adorno. In contrast to Levinas, however, who has been seen by many to serve as a natural comparator to Løgstrup, Theodor Adorno’s philosophical concerns may appear rather remote from Løgstrup’s. Thus, I will begin my discussion by noting some central points of contact between the two thinkers. As with my discussion of Levinas above, however, my aim here is not to provide an exhaustive or extensive comparison. Rather, it is to use resources from the Adornian reception in animating some issues and potential problems in Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology.

The first point of contact between the two thinkers is their shared emphasis on the importance of the materiality or concreteness of the other – as a *living* being – in the constitution of moral agency. This point comes across most clearly in Adorno’s philosophy as part of his polemic against the Kantian notion of a transcendental self. On Freyenhagen’s analysis, Adorno asserts *contra* Kant that ‘initiating an action (understood widely to include decision-making) *constitutively* requires a non-rational somatic element (a physical impulse)’ (Freyenhagen 2013: 255).⁷ And as J. M. Bernstein has emphasized, Adorno often describes this somatic element in terms of a ‘spontaneous’ responsiveness to the suffering of a living other, where, crucially, this somatic element is responsive to a non-discursive and non-conceptual sensuous

⁷ Cf. Adorno: ‘Kant, by allowing no *movens* of practice but reason, remained under the spell of that faded theory against which he devised the primacy of practical reason as a complement. This is what ails his entire moral philosophy. The part of action that differs from the pure consciousness which in Kant’s eyes compels the action, the part that abruptly leaps out – this is spontaneity, which Kant also transplanted into the pure consciousness, lest the constitutive function of the “I think” be imperilled’ (Adorno 2007: 229-30).

material particularity.⁸ In the language adopted by Bernstein, this somatic element is responsive to the ‘auratic individuality’ of the other *as* living and thus *a fortiori as* injurable and vulnerable.⁹ Thus, like Løgstrup, Adorno has been interpreted to place emphasis on spontaneous responsiveness to non-discursive vulnerable life as that which lies at the heart of ethical action.¹⁰

The second point of contact between the two thinkers concerns the central role both give to *radical evil* or *wickedness* in their respective conceptions of ethical life. As Peter Dews has observed, in Adorno’s philosophy the pervasive and radical evil of the world is conceived of as a social category, emerging out of enlightenment rationality and the form of industrial capitalism that developed in tandem with it.¹¹ This historicized diagnosis of evil, of course, contrasts sharply with Løgstrup’s theologically inspired phenomenological diagnosis of human wickedness. However, it is nonetheless striking how much Adorno’s conception of human evil accords with Løgstrup’s own. Dews describes the Adornian conception of evil as follows:

For Adorno, the self-understanding of the subject...falls prey to illusion when subjectivity comes to regard itself as something entirely distinct from the

⁸ Although I do not have space to develop it here, it strikes me that there is an interesting further point of convergence between Løgstrup and Adorno in their respective re-configurations of spontaneity as linked to nature or life, and not solely to the operations of the transcendental ego. In *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, Adorno writes the following on this theme: ‘...there is one further factor necessary for practice that is not fully explicable by theory and that is very hard to isolate. And I should like to emphasize it because I regard it as fundamental to a definition of the moral. We may perhaps best defined it with the term spontaneity, the immediate, active reaction to particular situations’ (Adorno 2001: 7).

⁹ Cf. Bernstein: ‘The appearing of individuals as lodging claims is the appearing of those individuals as possessing animistic auratic individuality. Aura is nothing more than this – the appearing of individuals as in their sensuous particularity lodging claims – but equally it is nothing less’ (Bernstein 2001: 450)

¹⁰ Here I am in agreement with Stern (forthcoming) in claiming that an important difference between Levinas, on the one hand, and Løgstrup (and I would add Adorno) on the other is the role a conception of *life* plays in these latter thinkers, where this gives their respective thought a materialist – even naturalistic, in a certain qualified uses of these terms – dimension absent in the thought of the former.

¹¹ Cf. Bernstein: ‘The “dialectic of enlightenment” ...at least in one of its construals refers to the rationalization of reason [and] is thus responsible for the destruction of experience, non-legal-rational authority, and ethical knowledge, whose joint destruction explains the destruction of auratic individuality’ (Bernstein 2001: 76).

natural: as immaterial substance, metaphysical monad, self-positing 'I', or pure pole of transcendental constitution. The subject's tendency to absolutize itself is – in one sense – built into the process of conscious reflection, since there is an almost irresistible temptation for the reflective subject to regard the experienced world as dependent upon its acts of cognition. Correlatively, the conceptual tools that the subject employs in cognizing reality are taken as capturing the essence of what is known, whereas concepts in effect shear away all the qualities which are irrelevant for self-preservation. It is this process, culminating in an unconscious repression of any difference between the qualitative 'diffuseness' of nature and the realm of conceptualized objects, which Adorno refers to as 'identity thinking.' (Dews 2013: 189)

This construal of Adorno's notion of radical evil accords with Løgstrup's conception of human wickedness in many of its core aspects. Here Adorno is presented as defining human evil in terms of a tendency of the self to claim sovereignty over itself and the world in a way that would not be out of place in Løgstrup's writings. Indeed, Løgstrup, in commenting on a similar tendency, similarly invokes the language of 'illusion' in accounting for the self's proclivity to view the others and the world as being value-dependent upon its 'acts of cognition' (M1: pp. 70-77). Moreover, the Adornian picture presents this tendency to self-assertive illusion as being, in one sense, 'built in' to the structure of conscious reflection, where, as we saw in chapter three, Løgstrup also seems to hold the view that wickedness is built in to certain forms of reflection in a similar fashion. Finally, on the Adornian view presented by Dews, the pervasiveness of radical evil *per force* occludes and distorts the individual agents' access to the 'auratic individuality' of the other that, as we have seen, is of central importance to the Adornian conception of moral agency. We can extrapolate: the radical evil of the subject manifests in a 'shearing away' of the 'auratic' qualities of the other which are irrelevant for the self's 'self-preservation,' where this then distorts and corrupts the subject's attempts to relate and respond to the other for their own sake.

With these two points of convergence in view, we can note a further similarity: both thinkers are concerned to articulate the possibility of recovering the experience

of ‘auratic individuality’ (for Adorno) and a relation to the other in their otherness (for Løgstrup) in light of pervasive human wickedness. However, their respective approaches to this issue are radically divergent.

From an Adornian perspective, the possibility of recovering experiences of ‘auratic individuality’ depends on our capacities to negate the forms of instrumental enlightenment rationality that have led us into illusion and cut us off from experiences of ‘auratic individuality.’ More specifically, Gordon Finlayson has suggested that, for Adorno, what is required in order to recover experiences of ‘auratic individuality’ is an *ethics of resistance*. Finlayson identifies three ‘negative virtues’ proposed by Adorno that constitute the core of an Adornian ethics of resistance: *Mündigkeit*, humility and affection.¹² *Mündigkeit*, itself a term taken from Kant, denotes ‘a capacity to take a critical stand, but which is also conscious of its own fallibility, and modified by continual self-criticism’ (Finlayson 2002: 7). So stated, *Mündigkeit* might appear to denote nothing more than the Kantian petition to *Sapere aude!* which Kant specifically contrasts with a pre-enlightened self-incurred ‘minority’ [*Unmündigkeit*] (Kant 2008: 8:35). According to Finlayson, however, Adorno distinguishes his usage of *Mündigkeit* from Kant’s with an appeal to the negative virtue of humility:

Humility is precisely what keeps Kantian moral autonomy in check, what prevents conscience from ossifying into moralistic righteousness and what differentiates *Mündigkeit* from mere rational self-assertion... It is the refusal of self-assertion, a refusal which implies the capacity ‘to do justice to what is other, won from reflection on one’s own limitations.’ (Finlayson 2002: 7)

With the addition of humility, then, Finlayson takes Adorno to be distancing his ethics of resistance from Kantian autonomy by tempering the rational self-surety implied by *Mündigkeit* in its Kantian usage. The tempering effect of humility is

¹² I put the term virtue in scare quotes here since, as Freyenhagen has noted, Adorno regards the concept of virtue as ‘obsolete’ (Adorno 2001: 98). However, I retain Finlayson’s designation here for the sake of clarity.

compounded by ‘affection,’ which Finlayson describes as including a ‘sensitivity to and solidarity with others’ vulnerability, a sense of dependence on other things and on other people and, above all, a kind of mutuality that is not mediated by exchange, reason or self-interest’ (Finlayson 2002: 7). In sum, then, the moral agent as figured in Adorno’s moral philosophy is a *resisting* agent, where moral agency is thought to be constituted through the cultivation of the negative virtues aimed living and acting *less wrongly*, where this is achieved through the activity of determinate negation and the fostering of a sense of solidarity with others.

Now, there are clearly points of convergence between an Adornian ‘ethics of resistance’ and Løgstrup’s theory of the sovereign expressions of life: for instance, both can be seen to involve an affective dimension and a particular kind of orientation to one’s own limitations. Yet, Løgstrup would surely be dismissive of the thought that the recovery of experiences of ‘auratic individuality’ could be won through critical reflection, as Finlayson’s ‘ethics of resistance’ suggests. From a Løgstrupian perspective, all attempts to overcome one’s wickedness through the work of self-renunciation and humility will inevitably ensnare the resisting agent yet further in an ‘illusory’ self-understanding, as we have seen. Indeed, such attempts might make matters worse by leading the resisting agent into a kind of self-reflective paralysis.¹³ Rather, on Løgstrup’s Lutheran view, while we needn’t to go to the extremes of a Levinasian radical alterity, our chances of relating to the other in their otherness are nonetheless radically dependent on the intervention of something *extra se*, so to speak: in the encounter with the other, our illusion of self-sufficiency, the ‘irresistible temptation for the reflective subject to regard the experienced world as dependent

¹³ Indeed, Adorno’s biography may seem to vindicate Løgstrup on this point since, as Freyenhagen has noted, Adorno was often criticised of intellectualistic quietism – especially concerning his decidedly muted response to the student movement in the 1960s – which would likely be diagnosed by Løgstrup in precisely this way (See Freyenhagen (2014)).

upon its acts of cognition,' is broken down as our pictures, theories and concepts are put into question by the other in a way would could not accomplish through our own efforts.

An Adornian might object to this Løgstrupian picture, however, as potentially signalling a reversion to a form of irrationalism. That is, if, in our encounter with the other, our capacity for rational reflection has been interrupted, how could our surrender to the claim made on us by the other in that encounter be anything but an 'uncritical acceptance of things as what they claim to be' (O'Connor 2004: 159); of the other's claims on us as being unqualifiedly justified, where 'the idea that reflection has transformative capacities is excluded' (*ibid.*)?¹⁴ Alasdair Morgan has levelled an Adornian charge of this sort against Levinas. He writes that Levinas' emphasis on the immediate encounter with the other – an emphasis shared by Løgstrup – 'can easily revert to a form of philosophical irrationalism' whereby 'this pre-reflective [immediacy] then becomes an absolutely other point beyond reason which cannot be

¹⁴ For another variation of this worry, Cf. O'Connor (2017): 'Normative primitivism looks...like a commitment to what Adorno calls and exposes as the error of "immediacy": i.e., that there are states of affairs whose truth is independent of human judgment. Adorno sees naïve realism in epistemology, for example, as a wrong-headed commitment to immediacy in that it does not recognise that what it takes to be given by the external world – the things of experience – are passively received by us have a historical background. That background determines most if not all (Adorno is ambivalent on this point) of how things appear to us and how we respond to them. Normative primitivism would, we might suggest, be guilty of an analogous naiveté in claiming that our normative interest in ourselves has a kind of independence from experience even though it comes replete with motivating interests shaped by historical considerations about human value and meaningful life. The untutored would be critically exposed as socialised, or, to put it another way, mediated by society and its values' (6). There is evidence to suggest that Løgstrup himself was very much alive to this sort of worry. For instance, as Bugge notes 'the other person's presence is a two-edged sword. In direct association with the other person, we are told in *The Ethical Demand*, the negative pictures which we have made of him normally break down. Not that the pictures are denied, but the personal presence somehow erases them. Which indicates a sort of "trust in life itself, in the ongoing renewal of life" (EF p. 23/ED p. 14). But in his later book *Kunst og erkendelse* from 1983 Løgstrup calls attention to a less positive consequence of this breakdown of the picture one has made of the person: "In real life, the other person, by his very presence, is standing in the way of his own history." His presence blocks my sight of his whole life world. I become short-sighted: "As the meeting is absorbing me, it clips my imagination. My imagination cannot move freely in the other's history and world, for my attitude, thought and feeling are narrowed to being an answer to what is currently occupying the other person and what he requires and expects for me"' (Bugge 2017: 224-5).

reflectively grasped but only converged with in an experience of dissolution which can never guarantee its outcome or preserve the freedom of the reflective subject' (Morgan 2007: 84). In other words, the worry is that if the encounter with the other entails the disengagement of the self's rationality and the incapacitation of self's freedom in his or her relation to the other, then it seems that any plausible sense in which the self can be considered to be a *moral agent* in that relation has been dissolved. Indeed, arguably, my use of terms such as 'surrender' and 'captivation' in describing my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency above may seem to exacerbate this worry.¹⁵

There are two objections here: one concerning irrationalism, and one concerning unfreedom. In responding to the first objection, it is important to further clarify what it is on a Løgstrupian view to be captivated or absorbed by one's encounter with the other. As I have tried to clarify above, on Løgstrup's view, when we encounter the other through the sovereign expressions of life we are exposed to a primitive normative claim that arises just in virtue of the other's living vulnerability. To this extent, the primitive normative claim is *indeterminate*; it cannot be adequately represented solely in an 'aesthetic-intellectual' way in terms of moral rules or

¹⁵ Another variation of this objection might be raised from a Kierkegaardian perspective in defence of the need to include a relation to God as a 'middle term' in one's ethical relation to the other. On this point, Kierkegaard scholar C. Stephen Evans has noted that Kierkegaard himself was certainly not 'unaware of the importance of human relationships,' but he nonetheless saw a need to 'stress the importance of "standing before God"' precisely because 'he [Kierkegaard] is so sensitive to the power of those [human] relations. It is not because he does not realize the importance of such human institutions as the family and the state, but because he sees how easily these relationships can become confining and even dehumanizing...When the criterion of the self is derived solely from relations to other humans, then that finite human identity becomes invested with ultimate authority. God in the sense of what is of ultimate worth is completely immanent; there is no place left for transcendence' (Evans 2006: 272). In other words, we might say that in trying to show that the infinite demand registers in our concrete and immediate relations with others that Løgstrup runs the risk of simply collapsing the distinction between the category of transcendence and the category of immanence, perhaps ending up with something more like a 'social command' account of the face-to-face encounter, but where the needs of the other are so exaggerated as to take on the semblance of the transcendent.

principles, to use Watts' terminology. However, for Løgstrup, this does not entail that in the face-to-face encounter we are forced to abandon our practical rationality all together. In fact, for Løgstrup, the situation is quite the reverse.

As we have seen previously, Løgstrup avers that 'the expression of life does not determine the behaviour or dictate the action, and it does not preclude rational reflection or judgment. On the contrary, it demands it' (BED: 132) and that 'the expression of life is what kindles deliberations of the imagination about what to say and do' (BED: 72). That is to say, relating to the other through the sovereign expressions of life does not necessarily entail the incapacitation or suspension of rational reflection. Rather, Løgstrup's point is that in relating to the other through the sovereign expressions of life we are freed up *for* reflection on how to 'turn the situation around' (BED: 53) through our agency. The distinction Løgstrup is attempting to draw here, it seems to me, consists in the *way* the true self engages his or her practical rationality. We can capture the distinction by way of the notions of 'aesthetic-intellectual' and 'ethico-religious' thinking introduced above. The true self, being absorbed or captivated by the other and their situation, relates to the normative claim contained therein in an ethico-religious way: when the true self relates to the other through the sovereign expressions life, the primitive ethical claim made by the other is incorporated into the way the situation shows up to the self. And the self can then engage her practical rationality 'directly' in responding to the task at hand, so to speak.¹⁶ As Løgstrup puts it in 'Ethics and Ontology:' 'we will act upon a demand only

¹⁶ Løgstrup expresses a similar thought in a different context when he claims that trusting and loving actions are expressive of a mode of responsiveness that is *distanced* – but not cut off - from norms and rules. He explains what he means by this as follows: 'What, then, is meant by the "distance" from the norm which one must observe with respect to the other person? This question arises in the situation of conflict where one is of the opinion that one has acted contrary to the norm. The distance then consists in our not using the norm utterly to write him off, to liquidate him. His action will indeed be censured to the extent that it was contrary to the norm. However, the distance means that we concede that he himself is something other and more than his action....In the confrontation concerning the norms love has a chance, provided that we refrain from laying exclusive claim to the

if we forget how we ourselves relate to the demand and concern ourselves instead solely with what the demand claims' (ED: 154).

The inturned self, by contrast, relates to the primitive normative claim made on them by the other *as* an ethical demand and thus it relates to the demand in an aesthetic-intellectual way, perhaps seeking to establish (or, more likely, delegitimize) the justifiability of the demand. In either case, the primitive normative claim made on the self by the other is reified into a principle, where this then cuts the self off from a free engagement with the other and their situation, as they become concerned with the *principle* rather than the situation. Captivation by the other, then, as expressed by the true self's mode of responsiveness, does not entail the disengagement of rational reflection *as such*. Rather, it refers to a *way* in which the agent's rational reflection is realized, namely, as a freedom *for* the normative claim tacitly incorporated in the situation, rather than as a freedom to step back from the situation in order to assess the normative claim made by the other on the self as a principle or norm. As a slogan, we might put Løgstrup's view as follows: *the inturned self has a binding and dependent relation to norms and moral principles and a free, non-binding relation to the other. The true self, in surrendering, has a binding and dependent relation to the other and a free relation to norms and moral principles*. Importantly, the surrendering agent may still appeal to norms and principles in working out how to respond to the other – it is just that she

norms and from using them as an axe for bludgeoning him to death' (ED: 42). In this sense, Løgstrup can be seen as a kind of ethical particularist in the sense outlined by Andrew Gleeson: 'Morality has to do without principles not because they are almost certainly inadequate (i.e. have exceptions because the reasons they enshrine vary) but because deciding how to act by consulting a rule is one way in which we fail *properly to attend* to the detailed particularity of each individual case – *even if* the case falls squarely under some knowable rule (and even if it does not)' (Gleeson 2007: 364). Viewed in this way, Løgstrup's theory of the sovereign expressions of life can be seen as an attempt to account for how we *qua* agents can and do properly attend to the detailed particularity of the other and their situation.

is 'distanced' (ED: 41) from norms while being bound to the material particularity of the other and their situation.

When viewed in this way, Løgstrup's position might actually be seen to accord with some interpretations of Adorno. On Bernstein's reconstructive interpretation, for instance, the 'the whole weight of Adorno's project...is to deny that there is a separable logic of the morally good' (Bernstein 2001: 321):

[T]he bindingness of moral claims is to be understood primarily as nothing other than material inferences from awarenesses of a state of affairs, from (the appreciation of) *bleeding badly* to (the response) *I will apply a tourniquet*. Material inferences of this kind do not operate in a void...[they] are articulations of the experiences of auratic individuality, that is of living beings that are injurable, and hence that there are practical demands at all depends on being aware of vulnerable life and developing modes of response that acknowledge vulnerability. (Bernstein 2001: 323)

In other words, for both thinkers rational reflection or the making of practical inferences in one's encounter with the other originally is – and ideally should be – attuned to the somatic, non-discursive and intransitive apprehending of vulnerable life. And, again for both thinkers, we become cut off from the other and their situation when our rational reflection is treated as a 'separable logic,' whereby we come to rely on the authority of rules and the conception of the good that emerges from them in how we relate to the other and their situation.¹⁷ An important difference is that Bernstein's interpretation of Adorno's ethics is *reconstructive*; it is conducted *per impossibile* in the sense that if we *were* to have the appropriate structures of awareness we could in principle make morally appropriate material inferences, but since we don't,

¹⁷ Løgstrup expresses his concern about treating moral reasoning in terms of a separable logic under the auspices of a critique of the Kantian 'universalizability test.' He writes that: 'In [the case of universalization] what applies is this: As specific as the moral situation may be – even if it is so specific that it is unimaginable that the situation should ever repeat itself – an action becomes morally good by virtue of the fact that anyone coming to be in the situation may be required to undertake it. In other words, morally good behaviour is behaviour that can be universalized. This means, however, that because it constitutes morality, the test of universalization is not itself a moral principle but a logical principle...This is unreasonable...[because] this means that here, too, we enter the sphere of morality only by means of a decision. We must decide in favour of the universalization test if we wish to be within the realm of morality' (BED: 134-5).

we cannot. But Løgstrup, by contrast, does not hold that the structures of awareness through which we could make morally appropriate material inferences, so to speak, (i.e. the sovereign expressions of life) are *unavailable* to us; his point is rather that, in our wickedness, we are prone to neglect the living particularly of the other and defy the sovereign expressions of life by trying to assert sovereignty and control over the other and their situation. And thus a certain configuration of the latent presence of the sovereign expressions of life, the presence of the other and the self's surrendering comportment to them is required in order to make morally appropriate material inferences (*mutatis mutandis* to perform spontaneous ethical actions).¹⁸

Yet, whilst this clarification may deflect the worry concerning a putative irrationalism underwriting Løgstrup's moral phenomenology, the related worry concerning the *unfreedom* of the surrendering agent might still be seen to have some traction. On an Adornian picture, the 'ethic of resistance' is aimed at resisting and negating those aspects of instrumental rationality which are constitutive of our current state of unfreedom with a view to *realizing* our freedom as autonomous subjects, freely responsive to the 'auratic individuality' of others.¹⁹ Thus, an Adornian may wonder in what sense the surrendering agent, insofar as it appears precisely to give up its autonomy in the encounter with the other, is *free*? Variations of this worry have lingered throughout the past three chapters: for instance, in relation to my

¹⁸ Of course, there is an important issue here concerning whose conception of radical evil and human wickedness is more defensible. I cannot hope to settle that issue here.

¹⁹ One way of capturing this aim is in terms of Bernstein's claim that Adorno holds the achievement of the 'complex concept' as something like a regulative ideal. According to Bernstein, Adorno's concept of the concept holds that the concept is composed of two axes: a *logical axis* and a *material axis*. The logical axis captures the concept's representation of an object in terms of general norms or rules 'imposed' on the object by the subject in rendering it intelligible. The material axis captures a dependency of the concept on the irreducible particularity of the object (the materiality of the object – hence the label '*material axis*'). Part of Adorno's polemic against modern society consists in the claim that, given modern society's domination by 'logical' instrumental rationality, it operates with a 'partial' concept of the concept, namely, a concept with the logical axis alone. Viewed in this way, the point of the 'ethic of resistance' consists in an attempt to recover the material axis of the concept, where this recovery will signal the realization of our autonomy, properly construed.

discussion of the split-self view, I registered a worry concerning how the agency of the true self can be distinguished from that of the ‘mere’ agency of a responsive automaton. And the worry re-emerged in my comparative discussion of Lear’s notion of radical hope with Løgstrup’s sovereign expressions of life above: whereas Lear distinguishes Plenty Coups’ agency as a form of *moral* agency in contrast to ‘mere optimism’ by associating radical hope with the virtue of courage, we saw that no such explanation can be appealed to in explicating Løgstrup’s notion of surrender. Indeed, the term ‘surrender’ seems to bring with it associations of *giving up one’s freedom* in the face of an overwhelming, but constitutively indeterminate claim.

It is important to note in responding to this charge that Løgstrup consistently associates the realization of the sovereign expressions of life with freedom. For instance, he writes that the ‘freedom of existence...consists in the sovereign expressions of life’ (BED: 67) and that ‘the demand is the correlate of sin; the sovereign expression of life is that of freedom’ (BED: 69). Clearly, one sense in which the sovereign expressions of life are associated with freedom for Løgstrup lies in the sense that through our identification with the sovereign expressions of life, we are freed *from* self-enclosedness.²⁰ However, in addition to this, what has been emerging in our present discussion is a sense that there is a further, more positive, valence of agential freedom at play in Løgstrup’s moral phenomenology; a valence of agential freedom *that is gained in virtue of surrender*. We might term this positive valence of agential freedom as a freedom *for* the (indeterminate) good. Importantly, however, this latter sense of freedom differs from freedom as *autonomy* – indeed, arguably, a central

²⁰ Cf. ‘Reflection on the freedom to act is never an impetus to action. On the contrary, the impetus to action comes from a consideration of the action’s purpose, content and meaning. The realization of the freedom that I myself am, and in which my existence consists, is something I can achieve only by forgetting it’ (BED: 80-1).

motivation behind Løgstrup's moral phenomenology is precisely to challenge the thought that one's moral agency can be expressed only in terms of autonomy, of freely giving oneself the law. In closing this chapter, I will present some concluding exploratory suggestions concerning how the freedom for the (indeterminate) good gained in virtue of surrender might be understood.

My suggestion in this regard can be captured in terms of the Augustinian distinction between *liberium arbitrium*, meaning the liberty of choice; the possibility of doing otherwise; freedom of the will, and *libertas*, meaning a freedom for the good or a *propensio* toward the truth.²¹ And my thought is this. While surrendering to the sovereign expressions of life clearly precludes the kind of freedom denoted by *liberium arbitrium*, it can be seen to be consonant with the sense of freedom as *libertas* (Cf. BED: 80-1). In order to explore this possibility, it is instructive to return to Han-Pile's

²¹ Cf. Rist (1994) 'Augustine prefers to put it like [this]: man is free (*liberum*) to do what he likes, but he is not freed (*liberatum*) from sin (*Rebuke and Grace* 13.42) – and this latter unfreedom will be disastrous. As Augustine has said as early as *On Human Responsibility*, freedom (*libertas*) is being subject to truth; we need to be freed from fallen 'free' choice' (132); 'Augustine is always concerned to argue that in the course of our ordinary human life nothing outside the will determines the will; that is, whatever kind of will we have (good or bad, as the early parts of *On Human Responsibility* put it), we shall 'will' accordingly. That is the reason why when Augustine remarked of his *Reply to Simplicianus* that there he had struggled for the free choice of the will, but that the grace of God prevailed, he was not denying that the will is free to choose. He was asserting that only the wrong choices are possible unless the will is properly repaired and maintained by God. Hence, if it chooses badly, it is nothing but the will that chooses; if it chooses well, the will is 'prepared' by God, or, as Augustine eventually puts it, it enjoys full freedom (*summa libertas*), freedom being a condition in which the soul is in harmony with, and subject to, the truth and the will and love of God' (186-7). Although I cannot pursue the thought here, it is plausible to think that Luther's thinking on the bondage of the will is substantially influenced by Augustine on this point (Augustine, after all, was held by Luther as being 'the Scriptural theologian who...had the right comprehension of the nature of sin and grace' (Pauck 1961: xlvi)), where this goes some way to explaining Luther's portrayal of 'Christians in their relationship to God as free, in their relationship to the world, however, as obliged to the service and compassion of their neighbour: Faith would set humans free from the compulsion for self-justification and therefore would render them free to serve their neighbours. In short, humans would be free out of faith in love' (Beutel 2003: 11). These considerations form the background of my exploratory remarks here concerning a form of freedom gained in virtue of surrendering to life in confidence with it. To put it bluntly, one could say that for Løgstrup whereas the sovereign expressions of life correspond to grace, surrender (*mutatis mutandis* receiving life as a gift) corresponds to faith. And my point throughout the past two chapters has been to argue that surrender (*viz.* a secularized form of faith) can fruitfully be interpreted as being expressive of a medio-passive mode of agency.

discussion of freedom and the choice to choose in Heidegger, considered in the previous chapter. In her article, Han-Pile considers *libertas* as one possible way of articulating the possibility of ontological freedom for Dasein. On this reading, ontological freedom would be construed in terms of a '*propensio toward authenticity [which] may be what enables Dasein to resist falling*' (Han-Pile 2013: 295).²² However, Han-Pile notes that 'the claim that ontological freedom is a *propensio* to authenticity suggests that Dasein can derive *a priori* ethical guidance from its very constitution. But the idea that Dasein should have such a constitution is in tension with Heidegger's pronouncements about Dasein's essence residing in its existence' (*ibid.*).

By contrast, as we have seen, Løgstrup, with his theory of the sovereign expressions of life, is expressly concerned to claim that, in a sense, the self *can* derive *a priori* ethical guidance from its existence (see my discussion at §4.3). Consider, for example, Løgstrup's comments concerning openness of speech: he writes that 'the elemental and definitive peculiarity attaching to all speech qua spontaneous expression of life [is] its openness. To speak is to speak openly. This is not something the individual does with speech; it is there beforehand, as it were, qua anonymous expression of life' (BED: 84). He develops this thought in *Norm and Spontaneity*, adding 'who thinks of the act of speaking as ethical? Yet all speech is ethical, thanks to its innate openness' (BED: 135). In other words, Løgstrup holds that life or existence contains the possibilities for goodness: the sovereign expressions of life always

²² Han-Pile bases her investigation of this possibility on Heidegger's study of Cartesian freedom in the *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, where Heidegger writes that 'in order to be free, it is not required that I can move in both directions but rather: *quo magis in unam propendeo eo liberius* (the more I incline to the one, the freer I am). Here the Augustinian concept of freedom comes to the fore: the more primordially the *propensio* is for the *bonum*, the more authentic the freedom of acting ... I am genuinely free if I Go towards what I understand' (GA 14: 151, quoted in Han-Pile 2013: 294, her italics).

already orient us in the encounter with the other in such a way that involves a sensitivity to the good of the other's vulnerable life, however un-thematic or inarticulable that sensitivity may be. We might say that, insofar as surrendering to the sovereign expressions of life involves letting the 'ethical guidance' they provide be 'determinative' of our mode of comportment, freedom from self-enclosedness is also freedom for the (indeterminate) good, as intimated by the sovereign expressions of life.

In a way comparable to Heidegger, then, for Løgstrup, the freedom of human existence can be seen to lie in its mode of being as that which transcends towards the world (for Heidegger) or the other (for Løgstrup). And *this* is the freedom that the self is cut off from in inturnedness. However, by comporting itself surrenderingly in the encounter with the other, the true self is coming into identity with the freedom that it itself is. By analogy, we might say that in comporting oneself 'surrenderingly' in relation to life, one is not *giving up* one's freedom, as an injured soldier might give himself up and surrender himself to an enemy combatant. Rather, one is surrendering oneself to life in *confidence* to it as containing the possibilities for goodness, as a lover surrenders himself to his beloved – even though those possibilities lie beyond one's finite capacities for representational intentionality. It is this freedom, gained in part by our keeping ourselves attuned to the constitutively indeterminate good of the other, that belongs to us as the finite, interdependent creatures that we are.

To develop the positive valence of freedom involved in surrendering as a form of confidence in life, we can note that Løgstrup discusses the affective relation of trust or confidence in life in *The Ethical Demand* when he is describing what it is to understand or receive life as a gift. He writes:

If life is given to us, not once and for all but in every moment, it follows that we have it for the purpose of delivering ourselves over to it. If it is a gift, it has

been given in order that it be lived in confidence [*tillid*] to it. And the trust in the other person which we always have from the very outset, and which in a fundamental way belongs to human existence, is based upon and goes hand in hand with the confidence in life which comes with the gift itself...The onesidedness of the demand expresses the fact that we receive life in order that we should in confidence surrender ourselves to it [*tillid til det at prisgive os til det*]. In contrast to this, every moral theory based on the viewpoint of reciprocity is an expression of our desire to have control over existence. (ED: 118)²³

Now, while the notion of life as a gift drops out of Løgstrup's later work – indeed, in his *Rejoinder*, Løgstrup registers his dissatisfaction with his treatment of the notion in *The Ethical Demand* (BED: 11) – the core sense of that notion is retained in his development of the sovereign expressions of life. He clearly retains a sense that life contains the possibilities for goodness that are not of our own making. Moreover, as we have seen, he retains a sense that the appropriate way of comporting oneself to life construed in this way is to surrender to it.²⁴

Plausibly, Løgstrup's notion of surrender parallels Luther's conception of faith as a form of radical trust and confidence towards God. Luther's homely illustration of faith in terms of a relation between husband and wife is instructive in this regard:

When a husband and wife really love one another, have pleasure in each other, and thoroughly believe in their love, who teaches them how to behave one to another, what they are to do or not to do, say or not to say, what they are to think? Confidence alone teaches them all this, and even more than is necessary. For such a man there is no distinction in works. He does the great and the important as gladly as the small and the unimportant, and vice versa. Moreover, he does them all in a glad, peaceful and confident heart, and is an absolutely willing companion to the woman. But where there is any doubt, he searches within himself for the best thing to do; then a distinction of works arises by which he imagines he may win favour. And yet he goes about with a heavy heart and great disinclination. He is like a prisoner, more than half in despair, and often makes a fool of himself. (Luther 2007: 1: 108–9)

²³ Cf. 'It is in the very nature of human existence that it wants to be just as new as the other person's new words, new deeds, and new conduct...We might call this a trust in life itself, in the ongoing renewal of life' (ED: 14).

²⁴ Løgstrup's thinking here, I would suggest, supports my reading of Løgstrup's moral phenomenology along Heideggerian lines in §2. Namely, it supports the view that understanding or receiving life as a gift serves as a kind of 'prototype' for the contexts and relations that define the social world.

On Luther's view, then, the faithful person 'knows all things, can do all things [and] ventures everything that needs to be done' (*ibid.*) whereas the doubter is forced into reflection concerning what is required of him. Importantly, the trust or confidence that defines faith for Luther is not *self*-confidence or trust in *oneself*; rather faith is a radical trust *in another*, namely, God. Hampson, for instance, talks of Luther's conception of faith in terms of a 'revolution in the self' whereby 'one's sense of self is [now] bound up with another, with God, as one knows one's self through God's acceptance of one' (Hampson 2004: 18). And Wilhelm Pauck writes that 'Luther's religion was a free trusting in God's *gift* of forgiveness and therefore upon a "foreign righteousness" that entailed an utter self-surrender and becoming dependent on resources that no man can ever call his own' (Pauck 1961: lxi).

Similarly, for Løgstrup, surrendering involves a trusting or confident affective attitude towards life viewed as a good ever-renewing gift. That is to say, Løgstrup's notion of surrender is expressive of the freedom of agency in that it involves an affective relation to the indeterminate claim made on them by the other, whereby the agent keeps himself attuned to that indeterminate claim in confidence with life's possibilities for goodness. By way of illustration, we might think of the parable of the lily according to which we are advised to be like 'the lilies of the field who sow not, nor do they reap, but who are willing to go with what God provides, which also means that they are ready for anything' (Caputo 2001: 8). More prosaically, we might think of dancing with a partner, whereby one keeps oneself attuned to or in step with the movements of the other and the flow of the dance but where this attunement is expressive of one's having surrendered oneself to the other and the dance, in confidence with them. The point is that through surrendering in confidence to life as containing the possibilities for goodness we are freed up *for* the good that, for

Løgstrup, transcends our finite, self-enclosing, capacities of aesthetic-intellectual representation.²⁵

Naturally, someone with Adornian sympathies might still object to the seeming insouciance and cloying optimism of Løgstrup's thinking here; not least because of the strong emphasis Løgstrup places on the pervasiveness of human wickedness elsewhere. On what grounds does Løgstrup justify the claim that life contains the possibilities for goodness? Does Løgstrup's thinking on this point betray some subterranean theistic commitments? I cannot hope to fully respond to these questions here. Moreover, it is beyond the remit of the present investigation to provide such a response, for the questions just posed move us beyond questions of agency towards questions of justification. And, as I noted in chapter one, in this thesis, I have been bracketing the question of justification for the sake of focusing on the question of agency. Nonetheless, I hope my exploratory comments here are illuminating in two respects. Firstly, I hope that they help bring out a distinctive contribution Løgstrup's moral phenomenology makes to contemporary debates concerning moral agency, where, through his theory of the sovereign expressions of life, Løgstrup has provided resources for elucidating a genuinely distinctive way of thinking about the freedom of the moral agent who, to paraphrase Crowell once again, is the kind of subject who can be a free moral agent while being absorbed in the encounter with the other. Secondly, I hope that my exploratory comments provide

²⁵ Although I do not have space to develop it here, it is worth noting an interesting contrast between Heidegger and Kierkegaard, on the one hand, and Løgstrup, on the other, in relation to the experience of freedom. Whereas, for Kierkegaard and Heidegger, our freedom revealed in anxiety, which ultimately directs us towards God (Kierkegaard) and death (Heidegger), respectively, for Løgstrup, our freedom is revealed in our *confidence* (i.e. trust, faith) in *life* (Cf. BED: 54 on Heidegger and BED: 66-8 on Kierkegaard). This difference, between anxiety/confidence and death/life, is surely one of the major issues that deserves further treatment, perhaps as part of an attempt to answer the question concerning Løgstrup's conception of life that I raise in concluding this chapter.

the service of bringing in to focus a further dimension of Løgstrup's ethics that is worthy of further investigation, namely, his conception of life.

5.4. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I have sought, firstly, to defend my medio-passive construal of Løgstrupian agency as *plausible*, in the senses that it can be seen to provide a structural account of agency that can compete with the standard view and that it rings true as a description of our lives as moral agents. Secondly, I have sought to defend the genuine *distinctiveness* of my construal of Løgstrupian moral agency both in relation to the standard view of moral agency and in relation to the non-standard conceptions of agency of relevant comparators. In a word, my aim has been to elucidate and clarify my medio-passive definition of Løgstrupian moral agency as a mode of responding to a constitutively indeterminate normative claim made on the self by the other that integrates the self's sense of agential limitation in the face of the other's indeterminate claim *in* the way that the self responds to it.

Yet, what my discussions above have gradually exposed is an area of Løgstrup's ethical philosophy that requires further investigation. For instance, in my responses to the Levinas-style objections one may begin to wonder what is it about the living vulnerability of the other that issues in a normative claim? Does Løgstrup take this point to be self-evident? Does vulnerable life constitute the 'bedrock' where we are forced to turn our spades, to borrow a phrase from Wittgenstein? Many philosophers would be unsatisfied with this conclusion and demand further justification. Can Løgstrup provide any? Moreover, in my responses to the Adornian-style objection, one may begin to wonder *why* the Løgstrupian agent is justified in having faith in life. Indeed, someone with Adornian sympathies would likely be highly suspicious of the seeming happy-go-luckiness of Løgstrup's position. In other words, the question that emerges out of my discussion here is what conception of *life* did

Løgstrup hold? And: in what sense can life serve as a normative ground for ethics, as Løgstrup's analysis seems to suggest? Such questions, of course, pass beyond the question of agency and broach the *question of justification* for Løgstrup's ethics. I hope that the present thesis helps to motivate further investigation of these questions.

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