

K.E. LØGSTRUP ON PERSON AND ECOLOGY

K.E. LØGSTRUP SOBRA LA PERSONA Y LA ECOLOGÍA

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Abstract: The paper explores the philosophy of Knud Ejler Løgstrup, a prominent Danish thinker of the 20.th century. His work, rooted in phenomenology, explored the relationship between human beings and nature, emphasizing that this connection is established through sensation. Løgstrup argued that humans are an integral part of nature rather than separate entities. His philosophy suggests a deep connection between interpersonal ethics and the natural world, both based on a pre-rational, immediate engagement with existence. Løgstrup's thought was shaped by his interactions with Martin Heidegger, whose existential phenomenology influenced Løgstrup's approach to human life. However, Løgstrup critiqued Heidegger's concept of "handiness" which reduces nature to a tool for human use. Instead, Løgstrup developed a theory of sensation that eliminates the distance between humans and the world, proposing that in sensation, humans are emplaced in the universe, directly connected to nature without the mediation of language or rationality. Løgstrup also explored the ethical implications of this distanceless relationship with nature, arguing that nature's alienation from human understanding is essential for maintaining moral responsibility towards it. He emphasized that preserving nature should be for its own sake, rather than for human exploitation, warning that the destruction of nature due to a disregard for sensation could lead to humanity's downfall. His work ultimately calls for a responsible, ethical approach to nature, grounded in an immediate, sensation-based connection to the universe.

Key Words: K.E. Løgstrup, M. Heidegger, E. Lévinas, Personalis, Ethics, Trust, Nature, Sensation.

Resumen: El artículo explora la filosofía de Knud Ejler Løgstrup, un destacado pensador danés del siglo XX. Su obra, arraigada en la fenomenología, investigó la relación entre los seres humanos y la naturaleza, destacando que esta conexión se establece a través de la sensación. Løgstrup sostenía que los seres humanos son una parte integral de la naturaleza, en lugar de entidades separadas. Su filosofía sugiere una profunda conexión entre la ética interpersonal y el mundo natural, ambas basadas en un compromiso pre-racional e inmediato con la existencia. El pensamiento de Løgstrup fue moldeado por sus interacciones con Martin Heidegger, cuya fenomenología existencial influyó en el enfoque de Løgstrup sobre la vida humana. Sin embargo, Løgstrup criticó el concepto heideggeriano de "utilidad" que reduce la naturaleza a una herramienta para el uso humano. En lugar de esto, Løgstrup desarrolló una teoría de la sensación que elimina la distancia entre los seres humanos y el mundo, proponiendo que en la sensación, los seres humanos se encuentran ubicados en el universo,

conectados directamente con la naturaleza sin la mediación del lenguaje o la racionalidad. Løgstrup también exploró las implicaciones éticas de esta relación sin distancia con la naturaleza, argumentando que la alienación de la naturaleza respecto al entendimiento humano es esencial para mantener una responsabilidad moral hacia ella. Subrayó que la preservación de la naturaleza debe ser por su propio bien, y no para la explotación humana, advirtiendo que la destrucción de la naturaleza debido al desdén por la sensación podría llevar a la caída de la humanidad. Su obra, en última instancia, hace un llamado a un enfoque ético y responsable hacia la naturaleza, fundamentado en una conexión inmediata y basada en la sensación con el universo.

Palabras Clave: K.E. Løgstrup, M. Heidegger, E. Lévinas, Personalismo, Ética, Confianza, Naturaleza, Sensación.

Introduction

Knud Ejler Løgstrup (1905-1981) is probably the most prominent Danish thinker of the 20th century, and his influence remains strong in Northern Europe today, particularly in the fields of care science and ethical theory. Utilizing a phenomenological methodology, he explored a variety of subjects, including theology, philosophy, ethics, and cultural and political issues.

In this paper, I will provide a brief general introduction to Løgstrup's thought before exploring his views on nature and the relationship between nature and human beings. For Løgstrup, this relationship is established through sensation (i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, etc.). We will examine how he employs his theory of sensation to describe human beings as an integral part of nature, rather than human beings as subjects in opposition to nature as an object.

Firstly, I will attempt to demonstrate that there is a profound connection between his interpersonal ethics and his view of nature, as both are based on an immediate pre-rational approach to the world (encompassing both other people and nature).

Secondly, I will examine Løgstrup's inspiration from and critique of Martin Heidegger. The young Løgstrup met Heidegger and attended his lectures in Germany, an encounter that was pivotal in shaping his philosophical approach. Heidegger's existential phenomenology provided Løgstrup with a framework to explore the fundamental conditions of human life. While Løgstrup adopted some of Heidegger's basic assumptions, he also criticized his teacher in Germany at certain points, emphasizing more clearly the relational aspects of human life and the intimate relationship between humans and nature.

Løgstrup studied theology in Copenhagen, Denmark. After earning a master's degree in theology, he went to Germany and France, where he encountered the phenomenology prevalent in continental Europe at that time. After his studies abroad, he returned to Denmark and, following a few years as a parish priest, became a professor of ethics and philosophy of religion. Although Løgstrup was a theologian, he referred to his own thinking as a 'philosophy of creation' rather than a *theology* of creation. His aim was to explore the *philosophical* implications of the createdness of existence, that is, the implications of the fact that our existence is given. Løgstrup's writing on the createdness of our existence does not necessarily imply a doctrine of God creating the world out of nothing. He left this question

to his colleagues in dogmatics, he said. Løgstrup's goal was to provide a phenomenological description of our existence, assuming the precondition that our existence as given, whether understood in a specific religious or purely philosophical manner.

We can discern two aspects in Løgstrup's interest in the createdness of our existence. Firstly, he focuses on existence as it is given to us prior to our consciousness and conceptualization/language. Before I become conscious of the world, the world is already present. Additionally, before I become aware of and can articulate my relationship with other people and nature, this relationship is already established as an ethical one, as we shall see.

Secondly, the idea of the createdness of our existence – which is inherently inclusive of all people – leads to an interest in the universally human and what is common to all humans. Løgstrup achieves this insight through a phenomenology, which indeed begins with concrete experience and the specific perception of the world as it appears to the individual. However, these experiences and phenomena can, in principle, be experienced by anyone, regardless of cultural or religious background.

2. Løgstrup and personalism

Before examining the implications of Løgstrup's thoughts on createdness in relation to ethics and the relationship with nature, we will briefly consider Løgstrup's connection to personalism. In many ways, Løgstrup's thinking can be characterized as personalism, although he did not frequently use this term in his writings. The concept is relatively unknown in a Northern European context, which eventually led Løgstrup to choose other terms. However, there is no doubt that his emphasis on human ethical responsibility and the inter-personal character of human beings (interdependence) places his ideas within the realm of proper personalist thinking.

Certainly, Løgstrup was aware of some central aspects of personalistic thinking in Europe in the 1930s, as evidenced by his dissertation on Max Scheler's ethics in 1932. Despite his familiarity with personalistic thinking, Løgstrup did not refer to it throughout his entire body of work, with one exception: In 1938 he wrote a remarkable essay with the title: "Thought and Action Must Be One. The Personalism in France".

In this essay, he refers with great enthusiasm to the French journal *Esprit* and to Denis de Rougemont and other French-speaking personalistic thinkers. The title of the essay,

"Thought and Action Must Be One," is clearly inspired by de Rougemont's book *Penser avec les mains* (English: *Thinking with Your Hands*) from 1936.

Løgstrup did not hide his enthusiasm for the personalist thinking he has encountered among the French thinkers. In the 1930s, Europe was in deep political and economic crisis, with rapidly growing Nazism/Fascism and Communism. In personalism, Løgstrup found an alternative to the authoritarian ideologies, providing a cultural and spiritual foundation in response to the problems of the time. "Human beings as persons must be reinstated at the center,¹" declares Løgstrup in the essay.

Løgstrup's analysis in the essay is that the citizens of Europe have resigned themselves to a blind economic and political development that they think they cannot influence. On the one hand, this means that the working class is excluded from having an impact on their own and society's development. On the other hand, it means that the work of intellectuals and the cultural elite becomes mere entertainment, without the aim of taking responsibility for society. Løgstrup opposes both tendencies and seeks, through personalism, to give responsibility and influence to both the working class and the cultural elite. He insists that the future is not governed by blind fatalism, but that human beings, as persons, can change the course of development.

To avoid this blind fatalism, where citizens have lost faith in any possibility of change, Løgstrup insists on the right and duty to take responsibility for one's own life and the affairs of society. For Løgstrup, this is not merely a political right and duty; it is at the very core of what it means to be a human being. In the essay he writes: "In short term being a human being [...] that is to have responsibility"². We shall later observe that this radical notion of responsibility reappears in his subsequent ethical thought.

Løgstrup thus finds in personalism a foundation that maintains the human being as an agent (with a duty to care for other persons) in the development of society. Despite significant and overwhelming crises, the human being as a person remains responsible and must continually strive to influence the development based on moral principles. This point is no less relevant today, when e.g. the climate crisis can at times seem so challenging that any action appears futile.

¹ K.E. Løgstrup (2017), p. 24. My translation.

² Op.cit., p. 24. My translation.

3. Trust – a sovereign expression of life

We will now proceed to Løgstrup's genuine ethical theory, which he elaborates in his principal ethical work, *The Ethical Demand* (1956), translated into German, English, and most recently into Spanish in 2022.

The argumentation in *The Ethical Demand* begins with an analysis of the concept of trust and opens with the programmatic statement: "It is a characteristic of human life that we normally encounter one another with trust"³. Løgstrup's major work starts with examples from everyday life, which he uses to demonstrate that trust is fundamental to human existence. It is typical of Løgstrup that he does not begin with philosophical axioms or references to the history of philosophy, but rather with anecdotal glimpses from daily life. In this way, his approach in certain aspects resembles much of Søren Kierkegaard's authorship, where poetry and philosophy from time to time almost merge.

Løgstrup argues that we typically encounter one another with trust. He provides examples illustrating how it is more difficult to lie than to tell the truth. One must exert effort to lie, but it is natural and easy to tell the truth, he says. Furthermore, he gives an example from an encounter with strangers in a train compartment: "If we enter into conversation on the train with a person whom we have never met before and about whom we know absolutely nothing, we assume that what he says is true and do not become suspicious of him unless he begins to indulge in wild exaggerations"⁴.

In other words, trust has primacy over distrust, and I immediately trust other people unless they are guilty of wild exaggerations or if I have been deceived so many times that my initial trust has been eroded. In his later works, Løgstrup refers to trust (along with mercy, the openness of speech, etc.) as a "sovereign expression of life." By this, he means that trust belongs to life; it is given with existence (with the createdness) and ultimately is not a product of my own actions or will: "Trust is not of our own making; it is given"⁵.

He describes how trust is already present in relation to my fellow human being before I even begin to think about it. Trust is surely a phenomenon that confronts me – it is neither willed nor recognized by me until I subsequently rationalize what happened.

³ K.E. Løgstrup (1997), p. 8

⁴ Op.cit., p. 8

⁵ Op.cit., p. 18

Løgstrup uses the analysis of the immediate trust to demonstrate the initial openness and vulnerability that is essential for the ethical relationship to the other person. Given the trust involved, I am exposed to other people, and they are exposed to me. Consequently, there is a vulnerability inherent in every encounter with the other person.

4. The Ethical Demand – radical and unspoken

The analysis of immediate trust is so to speak the foundation for his ethics in the sense that immediate trust invokes a sense of responsibility. In trust, we are always exposed to each other, and our lives are so intertwined that we cannot avoid bearing responsibility for a part of the other's life in our hands. The other person consciously or unconsciously reveals a part of their vulnerability through trust, which calls for me to care for the life of the other.

"Our life is so constituted that it cannot be lived except as one person lays him or herself open to another person and puts him or herself into that person's hands either by showing or claiming trust"⁶, he says. Again, we see that responsibility is inherent in our very existence, as Løgstrup argued in his essay on personalism. We cannot avoid being in a relationship of responsibility because vulnerability accompanies our encounter with the other person, which calls for me to care for the life of the other.

For Løgstrup, the ethical demand arises from the personal encounter with the other person, rather than from philosophical or religious instructions. In this sense, Løgstrup's ethics bears many similarities to Emmanuel Lévinas' ethics or proto-philosophy, as he termed it. Both adopt a phenomenological approach to ethics, and like Løgstrup, Lévinas states that ethics emerges from the encounter with the other person, where and when the other reveals him og herself. This revelation primarily occurs in the vulnerability of the face of the other, which expresses itself as a prayer for my protection. Apparently, Løgstrup and Lévinas were unaware of each other's works, despite the obvious similarities in their ethical frameworks and justifications.

Løgstrup continues his analysis of the character of the ethical demand, stating that it is distinctive in two ways. Firstly, the demand is radical: I am always and in all circumstances responsible for the person I encounter. No matter how sporadic the encounter may be, I cannot avoid having some aspect of the other person's life in my hands. Just as trust is

⁶ Op.cit., p. 18

intrinsic to human existence, responsibility and the radical demand are intrinsic to every human relationship.

Secondly, and more significantly, the ethical demand is unspoken or silent, according to Løgstrup. The radical nature of the demand dictates *that* I must take care of the other's life, but it does not specify *what* actions I should take – it is unspoken. There are no moral or religious instructions that tell me what to do, says Løgstrup. I must assume radical responsibility for the situation myself, and it is up to my own insight and empathetic ability to determine the appropriate actions.

"The demand, precisely because it is unspoken, is radical. This is true even though the thing to be done in any particular situation may be very insignificant. Why is this? Because the person confronted with the unspoken demand must him or herself determine how he or she is to take care of the other person's life"⁷. This is a consequence of Løgstrup's insistence that ethics arise from the relationship with the other person (similar to Lévinas), and it means that the ethical demand "is different in the case of the demands which inhere in prevailing morality and law. They concern themselves with more or less specific actions"⁸.

In our social life with one another and in the regulation of society, we need morality and law. Løgstrup does not disagree with this, but he argues that there is a qualitative difference between immediate ethics and the sovereign expressions of life, where I am responsible for my fellow human being on one side, and social norms and society's morality and law on the other side.

The interpersonal ethical demand requires insight and empathy, in contrast to social norms and legislation. It is particularly this aspect of Løgstrup's ethics that today significantly influences fields such as the care science in Northern Europe, where caregivers have a responsibility to approach patients with a personal attitude that cannot be definitively described by specific standards and regulations.

Løgstrup's ethical demand is therefore a demand that precedes my rationality and language. For instance, I show trust without thinking about it – and indeed without willing it – at least under normal circumstances. Sometimes I may subsequently reflect on what happened in the immediate encounter with the other person, but this is secondary to the

⁷ Op.cit., p. 44

⁸ Op.cit., p. 44

demand, which, like trust, is given with the createdness of existence and is not a product of my consciousness.

5. Nature – source and surroundings

In his early authorship, Løgstrup was primarily concerned with ethics and the interpersonal relationships between individuals, and in Europe, this aspect of his thought is the most well-known. In his later works, nature and humanity's relationship to it acquire an increasingly independent significance. This is most clearly expressed in the posthumously published work *Source and Surroundings. Considerations on History and Nature* (which is the third volume of his four-volume *Metaphysics*).

Løgstrup's starting point is that science and technology have created a distance between humanity and nature. One might think that science, with its objective study of nature, knows nature and is closest to it. However, Løgstrup argues the opposite. While science is undoubtedly beneficial to humanity in many ways, it maintains nature as an object, keeping it at a distance from us.

With the dominance of rationality in our relationship with nature, humanity becomes estranged from nature. A gap arises between subject and object, where humanity is no longer enmeshed in nature but merely a consumer of it. Løgstrup would argue that it is the objectifying rationalistic approach to nature, brought about by technological development, that is responsible for our unrestrained exploitation of nature: "[t]he development from a certain viewpoint has led to the exclusive consideration of the universe from human existence, and in such a one-sided way that it has ended with the human being becoming the only actor at the world stage"⁹.

The scientific and technological development has alienated us from nature, neglecting nature in its own right and making humanity the sole ruler with the right to exploit nature (or "the universe," as Løgstrup says, to emphasize nature as everything that exists and the foundation of all things). The result, then, is that we have become distanced from nature. What specifically makes this distance? Løgstrup answers: "We are at a distance to the understood, whatever it is, our surroundings or a contemplated action, thanks to language"¹⁰.

⁹ K.E. Løgstrup (1995a), p. 5

¹⁰ Op.cit., p. 6

Løgstrup's ambitious project in his philosophy of nature is, therefore, to find an approach to nature beyond language. Here, we see a parallel to his ethics, where the ethical demand is not mediated by either language or rationality. The sovereign expressions of life (trust, the openness of speech, etc.) are themselves pre-rational and pre-linguistic in nature. Thus, the ethical demand also takes place beyond language – although we can subsequently reflect on and discuss what occurred in the ethical situation. Similarly, we can also talk about nature (and rationalize nature through science and technology), but by then, the distance has already occurred.

Løgstrup seeks to reestablish humanity's natural relationship with nature beyond language, and before language and rationality have created a distance. He must therefore find an approach where we have access to nature without this distance. As we shall see, Løgstrup finds this path through his inspiration from and his correction of his former teacher, Martin Heidegger.

6. Heidegger – inspiration and correction

Løgstrup shares, in many ways, the same starting point as Heidegger, who in his seminal work, *Being and Time* (1927), also seeks to uncover an immediate engagement with the world that precedes the objectifying approach of consciousness/science.

Heidegger is not content with the world as it appears through the mediated approach of consciousness in its "objective presence" (German: *vorhandenheit*). The world as objective presence is the world we observe from a distance as object for human consciousness and theory. Both Løgstrup and Heidegger thus seek to move beyond this approach to an immediate engagement with the world.

This unmediated engagement with the world is what Heidegger refers to as the world in its "handiness" (German: *zuhandenheit*). It is a pre-thematic approach, where my immediate interaction with things occurs without conscious reflection and without linguistic mediation, according to Heidegger. For instance, when I wear my shoes, it typically happens unmediated. My relation to my shoes is a relation of handiness. The shoes are almost an extension of my own being. It is not an object to me but a tool (German: *Zeug*) ready for use, and thereby eliminating the subject-object dichotomy.

However, if my shoes fail to function as intended, my approach shifts from a state of handiness, and the shoes become objects ready for my research and I begin to explore what

is wrong. In other words, my world has once again become an object of my investigation, rationality, and language, which is not the original engagement with the world that we experience through our immediate use of things.

Heidegger thus describes two different approaches to the world: the world as handiness and as objective presence. Løgstrup agrees with Heidegger to this extent, although Løgstrup's terminology differs from Heidegger's. However, Løgstrup is not satisfied with Heidegger's concept of handiness, as it turns out that this handling and using of things in the world leads to a reduction of nature as nature: In handiness, I *do* something with nature by transforming it and integrating it into human existence as work within history (though still not as objective presence). Consequently, for Heidegger, nature is never merely nature, even in our unmediated approach. Nature is always a tool for my purposes, something I can use in order to create my world.

Heidegger is quite explicit in describing the transformation from pure nature as it exists in its own right to a resource for human activity: "Nature," he says, is "discovered in the use of the useful things, 'nature' in the light of products of nature." He continues: "The forest is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock, the river is water power, the wind is wind 'in the sails'"¹¹. In his effort to transcend the view of nature as merely an object of human rationality and theory, Heidegger redefines nature as a resource and as products for human praxis.

Løgstrup agrees with Heidegger that the world is limited if it is understood as objective presence, but the same can be said about the immediate interaction with things as tools for my purpose: "If the phenomenological philosopher [i.e. Heidegger] preferably keeps an eye on the world, on everyday objects, in his analysis of what must be understood by a world's meaning, a constriction takes place"¹², says Løgstrup.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger presents two approaches to the world: theory (the world as objective presence) and practice (handling things as tools). Løgstrup essentially agrees but argues that there is a third way, that "there is a relationship to the world or the universe that is neither praxis nor theory"¹³. Although Heidegger's concept of handiness is an immediate and non-objectifying approach to the world, it reduces the world to something other than

¹¹ M. Heidegger (2010), p. 70

¹² K.E. Løgstrup (1995a), p. 127

¹³ Op.cit., p. 127

nature, namely to production material. The problem, Løgstrup says, is that Heidegger "ignores sensation, which is just as original as the world in its usefulness"¹⁴.

7. Sensation – lack of distance

Løgstrup highlights sensation as the pre-conscious and pre-linguistic approach to the world, where distance is eliminated and nature remains nature in its own right – where the forest remains a forest and not just timber for our use, and the river remains a river and not just water power.

His crucial argument is that the world/universe is highly present in sensation. In sensation, we have an unmediated approach without distance. Normally, "[w]e find that sensation is receptive, but it is not. It lacks distance"¹⁵, he says. In other words, sensation is not basically a radar from which you can observe your surroundings; rather, in sensation, there is no distance to what you sense.

Obviously, the world is still out there, at a distance from my body. However, Løgstrup distinguishes in this context between the body (as my physical presence in the world) and sensation. "The seen and heard are at a distance from our body but not at a distance from our sensation. The ship we see out on the ocean, the dog's bark down in the village are far away from our body but not from our vision and hearing"¹⁶.

In sensation, the world is more than my surroundings. In sensation, I am connected to the world in a pre-rational and pre-linguistic manner – and more than that: in sensation, I am an inseparable part of the world, and the world is an inseparable part of me, present in my senses. In this context, Løgstrup speaks of "emplacement in the universe." He likely uses "universe" to avoid the potential misunderstanding of "world" as merely the external environment. Referring to the universe clarifies that it encompasses more than just my immediate surroundings; the universe includes all that exists, including my own existence. In this terminology, I am not at a distance from the universe. I am part of the universe, emplaced in the universe, and the universe is present in me thanks to sensation.

Løgstrup thus develops his theory of sensation as a corrective to Heidegger. However, when considering Heidegger's later philosophy of art, we must acknowledge that the two are closer than it initially appears when Løgstrup polemicizes against Heidegger's world of use

¹⁴ K.E. Løgstrup (1995b), p. 227. My translation.

¹⁵ K.E. Løgstrup (1995a), p. 6

¹⁶ Op.cit., p. 6

in *Being and Time*. In his philosophy of art, Heidegger concedes that there is another approach to the world, fundamentally different from both the objectifying and the using/consuming one. The artist works with his or her material (which is the material of the earth/nature), Heidegger states, but the artist (in this context, the sculptor) "uses the stone, but he does not consume it."¹⁷ The artist's interaction with the material of the earth is thus different from my use and consumption of everyday objects. For the sculptor, the mountain is more than just a quarry of rock.

At the same time, there is a close connection between the artwork and the world as it truly is. As an everyday consumer, my shoes are my immediate tool (until they potentially break). Through my consumption, the shoes have transformed from their original earthly/natural material into a tool. This is different in the case of the artwork. Heidegger refers to van Gogh's painting of a pair of peasant shoes, concluding: "Van Gogh's painting is an opening up of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, is in truth. Its existence emerges into the un-concealment of its being"¹⁸. In the artwork, the being appears as it truly is – thus, as more than mere utilitarian objects intended for my consumption. In the artwork, a revelation occurs, uncovering what is hidden.

Heidegger's viewpoint is cited here to clarify Løgstrup's specific position, which becomes apparent in comparison to Heidegger. Indeed, Heidegger concedes in his philosophy of art that there is a third approach to the world beyond objective presence and handiness – namely, the artist's engagement with the material of the earth and the artworks that reveal the world as it is: i.e. the "shoeness" of the shoe and the "earthness" of the earth. However, Løgstrup's thinking about perception nonetheless differs from Heidegger's on several points.

Firstly, Løgstrup's concept of sensation is fundamentally characterized by the lack of distance. He considered his theory of the distancelessness of sensation to be the most original aspect of his thought. In sensation, there is no distance from the perceived; it is unmediated. Nature is present in my sensation, without distance. Or more precisely, in Løgstrup's words: the universe is present in my sensation. This contrasts with Heidegger's philosophy of art, where the earth/nature indeed manifests itself in the artwork, but still it is mediated through

¹⁷ M. Heidegger (2012), p. 36. My translation.

¹⁸ Op.cit., p. 42. My translation.

the artwork. For Heidegger, the earth emerges in the crafted artwork, whereas for Løgstrup nature is more than that. For him we are emplaced in the universe through our sensation and the earth is more than anything else our home.

Secondly, a categorical difference between Heidegger and Løgstrup emerges in that Heidegger integrates temporality into all existential relations, including the appearance of the earth/nature in the artwork. The artwork is manufactured within history by the artist, and the existence or truth of existence that emerges in the artwork is itself an occasion in time. While Heidegger consistently thinks in terms of temporality, Løgstrup places greater emphasis on spatiality in our existence. In sensation, the perceived is present in my senses (the bird's song is *in* my ears; the sun's light is *in* my eyes), which means that I am emplaced in nature (or the universe). Of course, everything that happens occurs in time, but perception is in a certain sense timeless. Perception occurs in an eternal now, which only becomes history through reflection and language. Sensation is spatial and therefore situates the human being *in* nature/the universe, not as an observer of an artwork that, as an event in time, reveals true existence as in Heidegger's view.

Thirdly, in Heidegger's view, there is an opening up of the truth about existence in the artwork. The world is unveiled. One might assume that Løgstrup would agree with Heidegger, as the distancelessness of sensation connects us with nature, thereby offering us a complete and immediate understanding of the world or the truth about the world. However, for Løgstrup, the situation is quite the opposite. He writes: "The universe's absolute presence in sensation seems to give us an eminent chance to know the universe. Only distancelessness deprives us the chance, for what we cannot get at a distance from we cannot understand"¹⁹.

8. The alienation of nature

We cannot understand the universe thanks to the distancelessness in sensation. For Løgstrup, nature remains alien to us, which is a precondition for our obligations and moral responsibilities towards nature, as we shall see shortly.

We may become familiar with nature through science, where we study nature objectively from a distance, understanding its mechanisms. This knowledge allows us to manipulate and exploit nature to satisfy our needs. The situation is different with sensation: here, nature remains alien because we cannot understand what "we cannot get at a distance

¹⁹ K.E. Løgstrup (1995a), p. 9

from." While Heidegger asserts that it is precisely in the artwork that the world is revealed, Løgstrup states, "[i]n the visual arts nature appears in its alienation"²⁰.

Both in pure sensation and in the artwork, nature remains in its alienation, an alienation that Løgstrup calls "a life-giving alienation of nature"²¹, which serves as the foundation for what we might call Løgstrup's ecology, even though he did not use this term himself.

The alienation of nature means that nature exists on its own terms. In its alienation, it eludes my grasp, and I cannot make it a part of my world. Nature escapes my understanding, yet it can still "speak" to me, though, what nature says, "it does not say as a response, elicited by a human question [...] The natural occurrence does not speak to be heard. Alienation is manifested in both ways"²².

Nature can speak to me, but in no way is this a reciprocal relationship. The relationship is asymmetrical in the sense that nature meets me (and is present in my senses), and it is a relationship where I am the absolute recipient. When I sense, the world comes to me, and I can open my senses, but I can do nothing more than that. In sensing, I cannot exert power over nature. If I exert power, it is no longer sensing but consumption or exploitation. Due to nature's alienation and the asymmetrical relationship, Løgstrup concludes: "[In sensation] there is nothing to contribute, nothing to take initiative for, nothing to learn, as there is with needs, that must be satisfied so that we can survive. Insofar as sensation is unmitigated, we sense what we do not have in our power, the universe"²³.

Again, we see a line of thinking that in many ways is similar to what we know from Lévinas. In Lévinas' thought, ethics is also grounded in the unfathomable nature of the Other (French: *l'Autre*), who remains a stranger to me, but a stranger to whom I can show hospitality. The Other cannot be grasped or comprehended by me, but the Other can reveal him or herself to me – a revelation that discloses the Other's vulnerability, for which I must take responsibility. The Other, according to Lévinas, cannot be met with power or violence either. If I attempt that, the Other ceases to be the Other and becomes the Same (French: *le Même*), that is, a part of my sphere of understanding and power.

²⁰ K.E. Løgstrup (1970), p. 17. My translation.

²¹ Op.cit., p. 18. My translation.

²² K.E. Løgstrup (1995a), p. 259

²³ Op.cit., p. 50

Løgstrup strikingly follows the same line of thinking when he describes our relationship with nature. For Løgstrup, nature is an alien that can reveal itself to me in my powerlessness, which in the same way leads to my responsibility.

9. Care for nature

As we saw earlier, responsibility towards the other person began with an analysis of trust, which means that in every encounter with the other, I always hold some parts of the other's life in my hands. Løgstrup's argument for our responsibility towards nature follows the same trajectory, but here we see a stronger emphasis on nature's alienation and our powerlessness in the face of nature, as given by the distancelessness of sensation.

For Løgstrup, it is crucial that the problem with our exploitation of nature lies in our forgetting sensation as the fundamental approach to nature/the universe. He poses the question of how it is that we have reached such an extent in our destruction of nature, and he answers: "The answer is that it is a self-understanding that has come into existence and become victorious in our Western culture and which consist of the view that, in human existence, only need counts, not sensation"²⁴.

For Løgstrup, the preservation of nature must occur for nature's own sake – not merely to maintain nature as a reservoir of production materials for our needs. Nature exists before humanity and has value in itself. In sensation, I do not have power over nature, but nature meets me on its own terms. According to Løgstrup, we have inverted this relationship by forgetting sensation and thus seizing power over nature. He observed very early on (beginning in the 1980s) that this would mean the downfall of nature, but also our own decease: "If we do not acquire a technology that is suitable to nature and society, we are destroyed"²⁵.

Conclusion

Løgstrup's philosophy and phenomenology, from start to finish, is grounded in the createdness of our existence. The world is created, which for Løgstrup is not a religious dogma but a philosophical assertion that existence is given. This has consequences in several areas:

²⁴ Op.cit., p. 48-49

²⁵ Op.cit., p. 46

Human life is never isolated, for the relationship with other people (interdependence) is given with life itself, for better or worse. Løgstrup analyzes trust as an example of a "sovereign expression of life." Trust is sovereign precisely because it precedes my consciousness of trust. And in trust, the other person reveals him or herself in their vulnerability, which leads to my responsibility for the other person.

The createdness of existence is further sharpened in Løgstrup's thinking about nature, which he develops partly inspired by and partly in opposition to Heidegger. Løgstrup finds sensation as an alternative to both Heidegger's objective presence, handiness, and to the world as it emerges in the artwork. Sensation is immediate, meaning that the world/universe is not primarily an object of my perception, but the universe is in my senses before my reflection and language.

Humans are em-placed in the universe but without power over nature. We can certainly exert power over nature, but then we move from sensation to consumption or exploitation. Løgstrup acknowledges that we obviously use nature for our survival for good reasons, but the ethical relationship with nature disappears if we eliminate sensation as the primary approach to nature: "To destroy nature for no purpose is to overstep the boundary. To annihilate nature as if it did not matter whatever it existed or not is shamelessness. And it is also shamelessness to make nature a means to an end that is not worthy"²⁶.

As mentioned, Løgstrup develops his thinking partly in opposition to Heidegger. Nevertheless, we find in both Løgstrup and Heidegger an emphasis that our existence in the world entails an engagement that is not indifferent to the world/people around me. They use different terms for this engagement, but the meaning revolves around the same concept. Løgstrup speaks of responsibility and to take care of, while Heidegger speaks of *Sorge* (the German word for "care") or the Latin *Cura* with the same meaning.

Løgstrup was concerned about the exploitation of nature that he witnessed in his time, and he called for a responsible approach to nature. He believed that a reconsideration of sensation would lead to this, and therefore, there may still be hope – or in Løgstrup's own words, then "there is a chance that the universe may appear on its own condition"²⁷.

²⁶ Op.cit., p. 48

²⁷ Op.cit., p. 3

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