
Afterword

By Svend Andersen

K. E. Løgstrup’s book *Kierkegaard’s and Heidegger’s Analysis of Existence and Its Relation to Proclamation* contains his most important work on and stand concerning Søren Kierkegaard’s world view, alongside the ‘polemical epilogue’ in *The Ethical Demand* (1956) and *Controverting Kierkegaard* (1968). As stated in the foreword, the book, which was published in German in 1950, grew out of lectures that Løgstrup gave at the Freie Universität (FU) in Berlin in the same year. The following provides information concerning the background of the lectures and the genesis of the Danish text, as well as presenting the most important ideas in Løgstrup’s understanding and critique of Kierkegaard.¹

Background

Løgstrup’s lectures in Berlin are also a piece of post-war and university history. The first invitation from FU and the first letter dates from the time of the Berlin blockade. On 24th June 1948 the occupying Russians cut off the supply lines from the west into Berlin. The allies responded with the so-called ‘air bridge’, that arranged for food and other necessities to be flown in from Hamburg and Frankfurt amongst other places. Because the Russian blockade did not succeed in isolating west Berlin, they abandoned it on 12th May 1949.

 Partially as a result of the blockade, a new university was founded in Berlin. Berlin’s original university – the [120] current Humboldt University – was in east Berlin and gradually became dominated by communist ideology, resulting in the harassment of dissident students. Plans concerning a new university in the west sector were realized when FU was inaugurated on 4th December 1948. Teaching had started already on 15th November 1948, and Løgstrup’s lectures took place in the academic year after the university’s foundation.

The background for the lectures appear in a correspondence that can be found in FU’s archive. They consist in 15 letters, seven from Løgstrup. Contact with Løgstrup was apparently initiated by the future publisher Wolf Jobst Seidler, who

¹ Thanks to Kees van Kooten Niekerk and to Bjørn Rabjerg for looking at and commenting on my manuscript.
² Løgstrup’s view of Germany and Germans after the war appears in his article ‘Confrontation or Delusion’ from 1945. He asks there whether the resistance [in
on the 10th March 1946 wrote to a representative of the FU, that he had been contacted by ‘the Dean of the Theological Faculty at Aarhus’, who would like to accept an invitation to be a guest lecturer in Berlin. Interestingly, the letter was written from Krogerup High School, which suggests that it was the then headmaster of the school, Hal Koch, who had arranged the contact to his friend K. E. Løgstrup. The letter mentions a strong interest from FU’s side in getting contact with academics from abroad. The official invitation follows in a letter from FU’s ‘external affairs office’, signed by the university’s honorary rector, the prominent historian Friedrich Meinecke. It stresses that Løgstrup will be ‘one of the first foreign researchers’ to have visited the new university.

The correspondence which followed concerns itself mainly with practical things: the journey to Berlin and the timing for the lectures. Due to the blockade, the former concerns planning and arranging the flight from Frankfurt, which required permission from the American military authorities. Subsequently travel plans changed, because Løgstrup – who liked to travel with his German wife – wanted to take the train from Hamburg, which required permission from the Russian authorities. This seemed impossible, because an application needed to go through Moscow, which would take three months! In the end Løgstrup flew from Hamburg to [121] Berlin without his wife Rosemarie, who usually used to accompany him. In the course of the correspondence, the misunderstanding led a clearly irritated Løgstrup to propose that everything should be cancelled. But after profuse German apologies Løgstrup agreed to come to Berlin in January 1950.

As far as the lectures themselves are concerned, Løgstrup first proposes ‘Kierkegaard and the philosophy of existence’, but with ‘Proclamation and philosophy’ his alternative. The first topic was picked, and the two-hourly lectures held on 12th, 14th, 18th and 19th January 1950.

In a letter from February 1950, the rector and the honorary rector thank Løgstrup for his willingness to come to Berlin. While they express the desire that contact should be maintained and lead to further guest lectures, this wish however never became a reality.

Løgstrup’s own view of the visit and lectures in Berlin is apparent from his own comments on the latter in the typewritten manuscript found among his posthumous papers:

I thank you for your invitation and the honour you thereby did me. I think with particular gratitude of my studies at German universities. I remember the kind and willing openness that was always shown to foreigners at German universities. I very much regret that because of the exceptional situation, young Danes must renounce a stay at German universities for the
purpose of research education, and will hope that the possibility of contact will be available again soon. For me, as for many others, staying in Germany has been decisive thanks to its inspiration. Courage to really think thoughts through to the end, the piercing through, that is so characteristic of German thought, is tremendously exciting. I want now to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for what I owe to German universities.

[122] These positive comments are remarkable considering that they come from a Danish person who participated in the resistance to the German occupation.2

The text

One of the German book's chapters is available published in Danish, namely the second chapter, that is published as 'Kierkegaard's Case of The Doubling of the Spiritual Relation' in the essay collection Art and Ethics from 1961. Some passages in the Heidegger section can be found in the compendium for students that Løgstrup had had copied around 1950 under the title Martin Heidegger. The compendium is now published in book form in the Løgstrup collected edition under the same title. Finally one can find most of the lectures in a Danish version among Løgstrup's posthumous papers, typed with handwritten additions and changes. However not all manuscripts are complete and some parts are in German.3

The Danish text is put together in the following way. The chapters and sections which were not found in some Danish version are translated by myself. Some sections on Heidegger are taken from the book Martin Heidegger. The largest part of the text [123] exists in Løgstrup's Danish own manuscript. The Danish text is brought into line with the text from the German publication. Where additions

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2 Løgstrup's view of Germany and Germans after the war appears in his article 'Confrontation or Delusion' from 1945. He asks there whether the resistance [in Germany] against Hitler was due to the Nazi assault on European humanity and the rule of law [retskultur] – or the impending defeat. Only in the first case can 'we' have dealing with the Germans. One should not show any pity to the Germans by treating them as innocent victims, but rather one has to confront the atrocities of the Nazis. If one found in the Germans 'the insight that Germany's victory would have been the greatest misfortune that could have overcome Germany itself and the whole of Europe', then also the Danish researcher can have to do with his German colleague in 'international science research' (Løgstrup 1945, p. 24).

3 The original manuscripts are in the National Archives (Rosemaire and K. E. Løgstrup's private archive, number 7320, packets 1-2), and on microfilm in the archive at Aarhus University, number IX.1.4 to IX.1.13.
occur in Løgstrup's Danish manuscript, this is included and marked with edged brackets.

It should be stressed that the book is a Danish edition of a book Løgstrup himself published in German. The purpose for this is to make this important book available for Danish readers. This is, however, not an edition taken from various manuscripts from Løgstrup's posthumous papers. In that case Løgstrup's original spelling would be retained etc. Instead the spelling throughout has been amended to contemporary Danish, in the same way that Løgstrup himself did with the printing of the other chapter.

Løgstrup cites from Søren Kierkegaard, Gesammelte Werke, edited by H. Gottsched and C. Schrempf, Jena 1922 ff. However, in some places he seems to have used another German edition, namely Gesammelte Werke, Düsseldorf, Köln, 1955 ff. In the Danish manuscript Løgstrup sometimes give citations in Danish from the second edition: Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Værker, Copenhagen 1920 ff. This book's Kierkegaard citations refer to Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter, Copenhagen 1997 ff. (electronic edition: www.sks.dk). In some cases it has not been possible to locate some apparent Kierkegaard passages, where Løgstrup quotes without a source. The spellings for the titles of Kierkegaard's works are here in the book changed to the original form.

Content and Viewpoint

Even though the book according to the title treats Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's thought as equals, there is no doubt that Kierkegaard plays the central role. It is apparent also from Løgstrup's introductory remarks to the lectures, the manuscript for which is found among his papers, and which reads in translation:

Concerning my lectures I want to make two prefatory remarks. When about a year ago I needed to specify the subject of my lectures, I did so as ‘Kierkegaard and the philosophy of existence’. In preparing them, however, for the sake of focus concerning the philosophy of existence, I have restricted myself to Heidegger. In this context it is not my intention to just take into account what is common and different in Kierkegaard’s and Heidegger’s problematics; that material I will deal with in my first five lectures, but the three final lectures contain more of a critical treatment – particularly of Kierkegaard’s views. On the whole, I concern myself more with Kierkegaard than with Heidegger. Furthermore I will examine the relationship between philosophy, understanding of life and proclamation from Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's problematic.
The following therefore concentrates on the view of Kierkegaard’s thought that Løgstrup tries to establish in the book.\(^4\) \(^5\) For understanding this it seems to me that the following formulation is crucial: [125]

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 the concrete, external existence of the individual. (p. 77; German edn pp. 84-85)

The passage contains three noteworthy statements: (1) Løgstrup wishes to retain Kierkegaard’s understanding of existence. (2) The infinite demand belongs to human existence. (3) The demand announces itself in concrete human existence. As we shall see, it is only in the last statement that there is a real critique of Kierkegaard.

As characteristic of the book’s Kierkegaard interpretation, the following formulation is also important:

Kierkegaard is doing philosophy and not theology. Also in what follows we will have to do only with Kierkegaard as a philosopher. Kierkegaard’s view of Christianity and the problems it gives rise to will not be taken into consideration here. (p. 31; German edn p. 35)

Very generally one can say that in the book, Løgstrup with approval gives an account of philosophy of existence as a basic view, which Kierkegaard and Heidegger have in common. Although Løgstrup expressly restricts himself to a philosophical way of thinking with Kierkegaard, under the inspiration of existence philosophy he formulates a theological standpoint, that it is natural to call existence-theology. It is therefore not by chance that Løgstrup cites Rudolf

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\(^4\) Concerning Løgstrup’s account and interpretation of Heidegger’s philosophy, see George Pattison’s paper in the forthcoming publication Fink and Stern (eds) 2013.

\(^5\) On the limited contemporary response to the book see Hansen 2006, p. 35. There may be reason to focus on one reaction, namely K. Olesen Larsen’s. In a series of articles in *Tildhverv* he first set out his own view particularly concerning *Postscript* and *Works of Love*, to end with a complete rejection of Løgstrup’s interpretation of Kierkegaard’s concept of the infinite demand. The whole series of articles is collected in Larsen 1966. Although Løgstrup’s critical reading of Kierkegaard goes together with his polemic against Olesen Larsen and the Tildhverv movement, in my opinion it is absolutely essential to keep the two distinct from each other, if one is interested in Løgstrup’s understanding of Kierkegaard. The book also receives a critical treatment in Sløk 1955.
Bultmann, existence-theology's most prominent representative. In the theological reflections of this book, Løgstrup prefigures central thoughts in his later masterwork *The Ethical Demand*, but with a clearer existence-theological emphasis.

In the following I will highlight what I think are some of [126] the most central ideas in the book's development. While Løgstrup exclusively relates himself to Heidegger's philosophy from the main work *Being and Time* (1927) and never cites directly, he deals with a wide selection from Kierkegaard's works. Thus he uses both the pseudonymous authorship – with the emphasis on *Sickness Unto Death* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* – the upbuilding authorship in the form of *Christian Discourses*, together with the earlier *Papers*. One can therefore not claim that Løgstrup bases his reading and critique on a very narrow selection from Kierkegaard's writings.

**The self and the demand**

Løgstrup begins with a very central motif of existence philosophy: the loss of the individual to what others do and think. Kierkegaard calls this the loss of the individual in the crowd, while Heidegger calls it loss in the 'man'. For Kierkegaard life in the crowd is the immediate being absorbed in all sorts of goings-on, without – as Løgstrup stresses – as an individual having to make a decision and thus act ethically. The lostness has consequences for the central Kierkegaardian concept of the self: the individual loses himself by allowing his life to be determined by the other. Losing his self does not exclude selfishness, which Kierkegaard amongst other things shows in his analysis of immediate love in *The Works of Love*, which Løgstrup returns to in more depth in *The Ethical Demand*. Løgstrup notes that being lost in the crowd also has consequences for understanding ethics. What is good and evil is precisely defined also by how the others evaluate people's concrete simple actions, i.e. from customs and traditions.

Even though Løgstrup considers Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's descriptions as mutually compatible contributions to an analysis of human existence, he already here points to a crucial difference. Heidegger sees his analysis as an element [127] in a neutral description of man's way of being, as an ontology. His philosophical analysis is not put forward as an understanding of life, but however conversely as a condition for every understanding of life or religion, that has something to say to man in his existence. On the other hand, Kierkegaard depicts life in the crowd as bearing an 'ethical passion'. He polemicises against the form of existence through which the individual loses himself in the crowd. Kierkegaard finds the same neglect of the individual in philosophical speculation influenced by Hegel. And he finds it in established Christianity, where one becomes Christian just by being born in Christendom.
According to Løgstrup the two thinkers also basically give different explanations for why the individual loses himself in the crowd. For Heidegger it is due to the character of human existence as ‘Sorge’ or ‘cura’: this means that the individual is left to himself and must himself care for his continued existence. By contrast according to Løgstrup, Kierkegaard’s explanation is religious: man must necessarily relate himself absolutely to one end or another. And initially he relates himself absolutely to a relative end, namely the life of concrete busyness such as others interpret it. When Løgstrup calls Kierkegaard’s conditions for speaking of life in the crowd religious, it is due to the fact that he classifies the religious in this sense as philosophical. In other words, Løgstrup distinguishes between general religiosity and Christianity.

From this abortive form of human existence – life in the crowd – Løgstrup turns in the second chapter to the core of Kierkegaard’s understanding of existence, which he finds in the phenomenon of the self. Kierkegaard explains this in perhaps his most significant text, the passage on spirit [ånd] in Sickness unto Death. Løgstrup does not go into the whole work, neither the meaning of the title nor the fact that Kierkegaard analyses the self in order to analyse despair, which is his rewriting of the Christian concept of sin. Rather, Løgstrup goes directly to the philosophical phenomenon [128] or problem that interests him, which in this case is being a self.

In the essay edition of the book’s second chapter Løgstrup has added the sub-title ‘An Interpretation’, which is very apt considering that he is not content to paraphrase Kierkegaard’s formulations. And the interpretation is directed not only towards the mentioned passage, but includes a number of central Kierkegaardian concepts by bringing in other writings.

In contrast to Kierkegaard himself, Løgstrup takes as his point of departure the relation between soul and body, which is one of the two syntheses that constitute a human being as a self. In line with Hegel and German Idealism in general, Kierkegaard regards soul and body as a self-relation: one part of the relation relates itself to the relation in that the soul is conscious of the relation and has knowledge of it. The soul-body synthesis, however, cannot stand alone but must be supported by another synthesis: the one of temporality-eternity or finitude-infinitude. Løgstrup’s interpretation of this second synthesis implies a thought, the importance of which for his own ideas cannot be overestimated. In order to understand how the relation finitude-infinitude relates to itself, Løgstrup says, we need to include Kierkegaard’s concept of demand: ‘the demand places me in a decision, and in the decision I relate to myself, in so far as I relate to my own possibility of being obedient or disobedient’ (p. 23; German edn p. 26). And correspondingly: ‘In the reduplication, provoked by the demand, I relate to myself in my possibility’ (p. 24; German edn p. 27). Hence the real relation to myself does
not consist in consciousness or knowledge, but rather in action: in the decision vis-à-vis a demand. We have to do with a self-relation in the sense that I, confronted with the demand, decide who or what I will be. I relate myself to a future possibility of being me.

As regards the concept of the self, it has two characteristics in Løgstrup’s interpretation. First to be a self means just to relate oneself to one’s existence as demanded, to be the one whose existence the demand concerns (see p. 24; German edn p. 27). Second ‘self’ is the subject’s identity, cf. the formulation ‘Therefore to be one and the same is a continuous task’ (p. 27; German edn p. 31). One can express these two aspects with the help of the two Latin expressions ‘idem’ (the same, cf. identity) and ‘ipse’ (self), as they are set out e.g. by Paul Ricoeur. Roughly speaking these turn on the difference between person identity which can also be constituted by others, and the responsible or authentic self-relation (Ricoeur 1990).

Infinity, which characterizes human existence, thus come to expression in the demand. This latter, Løgstrup emphasizes, does not meet the human being from outside, so to speak, but rather belongs to his very existence. Here it is necessary to make an important distinction between human essence and existence: infinity obviously cannot belong to human essence, as that would contradict human finitude. Rather, infinity belongs to human existence in the sense that this latter is incessantly marked by the confrontation with the infinite demand. The relation to the infinite has the character of loss, as the infinite to which humans relate in the demand, is a lost infinite (p. 27; German edn p. 30). In this sense human existence is founded in negativity.

The loss of infinity is seen further in human life as guilt (p. 28; German edn p. 32). It also gives its existence the character of becoming or movement: infinity can never be obtained or realized but requires incessant movement (p. 19; German edn p. 21). Finally in Løgstrup’s way of reading Kierkegaard’s characterization of the self, passion is central: because the self is a synthesis of the finite and infinite, it is a constant task to hold together these elements which are so opposed. And the task requires passion.

The reason why Løgstrup’s interpretation of the kierkegaardian motif ‘reduplication of the spiritual relation’ cannot be overestimated is that it is here that Løgstrup finds the ‘infinite demand’ that becomes the key concept in his own later chief work. We will see below how the reading of Kierkegaard changes his fundamental ethical view.

The demand’s significance is also that it distinguishes Kierkegaard’s analysis of existence from Heidegger’s. Both are agreed that human existence is characterized
by the fact that the self in its existence involves becoming and possibility, and that the basis for that lies in negativity. But while for Heidegger these features are grounded in cura concerning its 'pre-ethical constitution', for Kierkegaard they are grounded in the infinite demand which belongs to existence as such (p. 32; German edn p. 36).

**Concrete existence**

But even if Løgstrup generally speaking concurs with Kierkegaard's existential analysis, he makes two important objections. The first objection relates to what Løgstrup calls 'the problem of the take-over of concrete existence' (chapter 4). The problem is that as the self is a synthesis of finitude and infinity, a human being cannot become a self by just living his or her life in immediacy. That would be realizing only the finite dimension of the self. On the contrary, the task must be to let infinity permeate one's whole concrete existence. According to Løgstrup, Kierkegaard understands the latter concept as 'the individual with the capacities and inclinations that he has been given, and that stakes out a range of temporal and also relative and finite goals for his work, since indeed the capacities want to be developed and the inclinations satisfied' (p. 46; German edn pp. 51-52). Moreover, 'the individual is one whose life is played out in a range of particular relationships, in a determined order of things: a human being is a child, husband, father or mother; they are a citizen of a country and have a particular job and so on and so forth, all relations that give the individual a range of duties, indeed at the same time also deliver the framework for the development of their capacities and the satisfaction of their inclinations, the framework also inside which they set themselves their goals' (ibid; German edn p. 52).

Especially the final formulations are important as they refer to connections that are also central in Løgstrup's own thought. 'The order of things' is a kierkegaardian expression, but in Løgstrup's use it without doubt also carries Lutheran connotations. According to Luther human life unfolds within specific orders or relations, into which humans are created: first of all marriage and family, but also the political authority relation and the occupational work relation.

Løgstrup's basic claim is now that in the end Kierkegaard does not succeed in showing how a human being can realize his or her self within these concrete contexts. He primarily bases his argument on three texts: the description of the forms of despair in *The Sickness Unto Death*; the reflections on the religious implementation of marriage in *Stages on Life's Way*; and the account of expressing within the relative one's relation to the absolute in the *Postscript*.

Løgstrup's view is based on Kierkegaard's depiction of 'infinite despair', imagination's infinite movement away from concrete, finite existence. He combines
this with the section on defiance, meaning desperately wanting to be oneself. Løgstrup’s interpretation consists of saying that the infinite self’s attempt to make the finite movement back to the concrete fails, as long as the self does not realize that it is not its own creation. It can only achieve this realization if it relates itself to the infinite’s or God’s demand. In *Stages on Life’s Way*, Kierkegaard puts the demand together with the infinite or abstract self, but here he states: it is ‘not easy’ to reconcile the demand with the concrete. The problem is pursed further in *Postscript*, where Kierkegaard give the requirement of the demand, that it consists in the fact that the individual must be aware that he or she has no power over God. Can this awareness of the God relation be combined in any way with concrete human life? Løgstrup claims that it [132] cannot on Kierkegaard’s premises. And he finds the evidence for this in a particular passage that Kierkegaard himself cites as an ‘edifying diversion’. The problem here is whether it is compatible with the demand of the God-relationship, that the individual allows himself a little diversion for a day at the deer-park. If the trip is motivated by desire, this cannot be the case. Kierkegaard therefore thought that the person would try to refrain from the day at the deer-park. However, the renunciation evokes a frustration, a ‘touchiness’, which can only be countered by the person defiantly holding onto the decision concerning renunciation. According to Løgstrup here lies a contradiction: ‘then not being capable of doing anything becomes something he is precisely capable of doing by his own power and will’ (p. 57; German edn pp. 62-63). To clarify the contradiction, Løgstrup goes back in the text, where Kierkegaard states that the absolute conception of God is not in the instant, but must be sustained: Løgstrup interprets it in this way, that the demand is for man to be ‘able to’ retain the God-idea. But this ‘cancels’ the demand ‘just as certainly as the content of the demand is that one is capable of nothing’ (ibid). All in all for Løgstrup, Kierkegaard’s solution ends in the problem with adopting concrete existence in a ‘circle of self-inspection’, due to the fact that the content of the demand is, in a purely abstract sense, to become nothing.

Precisely the question concerning the demand’s content is the starting point for Løgstrup for another central objection. But before he puts it forward, in the fifth chapter he explains his first objection in connection with his account of Kierkegaard’s (and Heidegger’s) concept of guilt. As to Kierkegaard, the textual target for Løgstrup’s critique is the passage on guilt in the *Postscript* (SKS 7:477ff). Løgstrup again sees a basic agreement between the two views of guilt. Both Kierkegaard and Heidegger introduce a more fundamental type of guilt apart from ‘vulgar’ or ‘quantitative’ guilt, i.e. the guilt caused by the violation of concrete norms. In addition Kierkegaard asserts a total guilt, consisting in holding quantitative guilt together [133] with the idea of God. However, according to Løgstrup, in Kierkegaard a ‘displacement’ occurs to the effect that total guilt is not any more the bringing together of a single transgression and the idea of God, but
becomes the lack of an ability to maintain the feeling of guilt. The feeling of total guilt 'lives its own autonomous life' (p. 62 German edition p. 68).

From laws of life to the demand

Løgstrup formulates his second central objection in the sixth chapter, which begins the book's second, critical, part. The objection is directed at Kierkegaard's determination of the demand, but mind you, not against the very idea of 'an infinite demand, under which the individual is placed just by existing' (p. 72; German edn p. 80). On the contrary Løgstrup endorses this idea. His objection is rather aimed at Kierkegaard's effort to determine the content of the demand 'in infinitely abstracting from concrete existence' (ibid.) But in critically transforming the idea of an infinite demand that he adopts from Kierkegaard, Løgstrup makes a decisive move towards the view he himself defends in The Ethical Demand. In order to set the thoughts in this book [i.e. the Berlin lectures] in relief, it can be useful to include Løgstrup's basic ethical ideas up to this point.

In the period before the Berlin lectures, Løgstrup's basic ethical concept was laws of life. Thus he writes during the German occupation:

Between a human being's own life and its ego there is a tension and a contradiction...It consists, among other things, but not least, in the fact that our life has its own laws... If we violate them, the humanity, of which they are laws, perishes at the same time. (Løgstrup 1943: 9).

Notice that Løgstrup speaks of laws in the plural. There are laws for the various relations [134] in which we can be placed towards each other. As examples, Løgstrup mentions the law of giving each other honour, the law of raising children to obedience, and the law of justice for the relationship between worker and employer. In other words the laws apply to Kierkegaard's order of concrete existence (see above p. 130). These laws are grounded in the fact that 'we have not ourselves created human life. It is given us ...' (Løgstrup 1943: 8). As they are expressions of life itself, the laws have a different normative character from morality and bourgeois conventions. The laws are 'something absolute, for which all other considerations have to be sacrificed' (Løgstrup 2010a: 86). Likewise:

Therefore one man can and must require from the other to take the laws of life seriously, because the one person's disobedience causes ruin to both, in that the humanity in their mutual relationship perishes. (Løgstrup 1943: 12)

With the idea of the laws of life, Løgstrup undoubtedly advocates the kind of ethics based on the idea of natural law: the fundamental ethical norms are given with the
nature of human beings themselves and are therefore universal. More specifically, Løgstrup here thinks in line with Luther, who saw natural law expressed in the Decalogue, which (at least in the last six) for its part contained ethical norms for the fundamental relationships of human life.

The most important features of this view can be summarized as follows: they are justified in life itself as a given life; in contrast to moral conventions they are absolute; they are attached to a decision situation, and that a person can demand that the other take them seriously.

Løgstrup's critical reading of Kierkegaard now leads roughly to the many absolute laws of life being replaced by one infinite demand. But how is the demand related to the concrete relations or orders to which the various laws apply? First of all, we find part of the answer in Løgstrup's critique of Kierkegaard's concept of total guilt. This guilt is, sure enough, caused by a concrete wrong against another, but it obtains its totality by being held together with the infinite. But thereby, Løgstrup says, the other person loses his or her significance, total guilt being a purely religious relation between the guilty individual and God. Løgstrup's alternative claim is that total guilt is still (also) guilt against another human being. Total guilt is a radicalization of ethical or legal guilt. In this connection a crucial statement against Kierkegaard's understanding of the demand reads: 'It cannot contain such content as responsibility for another human being or guilt against him' (p. 75; German edn p. 82).

Responsibility is a key concept within Løgstrup's alternative view of the demand. He makes this clear by distinguishing between two kinds of claim. On the one hand the norms of social life entail a number of concrete, detailed claims, which one person rightly can make against the other. On the other hand there is a claim – the demand – that is not grounded in the social norms, but that is 'given with the very existence of the other', and is directed 'against me in my very existence' (p. 78; German edn p. 86). In order to hear this demand no abstraction is necessary, because it is heard 'in the responsibility, as having responsibility for another means that all the responsible person in this connection says and does has to be said and done for the sake of the other, and not for the sake of the responsible person himself' (ibid.). It is noteworthy that Løgstrup here derives the demand [p. 135] of unselfish action for the best of the other from the phenomenon of responsibility. In The Ethical Demand it is different: there the demand is derived from the self-exposure – e.g. as trust – with which the other encounters me. And

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6 In the development of ideas concerning the one demand, a role was also played by the German theologian Friedrich Gogarten's book Politische Ethik [Political Ethics]. Gogarten actually used the term 'demand'. I believe however that the influence of Kierkegaard is far more important. For more on this see Niekerk 2007.
whereas self-exposure in *The Ethical Demand* is presented as a ‘fact’, Løgstrup in his discussion with Kierkegaard states that the demand can ‘only be asserted, proclaimed and undertaken’ (p. 78; German edn p. 85).

As we now deal with the ‘demand of the relation of responsibility’, still another concept to be found in *The Ethical Demand* follows, viz. authority. According to Løgstrup, Kierkegaard does not have an eye for the fact that responsibility is a triadic relation: I have responsibility for another, but to a third. And the latter is the authority in demand of the relation of responsibility. When the absolute demand is at stake, the authority precisely cannot be the other. Løgstrup here endorses Kierkegaard’s own insistence – in *Works of Love* – that the demanded act can very well go against what the other wishes. In that way the demand isolates the responsible agent as individual – this thought we also find in *The Ethical Demand*.

Løgstrup further explains how a human being is always already placed under responsibility, because ‘it is not ourselves who have given us our life and have ordered it’ (p. 87; German edn p. 96). That the given life unfolds itself within certain orders is, as mentioned, a thought that grounds the idea of laws of life, and which can be traced back to Løgstrup’s doctoral dissertation from 1942. Now Løgstrup emphasizes that the orders – e.g. as in marriage – have a dual character: they are both grounded in human (biological) nature, and culturally shaped and hence changeable. Due to their biological basis and cultural configuration the orders carry a certain ‘lawfulness’ with which one has to comply. Løgstrup even speaks of ‘laws that must be respected’ (p. 88; German edn p. 97). But now we are not talking about the absolute laws of life, but about changeable and hence relative norms. And using the word ‘lawfulness’, Løgstrup also hints at the fact that the social framework – the orders – in the present time are exposed to scientific analysis and assessment. As an example he mentions [137] the pedagogical critique of authoritarian child raising. The example recurs in *The Ethical Demand*, where we also find a more thorough analysis of the interplay between biology, culture, and social norms.

Again, the laws of the social orders must be distinguished from ‘the absolute or infinite demand’ (p. 89; German edn p. 98), which does not arise from the orders. Rather, the orders create the situation in which the demand is heard. The orders close humans in on each other, which grounds the responsibility that gives content to the demand. The connection between the orders and the demand implies that the ethical decision goes in two directions: ‘Inwards’ the decision is about whether or not the individual will act to do what is best for the other – and ‘outwards’ it is about the concrete content of the act. The latter depends upon the concrete relation and situation, and the decision requires appropriateness, insight, reason and understanding. This emphasis on the appropriateness and reasonableness of
the act Løgstrup also retains in *The Ethical Demand*. This is true also of a last thing Løgstrup mentions in this context, and which bears witness to the ambivalence of his relationship to Kierkegaard. On the one hand Løgstrup emphasizes that 'logically, nothing prevents the demand from interfering in and having effect in the concrete, external existence of the individual' (p. 92; German edn p. 101). On the other hand, he underlines – explicitly joining Kierkegaard – that 'the individual's relation to the infinite demand is and remains invisible to all' (ibid.).

Løgstrup claims that in Kierkegaard it is logically impossible to bring together the infinite demand with concrete existence. This is not only a factual impossibility, for example caused by such things as 'powerlessness and misery of the individual' (p. 73; German edn p. 80). The problem concerning this logical impossibility has some similarity with the question concerning the demand's necessary (and thus logical) unfulfillability, which Løgstrup discusses in *The Ethical Demand*. He says here that talk of this sort concerning the demand would be to 'live in a world of seeming reality' (Løgstrup 2011: 236; English edn p. 211). [138]

**The analysis of existence and proclamation**

By endorsing the idea of an infinite demand, Løgstrup takes the side of Kierkegaard against Heidegger. According to Løgstrup, Heidegger only recognizes demands as concrete moral and juridical requirements that as such belong to the domain of the ‘present at hand’, and not to the constitutive element of human existence. By contrast for Kierkegaard the infinite demand is precisely a constitutive element of human existence. As Løgstrup puts it: 'the awareness of human existence's character of becoming and possibility is kept alive by this demand; its infinitude prevents human beings from committing themselves to something actualized’ (p. 85; German edn p. 93). The contrast between existence's character of becoming and possibility – and the understanding of existence as something to be actualized - is crucial to Løgstrup's further treatment of the main topic that he calls 'Philosophy and Proclamation’ (seventh chapter). Again he here anticipates essential ideas in *The Ethical Demand*, now also with reference to its theological character. Løgstrup aligns himself to some degree with Heidegger's distinction between a purely formal analysis of existence and a concrete, contentful understanding of life, or proclamation. And he finds – despite differences – the same distinction in Kierkegaard’s thought. This means that a criterion for the credibility of a proclamation can be derived from the philosophical analysis of existence: it must answer to the formal analysis of existence. Otherwise the assumption of the demand is tantamount to coercion: 'faith without understanding is not faith, but coercion’ (p. 98; German edn p. 108).

This phrase is repeated verbatim in the introduction to *The Ethical Demand* (Løgstrup 2010: 10; English edn p. 2). It is said to apply generally to any understanding of life, or proclamation. But Løgstrup illustrates the relationship
from one particular proclamation namely – naturally enough – the Christian or the ecclesiastical. He believes that Kierkegaard himself saw this as the relation between existence analysis and Christianity, also when he determines Christianity as a paradox. Christianity’s truth is namely ‘the truth [139] concerning existence’ (p. 98; German edn p. 109). Løgstrup emphasizes that philosophy and existence analysis are not entirely independent things, against which the proclamation can be measured. Existence analysis and philosophy are both affected by Christianity.⁷ When the ecclesiastical proclamation is therefore subject to an existence-philosophical test, it is in reality the Christian message in philosophical form which is the critical authority (cf. p. 99f; German edn p. 109ff).

Alongside the general importance of philosophy in the clarification of proclamation, philosophy can set a number of more specific requirements on the proclamation. The requirements are based on the fundamental features of human existence: that it is the existence of the individual and not the crowd, and that it is becoming or possibility, and not actualization. From these questions Løgstrup arrives at a number of additional characteristics, which again are in The Ethical Demand. The demand ought to answer to human existence through the fact that it ought to preserve this character as possibility. It is therefore misleading to say that what is demanded can be actualized. The relation between the absolute demand and the concrete action is different: the demand brings about actions, but there is and will be a break between the two. The individual can therefore never be certain that he has acted rightly. And he or she can never renounce his or her responsibility for the action. If however what is demanded is viewed as something that can be actualized, then the demand is ‘transformed and garbled into an idea, a principle, a value’ (p. 103; German edn p. 113). That means that simultaneously both one’s own and the other’s human existence is sidelined and subordinated to what thought has devised.

According to Løgstrup, from the criteria of the philosophical analysis of existence one must reject talk of a politics grounded on Christianity or a distinctively Christian ethics. The Christian must base his political views on generally understood arguments. To justify [140] an ethical or political position by claiming obedience to the Christian message’s command (demand) would be pharasitical. In this context Løgstrup critiques church activism, which he did later as well.

At the time, Løgstrup spoke not only of philosophy and proclamation but also of theology: the theologian can relate his critique to philosophy, for example by

⁷ Løgstrup mentions that Heidegger in his analysis of existence is inspired by Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard (p. 100; German edn p. 110), which is confirmed by amongst others Heidegger’s lecture on Augustine in 1921, cf. Heidegger 1995.
pointing to the features of human life which philosophy overlooks. Perhaps one can express the matter this way: that theology – when the proclamation is seen in a Christian way – represents a link between philosophy/the analysis of existence, and proclamation. In a section which does not appear in the German edition, Løgstrup speaks of himself as a theologian. And he mentions communism as another possible proclamation, that could be subjected to the critique of existence analysis.

The final, short eighth chapter – that as a lecture contained parts of the previous chapter – provides a detailed account of the kierkegaardian opposition between thought and existence, of which Løgstrup himself makes positive use in his critique concerning the thought of a purely Christian ethics.

**A contemporary article**

A central theme of Kierkegaard's is *the dialectic of communication* or indirect communication. Løgstrup mentions it only a couple of times in this book, without going into it further (pp. 65, 94 and 113; German edn pp. 72, 105 and 124). However that he takes the theme to be crucial is shown by the article ‘The Category and Office of the Proclamation, With Particular Reference to Luther and Kierkegaard’ (*Tidehverv* 1950, number 2-3). The article appeared in German the year before, and as it originates from the same period as the Berlin lectures, there may be reason to briefly mention it here.

In the article Løgstrup gives a detailed analysis of Kierkegaard's concept of the dialectic of communication, that again shows a very extensive knowledge of the authorship. The analysis is thus [141] based on *Postscript* and *Sickness unto Death, Practice in Christianity, The Book on Adler* (and other journal entries) and *On the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle*. Kierkegaard's problem is that communication normally conveys objective knowledge, which however is falsifying when it comes to Christianity, since this is a truth that is not just objective, but involves the individual's existence. Løgstrup mentions Kierkegaard's characterization of Jesus in *Practice in Christianity*: his apparently straightforward communication concerning the being of God is contradicted by his humanity and is therefore indirect. The apostle can convey the Christian truth by direct communication because his own existence comes from his mission as an apostle. However the average Christian must use indirect communication so that the receiver can make his own decision regarding faith.

In the article, Løgstrup raises two objections against Kierkegaard's view. The first concerns philosophy of language, since it builds on a distinction between the different forms of speech: proclamation, communication and message. Løgstrup has here without doubt read Hans Lipps, who prefigures what was later called
speech-act theory. In this same way [as Lipps], Løgstrup distinguishes between category of speech i.e. that action that one performs by speaking – and the content of what is said. On the basis of this distinction the difference between proclamation and message can be understood: by virtue of the way it is said, what is proclaimed has force for the recipient who is proclaimed to. By contrast a communication does not need to impact on the receiver’s life. The proclamation presupposes that the speaker possesses authority. Christianity disseminates by a proclamation, as it proclaims God’s forgiveness and judgement. Løgstrup’s first objection to Kierkegaard states that he did not choose among the different forms of speech the one that matches to the content of Christianity, but just stuck to the general category of communication. Kierkegaard lacks a conception of the category of proclamation (p. 22; German version p. 262).

The other objection Løgstrup takes from Luther. For him, the authority of the proclamation is linked to the office of the person who proclaims. In this respect concerning the office there is no difference between the apostle and other people who proclaim. Furthermore, the office of the proclaimer has in principle the same character as the worldly offices – for example of the magistrate – insofar as both are appointed by God. According to Løgstrup a proclamation’s office has been lost by Kierkegaard, therefore the dialectic of communication is necessary for the dissemination of Christianity.

Interesting for us is Løgstrup’s explanation concerning Kierkegaard’s inadequate grasp of the office of proclamation: he has said goodbye to the idea of a divinely ordained office, because he has a secularized idea of life in the worldly regiment. Løgstrup speaks here of ‘Kierkegaard’s secularized sense of life in vocation and rank; his disqualification of life in the worldly regiment as sheer immanence and relativity’ (p. 24; not in the German version). We can thus see that it is the Lutheran concepts of calling, rank and orders that lie behind Løgstrup’s talk concerning concrete existence in the Berlin lectures. That it is Luther’s thoughts concerning the ethic of worldly life that lies behind Løgstrup’s alternative to Kierkegaard is even clearer in this formulation:

In [finitude] God placed his demand on the individual, God contradicted the selfishness of the individual with the neighbour that he imposed on the individual, in that he has ordered life in finitude into a life in offices. That the ethical situation with its demand and decision must first have come into being, should not have to be the concern of the Christian. (p. 25f; German version p. 268)

According to Løgstrup, by contrast for Kierkegaard the Christian task is at every instant to itself create the ethical situation. Løgstrup’s view of the ethical demand is roughly that he places Kierkegaard’s infinite demand in Luther’s relations of
vocation. The divine in the worldly is for Løgstrup no longer the social order as such – because they are culturally variable – but by contrast the authority behind the ‘silent’ demand, that always manifests itself through the ordinances.8

In the article, Løgstrup suggests a critique of Kierkegaard that goes beyond his objections in the Berlin lectures. Where these as we know restricted themselves to Kierkegaard as philosopher, the article by contrast has a theological agenda. Løgstrup agrees with Kierkegaard that human beings in immediacy live in ‘leveling finitude’.

But that does not mean that finitude as such – which means in its ordering through God – is sheer relativity... Luther’s ethics of vocation consist in an understanding that the leveling is a destruction of God’s ordering of the finite. (p. 26; German version pp. 268-9)9

Løgstrup here gives the crucial distinction for his thinking between inherent, created goodness – and the selfish human’s evil destruction of goodness. The critique of Kierkegaard’s understanding of Christianity is something Løgstrup unfolds later in the two contexts where he returns to Kierkegaard. We shall now briefly mention these.

8 That Luther plays a crucial role for the view of the ethical, that lies behind Løgstrup’s critique of Kierkegaard, can be seen in another article from the same period, where the object is the critique of Kant. Løgstrup writes here of Kant’s ethics as one of two basic ‘conceptions’. The other is Luther’s, and that implies that human beings, by virtue of the fact that their created nature is an ordered nature, have to live their lives with and against others in ordinances, so that it is in these responsible relations that they hear the law, which is material as a lex naturalis’ (Løgstrup 1947: 154; German version end of §3).

9 Løgstrup’s article caused a critical reaction from his young colleague Johannes Sløk. There is found in his polemic the claim that it is pointless to put Luther’s thoughts concerning the divinely ordained worldly regiments up against Kierkegaard’s alleged relativisation of them. The order’s given status is for Kierkegaard ‘absolutely questionable’ but through the individual’s choices they are ‘turned from sheer relativity to what is eternally valid’ (Sløk 1950). The discussion with Sløk played a role in Løgstrup’s concern with Kierkegaard. In 1947 Løgstrup was the opponent at Sløk’s defense of his thesis concerning the concept of providence. Concerning the section on Kierkegaard, Løgstrup said that one reads it ‘with great profit’, and that ‘anyone who has read it and moreover concerns himself with Kierkegaard will keep returning to it’. The two are also said to have manifested their disagreement concerning Kierkegaard in a shared teaching module. However, it has not been possible to clarify the circumstances surrounding this. On this see Morsing 2011, pp. 46-50.
The ethical demand

In the 'Polemical Epilogue' of The Ethical Demand, Løgstrup moves towards Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity, insofar as he concentrates on the writing that clearly has a Christian focus, namely The Works of Love. However this work is not directly about Kierkegaard’s understanding of Christianity, but rather the understanding of the commandment concerning love of the neighbour. And this commandment Løgstrup interprets not as a distinctively Christian commandment, but rather as an 'ethical demand', that gives itself to the structure of human existence as such and is therefore universal.

In the epilogue, Løgstrup continues and modifies the critique that the demand for Kierkegaard is without content. Again he emphasizes that according to Kierkegaard it is demanded of man that he recognizes that he is capable of nothing before God. From this thought Kierkegaard infers what neighbour love is, namely really self-sacrifice. However, that it can only be, if the love meets with the other's misunderstanding, which in turn is ensured by love solely consisting in helping the other to love God. For Kierkegaard there is therefore a clear opposition between a natural love in the form of erotic love and friendship, and neighbour-love.

Løgstrup rejects this contrast between natural love and love of the neighbour; its difference for him does not consist in [145] the love's content – or deeds – but in the fact that the neighbour is the one to whom we do not have a natural – for example, biological – connection. Luther is also a source of inspiration here: for him, natural love and the Christian neighbour love are closely unified. Fundamentally, Løgstrup's main objection is this: Kierkegaard cannot combine the infinite demand and concrete, finite human life. Løgstrup invokes Jesus's proclamation, where neighbour-love consists in helping the neighbour to realize himself, because 'the temporal possibilities for realizing oneself are bestowed by God' (Løgstrup 2010: 262; English translation p. 225). Here it is suggested that the concrete human life being marked by divine creation not only manifests itself in the infinite demand, but also in life's possibilities. Initially Løgstrup finds these life-possibilities in natural love. And the same objection is raised against Kierkegaard as in the article on the proclamation: when Kierkegaard disparages concrete life – with its relative purposes of immediacy – this is due to an inability to distinguish between natural love and its 'selfish form'.

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Controverting Kierkegaard

In the book *Controverting Kierkegaard*, the critique expressly addresses the ‘tendency and consequence’ of Kierkegaard’s understanding of Christianity. But in my opinion Løgstrup develops the critique from the same Lutheran conception, namely that concrete, finite, worldly human life is marked by divine creation. Now however this created feature consists not only in the demand and natural love, but also more generally in ‘the possibilities of speech and action, that the individual has along with his life’ (Løgstrup 2013: 41). These possibilities of life consist first and foremost [146] in the sovereign expressions of life, that Løgstrup first offers a thorough analysis of in this book.

The idea of created possibilities of life form the basis for Løgstrup’s introductory critique of Kierkegaard’s view of what is known as the Christological problem: what does it mean that the Christian commits himself to the man Jesus from Nazareth as Christ, God’s son? Løgstrup formulates his criticism in this way, that Kierkegaard advocates a ‘Christianity without the historical Jesus’. The formulation can mislead, in that with the historical Jesus one can indeed simply mean the person, whose life and data one tries to reconstruct with the help of purely historical methods. However, this historical Jesus has in principle nothing to do with Christianity. When in contrast both Kierkegaard and Løgstrup deal with the human Jesus – and they both do – it happens from theological interest. They are both interested in the role that the human Jesus plays for the emergence of Christian faith. The disagreement between the two consists in this, that for Kierkegaard – in Løgstrup’s opinion – it is only Jesus’s miracles and his claim to be God that has significance for faith. By contrast for Løgstrup the whole of his works and proclamations are important. For Løgstrup it is characteristic of the historical Jesus that God with his power is present in his life to the same degree as in any human life. Therefore there is ‘nothing paradoxical’ in Jesus’s life (p. 21). There is a paradox, however, in everyone else’s life: here there is a falsification of the created and good life possibilities, which Jesus realizes.

For Løgstrup Christian faith is not only a belief that Jesus lived the true, created human life. For in that case, faith would not mean anything other than an acknowledgment of the paradoxical difference between Jesus’s life and one’s own destruction of life. Faith is rather a faith that Jesus – as it also says in the New Testament – brings about God’s kingdom. This is his crucifixion’s ‘eternal significance’, that he actually brought the kingdom of God, he was executed for having blasphemed God. And to receive God’s kingdom in faith means, that [147] ‘each person by the forgiveness of his false life is made free to live the life that even now was given him’ (p. 34). Jesus’s death on the cross is the vicarious sacrifice, which the Christian should not imitate. By contrast for Kierkegaard the Christian
should live a life in following Christ – ‘a life beyond man’s created possibilities of existence and prior understanding’ (p. 35).

In The Ethical Demand Løgstrup claims – following on from this book [i.e. the Berlin lectures] – that there is no peculiarly Christian ethics. In Controverting Kierkegaard he adds that there is no peculiarly Christian suffering. The Christian is not exposed to a different sort of suffering from that to which all people are exposed. By contrast, there is a peculiarly Christian interpretation of suffering, namely that human beings are liable to suffering and death because they destroy created life. In the light of the Christian faith, human beings must take suffering and death as a destiny. On the other hand, human beings should not seek suffering. But that is just what Kierkegaard does, according to Løgstrup: the Christian should follow the humbled and crucified Christ by directing his own life towards suffering. In this way the suffering becomes demanded, which to use Lutheran terminology, in Christianity is made into law. In this connection Løgstrup adds a new element to his critique of Kierkegaard’s understanding of the demand:

Is the demand there for the sake of given life? Not according to Kierkegaard. According to him the demand will get its meaning from salvation. That is the reason why in Kierkegaard’s demand there is another demand than the proclamation of the historical Jesus. Jesus’s demand is radical, Kierkegaard’s cruel. (p. 53)

The formulation directs a double critique at Kierkegaard’s understanding of Christianity. As mentioned, Løgstrup does not consider the ethical demand – the commandment concerning neighbourly love – as a peculiarly Christian demand. Therefore he must reject the claim that the demand receives [148] ‘its meaning from salvation’: because salvation is precisely what is peculiarly Christian. To this critique one may respond that when Kierkegaard – for example in The Works of Love – treats neighbour love as a consequence of the (genuine) Christian faith, he finds himself completely in line with Luther. The second criticism corresponds to the objection in The Ethical Demand: as Jesus’s proclamation shows, the demanded neighbour love consists in helping the neighbour achieve temporal self-realization. By contrast for Kierkegaard neighbour-love means self-inflicted suffering, which is why the demand is ‘cruel’.

Løgstrup’s involvement with understanding Christianity and the emergence of ideas concerning the sovereign expressions of life also causes a clarification concerning the crucial parts of his critique of Kierkegaard, relating to infinite movement and the taking over of concrete existence. As regards the first, Løgstrup stresses that Kierkegaard portrays resignation’s movement in connection with human types that fate has placed outside universal human life. An example is Gloucester and Richard III respectively in Shakespeare’s play. But such fate is not a
condition of life for all humans and therefore certainly not a condition for faith. Kierkegaard generalizes unreasonably that infinite resignation ‘is a condition of faith for every believer, regardless of the fate he has’ (p. 75). But another type of person is the ‘cheerful person’, who is not excluded from the mainstream of life. This sort of life is not necessarily a bourgeois life, being lost to the crowd. Such a person can avoid making the temporal his idol – relating himself absolutely to the relative – by thankfulness concerning his own infinite movement:

The realization that it is not my right that I enjoy, but that I live by virtue of what is granted to me. Gratitude’s infinite movement is incompatible with that idolatrous relation to what you love, but not incompatible with loving it. (p. 78)

[149] Løgstrup naturally returns to the problem concerning the take over of concrete existence, and his analysis of Kierkegaard corresponds closely to that which we find in this book’s [i.e. the Berlin lectures] fourth chapter. But Løgstrup also adds here a modified objection, that Kierkegaard makes a generalization from a defensible problematic, namely that man’s concrete existence ‘is in contradiction’. If human existence did not have this character, the taking over of concrete existence would not be any problem at all. Here the sovereign expressions of life come into the picture. Løgstrup prepares his analysis by a very enlightening way of reading Kierkegaard’s statements concerning infinite movement together with Jean-Paul Sartre’s play from 1951 Le Diable et le bon Dieu [The Devil and the Good God]. The sovereign expressions of life – for example mercy – are a spontaneous incentive to act in a determinate way towards another person in a given situation. Precisely a determinate way: expressions of life are according to Løgstrup definitive, in that for example mercy can only consist in help without ulterior motives. To show mercy is to put oneself under the definitive requirement and to carry out the expression of life. Løgstrup now claims that either executing or realizing the expression of life realizes the person himself:

The human person no longer has to reflect upon becoming an independent person, nor has he to reflect upon the task of becoming his true self; he has only to realize himself in the sovereign expression of life, and it is that expression of life – rather than reflection – that takes care of the person’s selfhood. Kierkegaard is mistaken in thinking that only through religious reflection can the human person accomplish the task of becoming a self, as though we were not equipped with the sovereign expressions of life that accomplish it for us. (pp. 98-99; English translation pp. 53-4)

In my view here we have reached the basic problem that Løgstrup raises in his critique of Kierkegaard: the understanding of concrete existence. According to Løgstrup, for Kierkegaard a human being can [150] win his identity for himself and
live his life meaningfully by virtue of an infinitude, which is basically incompatible with concrete life. By contrast for Løgstrup the infinite or eternal is *itself present* in concrete life: ‘The eternal has incarnated its demand on us in the interpersonal situation and in the sovereign expressions of life that correspond to it’ (p. 120; English translation p. 71). When Løgstrup says that Kierkegaard ‘ignores’ the sovereign expressions of life, therefore his claim cannot be rejected with a reference to the fact that Kierkegaard writes about the importance of mercy or pity. Løgstrup’s point is that Kierkegaard has no sense that these sovereign expressions are sovereign and definitive, and in them is to be found man’s confrontation with an absolute or infinite authority. Løgstrup repeats the criticism from this book [i.e. the Berlin lectures], that Kierkegaard does not see that man meets the infinite demand in the concrete inter-human situation. And he makes more precise his claim that Kierkegaard presupposes a ‘leveling down of the finite’ (p. 132).

All in all one can say that even if Løgstrup ‘recycles’ many of his analyses from this book [i.e. the Berlin lecture] in *Controverting Kierkegaard*, there is a development in the course of the intervening time of around 15 years, that the interaction between his Kierkegaard interpretation and his own theological-philosophical thought changes both. A revised Kierkegaard interpretation corresponds to a deepening of his own views.

**The later works**

With *Controverting Kierkegaard*, Løgstrup’s productive reading of Kierkegaard can be said to come to an end. In the later works, culminating with the four volume *Metaphysics*, it does not play any particular role. However there are some places in the theologically important volume *Creation and Annihilation* (1978) where the interaction between them can be traced. Løgstrup begins his account of the creation with an analysis of the classical [151] metaphysical debate concerning space and time. Concerning the ethical importance of the two he says:

> Wanting to make do with an ethics of time means deluding oneself that we can meet the demands without being the subject of generosity. This was the delusion that troubled Kierkegaard. In the name of the eternal he starved the action out, severing it from its natural impulses in the goodness that surrounds us and embraces us with what fills our space. Only as judgement, as punishment, as threat was the eternal in time and was our failure eternally irreversible. But out of judgment, out of the sentence, out of threat, the action cannot retrieve its content, nor its incentive. Its content and its incentive must get its content from elsewhere, and we are judged, because we erroneously did not care about the content which our existence and our world presented to us in order that we should deal with it. We
cannot show goodness unless goodness is demonstrated towards us. Nor is it available. Eternity is in time as anger, in space as generosity. (Løgstrup 1978: 41f; English translation [modified], p. 42)

The concrete link that the ethical demand presupposes includes not only the situation between human beings, but thus also space. Løgstrup still claims, critically, that ‘because life understood by Christianity is the life of eternity, Kierkegaard draws the conclusion that temporal life is nothing in itself’ (p. 249; English translation p. 298). But neither at this later stage in his writing is the sharp critique synonymous with total rejection:

For the vast majority, Christianity is filled with a world view, and it is this to which people are unsympathetic, so unsympathetic that they do not even go so far as to take a position on Christianity as a declaration of existence, to use Kierkegaard’s expression. (p. 275; English translation p. 331)

Although the Christian understanding has received an added metaphysical dimension, it still contains a declaration concerning existence as a key concept. Which means that in this book [i.e. KHE] the critique is not a rejection of the ‘whole of Kierkegaard’s understanding of existence’.

Translated by Robert Stern

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Translator's notes

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1 This is the Danish edition by Svend Andersen of K. E. Løgstrup’s _Kierkegaards und Heideggers Existenzanalyse und ihr Verhältnis zur Verkündigung_ (Berlin: Blaschker Verlag, 1950), hereafter referred to as KHE.

2 Translating ‘videnskabelige’ as ‘research’ rather than ‘science’, as it is clear that Løgstrup intends the latter in a broader sense than ‘science’ often conveys in English.

3 Andersen here translates from German into Danish, and I in turn translate the Danish into English.

4 References are given to the Danish edition and then to the original German edition.

5 This reference is a mistake, and no 2010a is listed in the bibliography: The quote is in fact from K. E. Løgstrup and Hans Koch, _Venskab og strid_ (Aarhus: Klim, 2010), p. 86.

6 References to _The Ethical Demand_ are given to Løgstrup 2010 and then to the English translation, published by Notre Dame University Press in 1997.

7 A portion of _Opgør med Kierkegaard_ is translated in K. E. Løgstrup, _Beyond the Ethical Demand_, translated by Susan Drew and Heidi Flegal, edited by Kees van Kooten Niekerk (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2007), Chapter Two.
Where available, references are given to this translation alongside the Danish edition.

viii A selection from *Skabelse og tilintetgørelse* is translated in *Metaphysics Volume 1*, translated by Russell L. Dees (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 1995), and a reference to this is given alongside the Danish edition.

ix My thanks to Bjørn Rabjerg for help with this translation.

x This volume is due to appear in 2016.