The Phenomenology of Powerlessness

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THE ETHICS OF
POWERLESSNESS

1. Introduction

In October 2015 we published 'Experiences of Powerlessness in End-of-Life Care'. This paper identified three key features of experiences of powerlessness as described in advanced medical research.[1] Moreover, we proposed that these features manifest an experience of powerlessness insofar as they undermine what we called 'the power to be oneself'. In this paper, our aim is to deepen the discussion of this latter notion.

More specifically, our aim in this paper is to identify a set of resources for the development of the power to be oneself, drawing from the tradition of phenomenological research. We shall organize these resources by introducing a fundamental distinction: between accounts of what we shall call the ***everyday*** or first-order power to be oneself and accounts of what we shall call the ***radical*** or second-order power to be oneself.

As we shall see, phenomenologists offer various accounts of the everyday power to be oneself. That is, they offer accounts of what it is to be able to be oneself under everyday circumstances. As we shall also see, these accounts can help to explain just those features of the experience of powerlessness that we have already identified as emerging from the medical research, namely: (i) a loss of familiarity with oneself and one's environment; (ii) an increased sense of insecurity; and (iii) existential loneliness. We shall draw especially in this connection on the phenomenological work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Knud Ejler Løgstrup.

Yet simply on the basis of accounts of the power to be oneself that are restricted to the everyday, it is difficult to see how one could ***continue*** to be oneself in the face of radical disruptions in one's circumstances, such as those wrought by a debilitating illness. In the final section, we shall therefore turn to phenomenological accounts of the radical (or second-order) power to be oneself. This second power can be exercised given a crisis under conditions in which one can no longer be oneself in an everyday way. Taking centre stage here will be Martin Heidegger and Max Scheler. As we shall see, both Heidegger and Scheler offer ways of understanding precisely how one could continue to be oneself despite a breakdown of the everyday power to be oneself.

Firstly, however, let us briefly recapitulate the results of our previous Green Paper.

2. Summary of 'Experiences of Powerlessness in End-of-Life-Care'

We reviewed empirical literature that focused on the experience of powerlessness of patients, carers, and next-of-kin in healthcare contexts. Three features recurred over these different experiences: (i) a loss of familiarity with oneself

[1] 'Experiences of Powerlessness in End of Life Care' (EoP, 2015). We shall refer to this paper as 'EP' in what follows.

and one's environment; (ii) an increased sense of insecurity; and (iii) existential loneliness.[2]

Individuals were found to lose familiarity with themselves across several dimensions. Firstly, they lost a sense of familiarity with their bodily responses and capacities. They no longer knew how they would react to certain stimuli or whether they could undertake certain activities. Secondly, they lost a sense of familiarity with their emotional responses. They might find themselves assailed by anxiety to a degree they had not experienced before. Thirdly, they lost a sense of familiarity with their environments, either because they were transferred to a new location—such as a hospital room—or because they had lost the ability to easily navigate once comfortable places. Finally, individuals were found to lose a sense of familiarity with their social standing. Occupations may be rendered difficult or impossible to sustain as before inasmuch as the condition placed new pressures on pre-existing relationships with others. This loss of familiarity was further connected with a heightened sense of insecurity; unsure of themselves, their environments or their place in the world, individuals found it difficult to proceed with a sense of sure footing.

The literature we reviewed also often described individuals as experiencing 'existential loneliness', a term of art which refers to two main features: what we called 'individuation' and 'isolation', respectively. Individuals were individuated by illness in at least two ways. Firstly, patients and carers often found themselves developing an individualised relationship with their own mortality. Death, which had previously seemed abstract and something that happened to other people, now seemed deeply personal. Secondly, next-of-kin often found themselves personally called to the responsibility of caring for their loved ones. This responsibility was one they found, in a new way, to be privately their own. Individuals were often also isolated in two ways. Firstly, their conditions often forced them to withdraw from social activities that were no longer easy to pursue or otherwise to hide their conditions from those around them. Secondly, those around them often found it difficult to confront the fact of the patient's condition, finding ways to talk around the issue or even in cases avoiding the patient altogether.

Thus, individuals who experienced themselves to be powerless manifested a loss of familiarity with themselves and their environments, an increased sense of insecurity, and existential loneliness. Furthermore, individuals often found that they were ***unable to be themselves***, leaving them feeling hopeless and depressed.

From the papers we reviewed, the precise connection between these characteristics of the experiences was unclear. It was also unclear whether there were greater differences between the experiences of patients, next-of-kin and carers than we identified. Nonetheless, the features raised an important question: What kind of 'power' is lost upon the loss of familiarity with oneself, an increased sense of insecurity and existential loneliness, such that these experiences manifest as a sense of ***powerlessness***, specifically?

[2] EP pp.7-22

The features of the experiences of powerlessness we reviewed put pressure on dominant philosophical conceptions of power. Consider, for example, Amy Allen's influential discussion of power, first stated in 'Rethinking Power' and recently reaffirmed in a reply to critics.[3] Allen distinguishes between three senses of 'power': power-to, power-over, and power-with. One has the power-***to*** do something just in case one has the ability to attain some end. One has the power-***over*** someone or thing just in case one can make that thing do something it would not have otherwise done. Finally, one has power-***with*** others if the collective to which one belongs is able to attain some end.[4]

While this tripartite distinction is helpful, it is inadequate to explain why the three features of experiences of powerlessness manifest a loss of power. It is true that those who experience powerlessness lose the ability to attain certain ends and, in some cases, the ability to control others' behaviour. Aujoulat et. al., for instance, observe that those who have long understood themselves as managers may find it much more difficult to cope with the onset of an illness than those who have never understood themselves as in charge.[5] But be that as it may, not just any loss of such power-to or power-over will amount to an experience of powerlessness. Two people might lose the ability to climb trees, for example. While this loss may be profoundly disruptive to one person it may hardly matter to the other person, if at all. More is needed to explain why some loses of power-to or power-over amount to an experience of powerlessness while others do not, for the loss by itself may be relatively inconsequential to the person who loses it.

Those who experienced powerlessness did not just feel as though they had lost an ability to do this or that or lost the power to control others. Rather, they experienced themselves to have lost the power to ***be*** some way or other. This was true of a woman whose condition led her to feel that she could no longer ***be*** a grandmother, because she could not lift her grandchildren. It was true of a man who felt that his condition removed from him the possibility of ***being*** a man. It was also plausibly true of parents who grappled with the exceptionally difficult questions surrounding the care of children suffering from terminal cancer: their inability to improve the health of the child was plausibly experienced as a loss of the capacity to be a good parent.

This reflection, however, only pushes the problem a step back. For even given that the loss of a capacity only manifests as a source of a sense of powerlessness if it is experienced as the loss of the ability to ***be*** a particular kind of person, not just any loss of such an ability will manifest as an experience of powerlessness. Two people who have lost the ability to climb trees might, for example, both have had careers in tree surgery such that they have both lost the ability to be tree surgeons. But while this

[3] Cf. Allen (1998) and (2014), respectively

[4] As Allen states, power-over and power-with are really just forms of the power-to attain some end. Power-with shifts the subject of power-to from an individual to a collective, whereas power-over further specifies the goal an individual or collective might seek, namely, control over another individual or collective.

[5] Aujoulat et. al. (2007) p.780

loss may be utterly devastating for one person it may even be liberating for another; somehow the loss of the ability to be a tree surgeon might free her up to be something else entirely. So why should the loss of the ability to be something or other manifest as an experience of powerlessness?

In 'Experiences of Powerlessness in End-of-Life-Care', we proposed that the loss of the power to be a certain way manifests an experience of powerlessness when it leads one to feel that one is unable to be ***oneself***. On this proposal, the power to be a manager, for example, would manifest an experience of powerlessness insofar as the patient understood himself to be a manager such that the loss of this ability would seriously matter to his understanding of who he was; the power that is lost in such experiences is ***the power to be oneself***.

But how is it that the main features of experiences of powerless could undermine the power to be oneself? What is it about existential loneliness or a loss of familiarity with one's bodily capacities and reactions, for instance, that could undermine such a power? It is to these questions that we shall now turn. By drawing on several phenomenologists, we shall see various ways of understanding the connection between the features of experiences of powerlessness that we have described and the loss of the power to be oneself.

Section Summary:

- Experiences of powerless commonly exhibit three main features
  - Loss of familiarity with oneself, which involves a loss of familiarity with one's
    - bodily reactions
    - emotional responses
    - social standing
    - environment
  - Increased Insecurity
  - Existential Loneliness, which involves
    - Individuation
    - Isolation
- Experiences of powerless put pressure on predominant conceptions of power, for they cannot be reduced to a loss of either
  - Power-to
  - Power-over
  - Power-with
- We have proposed that the features of experiences of powerlessness we have identified manifest as experiences of *powerlessness*, specifically, insofar as they undermine the 'power to be oneself'

3. The Phenomenology of the Everyday Power-to-Be-Oneself

a) *The first-person perspective: Merleau-Ponty and the loss of familiarity with one's body*

For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, bodily familiarity is fundamental to our experience. The body is not merely the material support for our mental lives. Nor is it a purely physical system explicable only in terms of material laws. Rather, it is as we shall see one's very perspective onto the world. For this reason, Merleau-Ponty is able to give us a distinctive way of understanding why the experience of a loss of familiarity with one's body and environment could undermine the power to be oneself. On this account, bodily familiarity is so basic that it explains why perceptual experience has its distinctive structure. The loss of this familiarity would not just undermine an ability to perform any number of actions through which one is able to be oneself. Rather, it may even distort our most fundamental awareness of our surroundings.

Merleau-Ponty's account of the body emerges in his development of a novel phenomenology of perception. According to him, perception is not a capacity for the provision of mere 'sense data'. Nor, for that matter, is perception primarily a capacity for grasping determinate objects with particular properties. To be sure, we can in some cases come to experience something close to sense data. This might be the case when one experiences an afterimage of a bright light, for instance. Moreover, we can evidently come to have perceptual awareness of the properties of objects. A careful inspection of a faulty monkey wrench, for example, would require focused attention on the properties of the tool. For Merleau-Ponty, however, both these forms of perceptual awareness are rarefied developments of a much more fundamental way of perceiving the world.

Consider, for example, driving a car down the motorway. This activity obviously requires a quite sophisticated perceptual awareness of one's surroundings. One must be perceptually aware of, for instance, the gearstick, the various switches around the steering wheel and, crucially, the other cars around one. But in what way do these various entities appear to one? According to Merleau-Ponty, we are not immediately aware of inarticulate sensation, but rather the other cars and the gearstick. Perception is immediately and meaningfully 'intentional': that is, perception is always ***of*** that which is perceived. But where other phenomenologists, such as Husserl, might have articulated the intentional awareness of entities in perception in terms of the explicit presence of objects bearing determinate properties, Merleau-Ponty holds that we have a much more basic form of meaningful, intentional grasp of our surroundings. According to him, it is not the case that, when driving, one would perceive the gearstick as determinate and at the centre of one's attention, bearing a number of properties. Indeed, if one could only ever have perceptual access to things by making them the determinate focus of one's attention, driving would be a much more

dangerous business than it already is, for one could hardly keep one's eyes on the road. Rather, one is for the most part only aware of the gearstick as ***drawing one into action to shift gear***. We can say that the gearstick is perceptually present to one as 'soliciting' one towards an action that it 'affords' without being determinately or focally present at all.[6]

Similarly, in the case of football:

> For the player in action the football field is not an "object," that is, the ideal term which can give rise to an indefinite multiplicity of perspectival views and remain equivalent under its apparent transformations. It is pervaded with lines of force (the "yard lines"; those which demarcate the "penalty area") and articulated in sectors (for example, the "openings" between the adversaries) which call for a certain mode of action and which initiate and guide the action as if the player were unaware of it. The field itself is not given to him, but present as the immanent term for his practical intentions; the player becomes one with it and feels the direction of the "goal".[7]

By Merleau-Ponty's reckoning, the football player is not ***first*** aware of bodies and people around him and ***then*** drawn into action by somehow making the connection between the position of the other players and the requirements of the game. Rather, the player is ***immediately*** aware of opportunity for acting in a certain way, which he simply undertakes to perform. Merleau-Ponty thinks that, quite generally, perception is fundamentally an awareness of soliciting opportunities for action. Perception and agency are therefore very closely linked. It is not just that perception provides us with neutral access to an objective world, on the basis of which we might act. Rather, the perceptual field is itself articulated precisely in terms of our capacity for action and the understanding of the tasks we seek to undertake.[8]

But how is it that the world comes to be articulated in terms of intentional action? According to Merleau-Ponty, perceptual experience is articulated in this way in virtue of what he calls the 'body schema'. It is for this reason that Merleau-Ponty holds that the body itself is so fundamental for our experience. The term 'schema' is an inheritance from Kant. Kant introduces the idea of schemata to explain how particulars provided by intuition can come to be subsumed under general concepts of the understanding, thereby providing us with conceptually rich perceptual experience. To put the point very roughly, it is through ***imagining*** possible instantiations of general concepts that we are able to bring together the sensible with the conceptual. Although Merleau-Ponty would reject Kant's account of perceptual awareness, the notion of the body schema is meant to serve a similar function. For, according to Merleau-Ponty, it is thanks to the body schema that the world comes to be articulated in experience in

[6] Cf. Dreyfus (2014, p.117ff), Romdenh-Romluc (2012)
[7] Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p.53
[8] Komarine Romdenh-Romluc develops Merleau-Ponty's distinctive account of agency over a number of compelling papers: Cf. (2015), (2014), and (2012).

terms of our actions, providing us with intentionally rich perceptual experience. The body schema is thus responsible for drawing action and the world together in the very constitution of perceptual experience. But what is the body schema? Taylor Carman gives the following helpful summary:

> The body schema is not a representation of the body […] but our ability to anticipate and (literally) incorporate the world prior to applying concepts to objects. This ability, which Merleau-Ponty also calls "habit," is not objective knowledge, nor is it internal to the mind, for "it is the body that 'understands' in the acquisition of habit" […]
>
> The body schema thus constitutes our precognitive familiarity with ourselves and the world we inhabit: "I am aware of my body ***via*** the world," Merleau-Ponty says, just as "I am aware of the world through the medium of my body" […] My body is not an extraneous container or instrument of my agency, but comprises "stable organs and pre-established circuits" […] that operate according to their own logic, as it were, below the threshold of self-conscious attention.[9]

The body schema, then, is a non-conceptual ***ability*** to come to understand the world in terms of our ability to act within it, and to come to understand the way we can act through the possibilities open to us in the world. It is non-conceptual insofar as it is distinct from the process of deliberating about how to do something; one can simply get on with acting without engaging in explicit reflection on the matter at hand. But the body schema is not just a reflex reaction, either, for it essentially involves drawing ***meaning*** out of the world in experience.

Suppose you wish to make yourself a cup of tea. It is thanks to the body schema that you can grasp the kettle, lift it, fill it up, and turn it on very efficiently and without having to think of any of these things. Your body knows its environment, what weight to expect for the kettle so that you hold it with appropriate force, know when to turn off the water, and so on. It responds pre-reflectively to the affordances of such environments (such as the packet of tea bags on my shelf) depending on the context (in this case, my desire for tea). But your navigation of the environment is clearly distinct from knee-jerk reactions, for while the latter are mere physical responses to causal stimuli, your responsiveness to affordances is an openness to meaningful avenues of action that only draw you into action insofar as they appear in the course of your meaningful conduct.

As with Kant's schemata, the body-schema explains how the sensible and the meaningful are brought together through a relationship to the possible. But whereas for Kant, this process was through the development of representations of the imagination, and thus arguably a process of cognition, for Merleau-Ponty the relationship with the possible is to be understood in pre-cognitive, bodily terms, that is, as a poised anticipation of coming events. For example, a tennis player awaiting a serve is poised in such a way that she is not only responding to what solicitations are currently drawing

[9] Carman, pp.106-7

her to act, but such that her body maintains itself in readiness for other possible solicitations to come to light, depending on the character of the serve. She is thus ready to respond to solicitations that may arise. The body schema is thus the body's ability to anticipate in its poise the solicitations that will come to it in the course of one's activity. Moreover, this ability constitutes our pre-cognitive familiarity of our active bodies in terms of the world and the world in terms of our active bodies. That is to say, we are familiar with our bodies through our ability to bodily anticipate the emergence of possible solicitations.[10]

According to Merleau-Ponty the body schema is dynamic, in the sense that our familiarity of our bodies-in-the-world develops over time through engagement with activities. For example, if you were to decide to take up snowboarding, you would be letting yourself in for a lot of falling over while you learned your way about. But through concerted effort and practice, you may start to understand your body in terms of the task. For example, you might learn that you are capable of a particular poise that helps you to keep your balance in anticipation of differences on the surface of the slope. If you became more adept at snowboarding, the world would begin to offer solicitations that it would fail to present if you hadn't trained. For example, at the beginning of training you may perceive a ramp as something entirely uninviting or even repellent. But if you became really good, you might perceive it as soliciting you to make a jump. You would also grow more adept at anticipating in your very physical comportment various possibilities. For instance, after considerable practice you might be able to snowboard off-piste, precisely because you would be poised to anticipate surprising solicitations from an unfamiliar environment that you would not be prepared to encounter at the start of your training. Thus, the pre-cognitive familiarity with our bodies is, according to Merleau-Ponty, a dynamic ability to allow the world to solicit us changeably, in terms of our developing capacities for action.

The body schema allows us to have a fluid engagement with tasks in the world, in which explicit thought need only play an inessential role. For example, having spent many years in the nets practicing her batting, a player will be able to step out into a match and get into a position in which, while clearly concentrated, she is able to spontaneously respond to the developments on the field around her, simply drawn to act in a particular way by the scene as she finds it. While sports provide us with extraordinary examples of such 'absorbed coping', as Dreyfus has called it, there are much more everyday examples to hand. Walking, for instance, is an ability that needs to be learnt. When it is learnt, one is able to get up and walk spontaneously, hardly requiring any thought at all despite the differing quality, stability and incline of the

[10] Thus, on Merleau-Ponty's account, bodily familiarity is fundamental to the very constitution of perceptual experience: 'My body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task. And indeed its spatiality is not, like that of external object or like that of 'spatial sensations', a ***spatiality of position***, but a ***spatiality of situation***. […] In the last analysis, if my body can be a 'form' and if there can be, in front of it, important figures against indifferent backgrounds, this occurs in virtue of its being polarised by its tasks, of its ***existence towards*** them, of its collecting together of itself in pursuit of its aims; the body schema is finally a way of stating that my body is in-the-world.' (Merleau-Ponty (2009) pp.114-5

surfaces upon which one is walking. One's familiar ability to adjust one's footing to match the environment without a second thought, allows one to spontaneously and smoothly get on with things.

To sum up, Merleau-Ponty holds that our perceptual awareness of the environment is constituted by the exercise of our ability to allow the world to inform action and for action to disclose new possibilities in the world. This ability is what Merleau-Ponty calls the 'body schema'. It involves a pre-cognitive, anticipatory poise towards possible solicitations and constitutes one's basic, pre-cognitive familiarity of one's body-in-the-world. The body schema is fundamental for perceptual experience, insofar as it is in virtue of this familiarity that the world comes to appear articulated in terms of soliciting possibilities for action. Furthermore, on the basis of our familiarity with our bodies-in-the-world, we are able to undertake complex activities in such a way that we can, eventually, get into a position from which need not think about what we are doing, such that we find ourselves absorbed in the flow of activity.

How, then, does Merleau-Ponty's account help us to understand the relationship between the loss of bodily familiarity and the loss of the power to be oneself? As we have noted, patients who experience themselves to be powerless do not just lose a sense of familiarity with their bodies, they also lose a sense of familiarity within their environments. This would come as no surprise to Merleau-Ponty. According to him, one's familiarity with one's body is symbiotic with one's familiarity with one's environment. This basic familiarity with one's body-in-the-world—that is, the body schema—is a condition on the possibility on both our dynamic perceptual awareness of the world and of fluid action within the world. If this is the kind of familiarity which is disturbed by the onset of debilitating illness, Merleau-Ponty could offer a way of understanding how such loss of familiarity could undermine the power to be oneself.

Merleau-Ponty holds that the body schema can lag behind changes in one's physical body. He makes this point in his discussion of phantom limb syndrome, the condition in which amputees still feel as though there were pains and other sensations in an amputated limb.[11] By Merleau-Ponty's lights, while the body itself is missing an arm, the patient's body schema has yet to adapt to the missing limb. As such, the individual anticipates possible solicitations ***as though*** able to still solicit the missing limb. The world of experience, then, becomes uncanny insofar as it draws the individual towards actions its body cannot perform. In other words, the amputee is operating with an out-of-date body schema. It is quite possible that the loss of bodily familiarity involves at the very least this aspect: that one's poised anticipation of future solicitations is inappropriate to the current physical state of the body.

Other examples suggest that this is indeed present in the loss of familiarity with one's body. For example, if the ears are damaged in a particular way, as in cases of vestibular disturbance, it is possible to undergo an impairment of proprioception, the sense of the position of parts of one's body relative to other parts of the body and

[11] Cf. Merleau-Ponty (2009) 88ff.

one's environment. This can leave individuals in a distressing and surely frustrating position. For example, a person with this condition might find herself working and needing to reach for a cup of tea, placed to the side of her laptop. The impairment to her proprioception might mean that her immediate sense of the position of her body is out of line with the actual position of her body, meaning that the world solicits her pre-cognitively in a way that she cannot follow through. For instance, she might overshoot the handle of the tea cup, knocking it over. In this condition, she might learn that the only way she is able to more securely navigate her environment is through slow, deliberate movement, concentrating on the position of her hand relative to the cup and so on. That is to say, she might have to find ways of precisely circumventing her pre-cognitive grasp of what the situation affords.

Havi Carel has developed a phenomenology of illness along similar lines.[12] According to her, under everyday conditions we are hardly aware of the body at all; in fact, we depend upon the body's withdrawal beneath the threshold of conscious awareness in order to get on with everyday tasks. For instance, you would hardly be able to type fluidly if you were always explicitly conscious of the position of your fingers and in need of guiding them deliberately towards the right keys. But, Carel argues, illnesses bring the body to explicit awareness. For example, after diagnosis you may no longer be able to ignore the once familiar and apparently unproblematic dull pain in your lower back; for all you know, this may be an aggravation of the condition. Alternatively, a patient might find himself in a situation to that sketched above, unable to rely on his instinctual grasp of the affordances of the environment and thus in need of a highly explicit and careful deliberative control of his body. Thus, the body which, ideally, should be the transparent medium through which we act, becomes something of an impediment to action, requiring attention that draws one away from the smooth flow of action.[13]

How might one respond to a disruption to the body schema such as those we have described above? In some cases, it may be possible for individuals to allow their body schema to "catch up" with changes in their bodily capacities. For example, a person who lost the fingers of his right hand to a sliding warehouse door may initially

[12] Cf. Carel (2015) & (2013)

[13] 'We can think of the inconspicuousness that characterizes the functional tool as also characterizing the healthy body. When my body does what I want it to do (keep my balance when I am walking, digest the food I've eaten), I do not pay attention to it or to the biological mechanisms performing bodily tasks. In fact we have no lived experience of our endocrine glands or of our kidneys filtering blood. I live in (as) my body and experience the world through it and much of the time my attention is directed away from the body as perceiving, walking, thinking, to the object or task I am engaged in. […] Now let us turn to the hand holding the pen. Imagine that the pen works perfectly but I cannot use my hand— it is paralyzed ("conspicuous") or amputated ("obtrusive") or I have had a stroke and can no longer remember how to write ("obstinate"). In these cases, too, I experience a failure of a tool, but this time the tool is part of my body. The duality of the body as object and as subject is useful here. Viewed as a physiological material machine, we can indeed think of the hand as a malfunctioning tool and in this case Heidegger' s tool analysis holds. But if we think of the body as experienced and lived, we can see that its failure will be felt differently to the failure of the pen. Whereas we can throw out the useless pen and buy another, our hands (and bodies more generally) stand in a very different relation to us' Carel, (2015), p.120

act in the world as he had done before, responding to the solicitations of a pen that lead him to attempt to pick it up in his damaged hand, only to find himself pushing the pen further away or otherwise frustratingly unable to grasp it. He may come, however, to adapt to the change in his body so that he is no longer sensitive to the solicitations of the pen in this way. Through months of effort, he may come to adopt a different poise in the world, suited to the changes in the body, such that only that which is graspable by his damaged hand solicits him to act.[14]

It may be the case, however, that the body schema is ***unable*** to adapt to changes in the physical condition of the body. This might be the case, for example, if the symptoms of a particular condition developed unpredictably and constantly over time such that the body schema was in constant need of adapting to changes in the physical capacities of the body. Furthermore, it may even be the case that ***the very capacity*** to allow to body schema to adapt is, in some cases, undermined. In both of these circumstances, individuals would find themselves understanding the world as offering confusing solicitations, which pre-cognitively draw them to act in ways that they cannot pursue and in such a way that they are unable to get into a position in which their pre-cognitive grasp of the surroundings draws them to act in ways they can reliably perform.

One can only be oneself by undertaking activities through which one is able to be oneself. On Merleau-Ponty's account, as we have seen, we undertake these activities through gaining bodily proficiency, such that our ability to bodily anticipate future solicitations allows for the fluid engagement in an activity when such solicitations emerge. The disruption of the body schema in the way we have sketched above would plainly undercut the ability to smoothly engage in tasks. For where it is not the case that one can rely on one's body schema to guide one's hand toward, for example, the position of the cup of tea that stands dangerously close to the laptop, one could only draw upon one's capacity for careful, deliberate, focused attention to guide one's hand to the cup. Doing so is possible but it is time- and energy-consuming. Having to do so continually, for most situations of everyday life, severely curtails a person's ability to interact with her environment. In this sense, then, the power to be oneself is at the very least disrupted by a loss of the familiarity with the body, for its exercise becomes a far more onerous task, demanding of a high degree of careful attention.

More dramatically, however, it may also be the case that the nature of the condition is such as to undercut the individuals' ability to adjust to the changes in his body. This might be because the changes are unpredictable and frequent or, alternatively, because of physical impairment to the capacity itself. In such cases, one

[14] Several companies now sell so-called 'age simulation suits', which are designed to inhibit the capacities of the person wearing the suit to match the loss of capacity of elderly people. The designers hope to draw attention to the experience of elderly people by sharing the experience of impairment. However, on Merleau-Ponty's account the experience of wearing the suit may be more akin to the person who has experienced a sudden loss of capacity, rather than someone who has aged gradually over time. That is to say, the individual may experience what it is like to have to adjust one's body schema to suddenly changed capacity.

would find oneself not only unable to engage fluidly in those tasks through which one is able to be oneself but, rather, also unable to allow one's body schema to adapt to the changes in one's bodily circumstances. In this further sense, then, Merleau-Ponty gives us a way of understanding how the power to be oneself might be undermined by the onset of debilitating illness.

Mid-Section Summary:

- Merleau-Ponty holds that bodily familiarity is
  - an ability to anticipate possible solicitations for action from one's environment;
  - fundamental to the constitution of perceptual experience.
- A disruption to bodily familiarity could undermine the power to be oneself insofar as
  - one's ability to anticipate possible solicitations lags behind one's impairment, such that one cannot perform what one is drawn to do;
  - one's ability to adjust one's 'body schema' is undermined by either
    - frequent changes in one's capacities
    - stability of one's changed capacities but inability to adjust to change

b) *The second-person perspective: Knud Ejler Løgstrup and Existential Loneliness*

We have just seen one way in which phenomenology may help us to understand the connection between the loss of the power to be oneself and one of the key features of experiences of powerlessness from the first-person perspective: loss of bodily familiarity. We shall now turn to another phenomenological resource to help us understand the connection between the power to be oneself and a different aspect of experiences of powerlessness: existential loneliness.

As we have seen, existential loneliness has two principal features: individuation and isolation. We have also seen that it is not just those with illnesses who experience existential loneliness; carers and next-of-kin also share in this experience. We do not necessarily need to turn to phenomenology in order to explain how, from the first person perspective, the increased isolation of a person with an illness might leave her feeling powerless. For insofar as she is able to be herself through activities which depend on others' involvement, increased isolation from other people would make it increasingly difficult to undertake those activities.

Knud Løgstrup's increasingly influential work *The Ethical Demand*, however, can help us to understand why, from the second-person perspective, next-of-kin and carers might feel powerless in the face of existential loneliness. For, as we shall see, Løgstrup holds that the demands of care that are placed on next-of-kin and carers are, in principle, unfulfillable. Thus, by his account, feelings of powerlessness in the second-person may well be a result of a true perception of the situation. For if Løgstrup is right,

carers are drawn to their inability fulfil the demands of care placed on them by the onset of illness.

As one of key claims of *The Ethical Demand*, Løgstrup argues that it is an essential feature of human life that we trust each other.

> It is a characteristic of human life that we normally encounter one another with natural trust. […] This may indeed seem strange, but it is a part of what it means to be human. Human life could hardly exist if it were otherwise. We would simply not be able to live; our life would be impaired and wither away if we were in advance to distrust one another.[15]

According to Løgstrup, all human interactions involve expectations between the interacting parties. For example, if you are to ride the bus you expect the bus driver to, among other things, provide you with a valid ticket and not drive the bus into a lake. Because each human interaction involves expectations which, if not met, could work against one's needs, and because it is quite possible for others to fail to meet these expectations, we must interact with others under a prevailing sense of trust. According to Løgstrup, then, we cannot but trust others and 'to trust […] is to lay oneself open'[16] to the possibility of abuse, for trust is necessary and entails vulnerability with respect to the person in whose hands one's needs have been placed.

Løgstrup claims that this 'fact' is the source of the ethical demand, that is, the demand that we care for the needs of the other.

> By our very attitude to one another we help to shape one another's world. By our attitude to the other person we help to determine the scope and hue of his or her world; we make it large or small, bright or drab, rich or dull, threatening or secure. We help to shape his or her world not by theories and views but by our very attitude toward him or her. Herein lies the unarticulated and one might say anonymous demand that we take care of the life which trust has placed in our hands.[17]

Since we cannot but be vulnerable with respect to others, because we cannot but trust them, we encounter the demand to look after the lives of others, which demand demands that one care for the needs of the other. Thus, Løgstrup takes it as a matter of phenomenological fact that we find ourselves faced with the demand to care for the needs of the other.[18] This is a point on which it is worth dwelling. According to

[15] Løgstrup, p.8
[16] op. cit. p.9
[17] op. cit. p.18
[18] Løgstrup argues that the ubiquity of trust explains why the commandment to 'love thy neighbor as thyself' could resonate for us (cf. op. cit. pp.1-8). His appeal to trust is meant to explain the force of the commandment in 'strictly human terms'. It is not clear what Løgstrup means by this qualification. It might seem that he intends a contrast with a theological interpretation of the commandment, thus attempting to explain the force of the contrast in strictly secular terms. But the qualification 'human terms' is clearly not

Løgstrup, it is not just that we ***can at times*** encounter situations that demand that we look after the needs of others. Nor is he claiming that we ***often*** find ourselves required to act for another's needs. He is, rather, pressing on us the far stronger claim that we are ***always*** in situations that demand that we care for the needs of others around us.[19] Thus, according to Løgstrup, it is part of a complete description of everyday human experience that we find ourselves facing the demand to care for the needs of others, which fact is explained in part by virtue of another phenomenological fact: the necessity and fundamentality of trust.[20]

Having argued that the ethical demand is an ever-present fact of our lives with others and grounded in the necessity of trust, Løgstrup begins to develop a complex discussion of the contours of the demand. We need concern ourselves with only one or two aspects of his discussion here. Specifically, Løgstrup claims that the demand is ***radical***. The demand is radical, according to Løgstrup, because it is isolating, by which he means that in every case it falls to ***oneself*** to figure out what the demand demands.[21] This is a consequence of another characteristic of the ethical demand, namely, that is it silent.

In claiming that the demand is silent, Løgstrup means that the situation itself does not spell out what it is, specifically, that one has to do. He cites two reasons for this claim. Firstly, the needs of the other cannot be identified with his avowed wishes, because it might be that his needs depart from his spoken desires. For example, you might encounter a friend, obviously in need, who claims that all he really needs is a night in by himself. It may well be, however, that what he really needs is good company but, for whatever reason, does not want to ask for it. Thus, the ethical demand might

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synonymous with 'secular terms'; theology is, after all, a distinctly human preoccupation. Moreover, Løgstrup often claims that we view our lives as gifts, which is not easy to interpret in fully secular terms.

[19] Løgstrup does not think that the ethical demand exists any between two randomly selected people.

> its radical character means that the demand can be fulfilled only through unselfishness. This does not mean, however, that a person has unlimited responsibility for everything under the sun, including all sorts of things having nothing to do with him or her. (op. cit. 46)

This is a consequence of Løgstrup's phenomenological methodology. Through an investigation into the structure of concrete relationships, he finds that they necessarily involve the presence of the ethical demand. This does not imply that the ethical demand exists between two people who have no concrete relationship, just that were they to have such a relationship, they would find themselves under the demand. Obviously, a lot rides on how we are to understand the notion of a 'concrete relationship'. Is it a concrete relationship that exists between, for instance, a Canadian hipster in a Berlin café and the Uruguayan farmer who procured the beans that ended up his cup?

[20] One might worry that Løgstrup is committing some form of the naturalistic fallacy insofar as he appears to be deriving the 'ought' of the ethical demand from the 'is' of the basic fact of human trust. But this may not be quite right. For Løgstrup, the ethical demand is a phenomenological fact; reflection on the structure of human life as lived reveals that we are already beholden to and by others. The appeal to the supposedly basic fact of trust is thus meant as an explanation of this feature of our lives, rather than a justification of it. That is to say, he is claiming that only a being for whom trust was basic would find itself confronted with the ethical demand as an unavoidable fact of the matter.

[21] In his introduction of the notion, Løgstrup in fact mentions four reasons for thinking that the ethical demand is radical. It is unspoken, may work against one's own desires, is isolating, and is one-sided (cf. op. cit. pp.44-5)

require one to disavow his wishes and insist on keeping him company. Secondly, it is not just that the other's wishes cannot determine the content of the demand, the *demand* cannot specify its own content either. The demand requires that one cares for the needs of the other. Any specific content to the demand will vary from case to case, insofar as the needs of the other will vary from case to case. While your friend might need you to keep him company on Tuesday, he would probably need you to leave at some point. The ethical demand is silent, then, insofar as its content is specified by neither the expressed wishes of the other or by the demand itself. In each case, one has to figure out what the demand stipulates for oneself; it does not tell one what is to be done.[22]

Because the demand is silent, one has to figure out what is demanded in any particular case. But this also implies that no one else can do that work for you. For if one cannot read off what is demanded from the express wishes of the other, one certainly cannot read off what is demanded from what anyone else thinks either. To the degree to which the ethical demand is non-deferrable it is isolating. Løgstrup is not claiming that in order to figure out what to do one has to retreat from social life and churn over the problem in voluntary seclusion. Indeed, it may well be the case that you need to talk to the person in your care to get a clear sense of what they need. Carers may also want to discuss things with the family of the patient. Løgstrup would find it problematic, however, if one simply deferred responsibility for identifying the needs of the other to anyone else.[23]

Løgstrup claims, however, that in one's isolation one finds that the demand is unfulfillable.[24] This is because 'what is demanded is that the demand should not have been necessary'.[25] So it is not just that the demand demands that one cares for the needs of the other, it demands that one should not have had to have been demanded. Thus, the demand is clearly impossible to fulfil: insofar as one tries to respond to the side of the demand that requires one to care for the needs of the other, one fails to meet the side of demand that requires that one should not have been demanded. For example, you might recognise that it is demanded of you that you do not betray a

[22] op.cit. p.22

[23] With these remarks, Løgstrup clearly draws his discussion (albeit not intentionally) into close connection with palliative care contexts. In these contexts, individuals find themselves needing to respond to the needs of the other which, often, may not be expressed. It may be, for instance, that a patient needs to discuss her approaching death with someone, but may be hesitant to ask anyone in particular to talk things through with her, because she is sensitive to the possibility that such discussions will cause her family and friends pain. Moreover, this aspect of the demand raises rather profound questions over whether any set of guidelines can help individuals respond to the demand. If the demand calls for each individual to work out for herself what is demanded, what use could come from general guidelines? While these are clearly very important issues, they do not directly help us work out the connection between the features of experiences of powerlessness we have identified and the loss of the power to be oneself. For this reason, we shall put these considerations to one side.

[24] This claim has been the subject of considerable controversy. For example, Alasdair MacIntyre (2007)—one of Løgstrup's otherwise vocal champions—has argued that it is flat out incoherent. It has, however, also been heartily defended, both by Robert Stern (forthcoming) and Wayne Martin (forthcoming).

[25] Løgstrup, p.147

friend. But to encounter that as a demand, we might think, is already a failing: insofar as you even find it ***possible*** to betray your friend, you have had one thought too many. A good friend, arguably, should be closed to the very possibility of betraying his friend. In this instance, the presence of the demand reveals also that it should not have been demanded of you, because you should have just been closed to the possibility of betrayal.[26]

In summary, Løgstrup holds that we are necessarily placed in positions of power over others, insofar as others necessarily and implicitly trust us to care for their needs. For this reason, we find ourselves faced with the ethical demand, that is, the demand to care for the needs of others. This demand is isolating and unfulfillable. That is to say, in facing the ethical demand one finds that it is one's own, non-deferrable responsibility to work out the needs of the other and to care for them, but that this responsibility is in principle impossible to fulfil. How does this help us understand the connection between existential loneliness of the second-person and the loss of the everyday power to be oneself?

To recall, one of the features of existential loneliness is 'individuation'. In the case of next-of-kin, this manifested as an experience of being singled out in having an individual responsibility to care for the patient. This is precisely what Løgstrup means in claiming that the demand is isolating. We have also seen, however, that Løgstrup holds that one finds that one is isolated with respect to a responsibility which is in principle unfulfillable. As we shall now see, plausibly we may find this playing out in some examples of experiences of powerlessness of next-of-kin.

We should be careful not to rush to Løgstrup too quickly, however. The needs of a patient might be experienced as unfulfillable by a carer in a way that does not need to be clarified by a Løgstrupian analysis. For example, Kornhaber and Wilson observe that nurses in a burns unit expressed a sense of powerlessness when they could not avoid causing a great deal of pain in the application of bandages; for them, it was anathema to being a carer that one should be the cause of pain.[27] This case would not require a Løgstrupian analysis to clarify, however. For the demand to care for the needs of the other is experienced to be unfulfillable simply in virtue of the limited abilities of the carers in question with respect to the specific requirements of the needs, rather than

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[26] At this point we return to the issue raised in footnote 23. For if the ethical demand is, in principle, unfulfillable, why bother to respond to it at all? This is a difficult issue that we cannot try to settle here. Wayne Martin (forthcoming) has proposed one way of responding to the problem, however. While the ethical demand may be unfulfillable, it can nonetheless have great pedagogical value:

'The response to an unfulfillable demand obviously cannot consist in fulfilling it. But there might be a way in which we can fittingly adjust our behaviour in light of what the encounter with the unfulfillable demand has taught us. If indeed it is the presence of contra-ethical impulses that both brings us face-to-face with the ethical demand and at the same time renders it unfulfillable, then one form of response would be to work on ourselves so as to try to minimise or eliminate those impulses, and to cultivate ourselves towards the point where we might indeed respond spontaneously to the needs of others. Such a response would not amount to a fulfilment of the demand, but it would be to act in a way that was informed by its lesson.' (Martin)

[27] Cf. Kornhaber and Wilson, p.174

the nature of the ethical demand as such. There is, however, a further way in which carers and next-of-kin may experience themselves as unable to meet the demand on which Løgstrup can help us shed some light.

Consider, for example, the experience of parents of a child with terminal cancer faced with the choice of whether to keep the child in hospital care or to withdraw the child to be cared for at home.[28] This is very clearly a very difficult situation for the parents to be in, not least because they may struggle to know whether they are motivated by the needs of their child or, rather, by their own wishes. No doubt the psychological situation will be far more complicated than this brief sketch and we have no intention to engage with the question of how they should act; suffice it to say, in the face of the loss of someone close to one, one can struggle to distinguish between conflicting motivations.

As we have seen, Løgstrup holds that the demand to act in the best interests of the other is unfulfillable ***in principle*** because the demand demands that it should not have been demanding, that is, that one should not be in a position from which the right thing has to be exacted. It is quite plausible that the parents in this example may be brought face to face with this aspect of the demand, insofar as they realise that they find themselves struggling to do something which should not have been an object of demand but something they do as a matter of course, namely caring for their child. That is to say, the parents may experience themselves to be powerless in the face of the unfulfillability of the ethical demand, insofar as they find themselves demanded to do something they are unable to achieve, precisely because they may feel that they should not find it demanding to care for the needs of their child.

Thus Løgstrup could explain a further connection between the experience of existential loneliness in the second-person and experiences of powerlessness insofar as he could argue that such experiences are characterised by an experience of being individuated with respect to a responsibility that one is necessarily powerless to fulfil but which one cannot eschew.[29]

So far, however, we have made no reference to the ***power to be oneself*** in describing how Løgstrup might explain the connection between individuation and powerlessness. In our example, we suggested that the parents may feel powerless to fulfil the demand to care for the needs of their child, not because they are unable to be themselves. Indeed, one might even argue that Løgstrup would find it quite problematic to attempt to cash out the experience of powerlessness in the face of the unfulfillability of the ethical demand in this manner. After all, Løgstrup holds the the demand requires that one be entirely unselfish.

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[28] This example is taken from a case study that we discuss in EP, p.17ff

[29] Does Løgstrup give us a way of understanding experiences of powerlessness that are specific to healthcare? One might think not: for him, any transparent confrontation with the ethical demand will involve isolation and powerlessness with respect to the unfulfillability of the ethical demand. This would only be a problem, however, if experiences of powerlessness in healthcare were sui generis. This claim is, however, far from obvious and at any rate beyond the scope of the current paper to discuss at length.

We need, however, some way of explaining why individuals feel powerless in the face of ***particular*** unfulfillable needs. Løgstrup holds that it is not just in some difficult cases that the ethical demand is unfulfillable. Rather, the demand is in principle such that it cannot be met. If this is the case, however, then why do individuals only feel powerless in the face of the inability to meet the ethical demand in certain cases? There is scope within Løgstrup's account to offer an answer this question by appeal to the power to be oneself.

As Løgstrup makes clear, when it comes to relationships of 'natural love', of which he finds the parent-child relationship exemplary, we cannot clearly separate out the needs of the other from one's own needs:

> by virtue of our love for the other person he or she constitutes a vital part of our own life. His or her flourishing or failing to flourish affects us directly, not just by way of certain objective and material relationships. The other person is in such a real sense part of our world that it is in fact awkward to refer to him or her as "the other person" rather than as one's child or spouse. The action to which natural love moves a person is therefore motivated by the fact that it serves both his or her flourishing and our own. There two concerns simply cannot be separated from each other. [30]

That is to say, the relationship between a parent and child is such that the needs of the child are interwoven with the needs of the parent. This is not to say that the needs of the child ***just are*** those of the parent, as if there were no chance of conflict. Rather, Løgstrup's point is that we cannot consider the parent's love for his child as though utterly independent of his needs; the flourishing of the child is one of the parent's needs.

Moreover, Løgstrup holds that it is part of the nature of this kind of love that

> Natural love is not in the dilemma of having to think either of itself or of the other person. According to its very nature it does not find itself in that situation. Love always has reference to the other person; it is a case of being drawn to her.[31]

Again, Løgstrup does not mean that there is no possibility of conflict between the needs of the parent and those of the child. Indeed, this remark may even explain the possibility of such a conflict in the life of a parent: since it is in the nature of the parent's love for her child to be drawn to the needs of the child, any experience in which she feels herself drawn towards her own needs in conflict with those of the child will be experienced as going against her love for her child.

As we have seen, the next-of-kin can feel powerless in the face of the needs of a loved one. Løgstrup can help us understand why the inability to meet the needs of the other can be experienced as undercutting the power to be oneself. Because the

[30] Løgstrup, p.125
[31] ibid. p.129

needs of the other are not straightforwardly independent of one's own needs—insofar as it is in the nature of 'natural love' that one's flourishing is closely tied to the flourishing of the other—the decline in the health of a loved one would have to constitute a decline in one's own flourishing. This picture is complicated, however, by the idea that it is part of the nature of natural love that one is drawn to the needs of the other. Insofar as there is a conflict of interest between the needs of the patient and child, on Løgstrup's account this would be experienced as going against the parent's love for her child; she may be distressed at the very fact of a conflict of needs. In other words, the experience of powerlessness in the face of the ethical demand could quite plausibly manifest as an experience of being powerless to be oneself, precisely because one finds oneself thrown into an incredibly trying psychological situation in which one is not simply able to trust oneself to be caring for the needs of the child.

To sum up, Løgstrup offers us a way of understanding the experience of the loss of the power to be oneself from the second-person perspective. The onset of illnesses can make it incredibly difficult for the next-of-kin to be sensitive to the needs of the other in distinction from their own needs. This may confront the next-of-kin with the realisation that they should not need to find the needs of the other demanding; that is, their psychological distress may bring them face to face with the unfulfillability of the ethical demand, in the face of which they may feel powerless. But to find oneself in this situation—to be unable to meet the ethical demand—may plausibly manifest as an experience of an inability to be oneself, insofar as being oneself involves the spontaneous care for the needs of the other. Thus, insofar as the next-of-kin feels powerless in the face of the ethical demand, he may also feel powerless to be himself.

Mid-Section Summary:

- Løgstrup holds that trust is a basic feature of human experience. Because we cannot but trust each other, we are always confronted with the 'ethical demand': the demand to care for the needs of the other.
- The ethical demand has several key features, including:
  - It is silent, insofar as one cannot read off its requirements from the situation;
  - It is isolating, insofar as one has to work out what to do *for oneself*;
  - It is unfulfillable, insofar as it demands that what it demands should not have needed to have been demanded.
- Next-of-kin and carers may feel isolated in their responsibility to care for the other.
- This isolation may manifest as an experience of powerlessness insofar as it confronts them with the unfulfillability of the demand, which unfulfillability is incompatible with their understanding of how to be themselves.

c) Increased Insecurity

We have identified three features of experiences of powerlessness: loss of familiarity with oneself and one's environment, increased insecurity, and existential loneliness. Merleau-Ponty has shown us a way of understanding the connection between the loss of familiarity and the power to be oneself from the first-person perspective. Løgstrup has helped us find a way to explain the connection between existential loneliness and the power to be oneself from the second-person perspective. But what about increased insecurity? Before we move on to conclude this section, we shall suggest that, on the accounts we have reviewed, increased insecurity could be explicable as something of a secondary symptom of the more basic phenomenon.

As we have seen, on Merleau-Ponty's account the loss of certain bodily capacities could lead to a disconnect between one's body schema—the ability to anticipate solicitations from one's environment—and one's physical body, such that one finds oneself drawn to act in ways contrary to one's ability to perform those activities. Moreover, we proposed that Merleau-Ponty also leaves space for the possibility that the body schema may be unable to adapt to the changes in one's bodily capacities. In the first case, there would clearly be a sense of uncanniness and alienation from one's environment, in the sense that it would draw one to act in unfulfillable ways. Indeed, it may even be the case that one can no longer trust one's pre-cognitive instincts to guide one around; one may need to circumvent one's instincts and rely, instead, on careful and attentive deliberative control. It is not difficult to see why being in this condition would leave one feeling somewhat insecure, for one could not trust one's immediate, bodily responses to one's environment to lead one on safely. Thus, on the Merleau-Pontyian account we have sketched above, the feeling of insecurity is explicable as a consequence of the loss of bodily familiarity.

On Løgstrup's account, the presence of illnesses could bring one face to face with one's essential vulnerability, which vulnerability is happily concealed in day to day life. On this view, it is quite natural that patients should feel insecure, for they are newly attuned to their vulnerability. Moreover, we have seen that since the ethical demand is silent, it requires each individual in each case to figure out what the other needs. But Løgstrup is also clear that one could never get into a position in which one straightforwardly ***knows*** what the other needs; the ethical demand is silent, so one is always going out on a limb when identifying the other's needs.[32] In this case too, then, it is natural to think that such individuals would feel no sure-footing, precisely because they are demanded to identify the needs of the other while being in principle unable to

[32] Løgstrup in fact disparages a particular form of the desire to get to know the other (cf. op. cit. p.118ff). According to him, to want to know some part of the world can be to want to be done with it; if you know that the cat is on the mat, you have no need to look for the cat. But, for Løgstrup, one should never aim to be done with another, as if meeting the ethical demand were a matter of ticking boxes and moving on. Rather, one has to comport oneself towards the other as someone who does not know her needs but is, rather, always in need of figuring them out.

ever know whether they are responding to the other's needs or, rather, pursuing their own hidden interests.

On both of the accounts we have discussed above, then, the experience of increased insecurity is an intelligible concomitant feature of the other aspects of experiences of powerlessness. Thus, there is scope in both accounts to account for this feature of the experience of powerlessness as a secondary symptom of the more basic phenomenon. But we might still wonder if this is all there is to say about the experience of insecurity. Is it conceivable that one might feel powerless in the face of insecurity without a loss of bodily familiarity or absent a sense of existential loneliness? We shall not, however, be able to answer this question at this stage.[33]

d) *Summary*

In this section we have reviewed two prominent phenomenological accounts of everyday experience. We have seen how both Merleau-Ponty and Løgstrup offer us different ways of understanding how it could be that the features of experiences of powerlessness we have identified undermine the power to be oneself. On Merleau-Ponty's account, the loss of familiarity with one's body would explain how one might lose the power to be oneself, insofar as such a loss of familiarity would, firstly, constitute a disruption in our ability to smoothly continue with those activities through which we are able to be ourselves, and, secondly, disrupt our ability to regain a fluid absorption in those activities. Thus, Merleau-Ponty helps us understand the connection between the loss of bodily familiarity and the experience of powerlessness from the first-person perspective.

Løgstrup helps us to understand the connection between existential loneliness and the power to be oneself from the second-person perspective. Second-person existential loneliness would undermine the power to be oneself insofar as the feeling of individuation with respect to the ethical demand would draw one to face that one is powerless to fulfil the demand. But insofar as the power to be oneself requires that one cares for the needs of the other spontaneously, without having been demanded, this power would also be undermined by the experience of the unfulfillability of the demand.

Finally, both Merleau-Ponty and Løgstrup offer us different ways of accounting for the connection between the experience of increased insecurity and the loss of the power to be oneself. According to both accounts, this experience is explicable as a concomitant feature of the more basic characteristics.

[33] A number of resources suggest themselves as plausible contenders for a phenomenology of insecurity in its own right, though we shall not discuss them at length here. Martin Heidegger, who we shall discuss at length below, discusses 'uncanniness' at length in several places. For an extended discussion of Heideggerian 'uncanniness' see (Withy, 2015). Sigmund Freud has also written on this subject. See his (2003). Moreover, R. D. Laing has developed an account of what he calls 'ontological insecurity'. See Laing, p.39.

These considerations focus our attention on a problem, however. Both Merleau-Ponty and Løgstrup can help us understand how an everyday power to be oneself can be undermined, so that one no longer has the ability to carry on as one had before. Several papers have argued, however, that the experience of powerlessness is not entirely devastating to patients' power to be themselves. Aujoulat et. al., for example, found that those patients who fared better in the face of experiences of powerlessness were able to become a 'same and yet different person'.[34] That is to say, while patients lost the power to be themselves as they had been before, they retained the power to be themselves in the face of a radical disruption in their everyday abilities.

How is it possible that patients might retain the power to be themselves in the face of such radical disruptions to their everyday lives? What does it mean to become a 'same and yet different' person? We could not answer these questions if we restricted our analysis of the power to be oneself to the everyday ability to get on with things. For it is precisely this power that is disrupted in those cases in which individuals are confronted with the need to find a way to be themselves, precisely ***despite*** a radical collapse of the ordinary.

For this reason, we propose, we need to make a distinction between two orders of the power to be oneself: (i) the everyday power to be oneself that can be lost upon the onset of illness and the loss of which manifests an experience of powerlessness; and (ii) a more radical power to be oneself that is retained despite the loss of the first, upon the exercise of which one is able to become 'empowered'. We shall call these the first- and second-order power to be oneself, respectively. If we can make sense of the second-order power to be oneself that is exercised in the face of a collapse of the power of the first-order, we shall be able to understand how patients, next-of-kin and carers are able to carry on being themselves despite a radical collapse in the everyday.

In the following section we shall turn our attention to two phenomenologists who have argued that there is indeed a second-order power to be oneself. For according to both Martin Heidegger and Max Scheler, one can maintain oneself despite a radical breakdown of the ordinary and everyday. As we shall see, Heidegger will help us to understand how one might exercise a second-order power to be oneself in the face of experiences of powerlessness from the first-person perspective. Scheler, alternatively, shall help us understand the second-order power to be oneself in the case of experiences of powerlessness from the second-person perspective.

[34] Cf. Aujoulat et. al. (2008) p.1236ff

Section Summary:

- On Merleau-Ponty's account, a disruption of bodily familiarity would undermine the power to be oneself insofar as it disrupted the ability to be drawn into action by solicitations in the world.
- On Løgstrup's account, next-of-kin or carers would be confronted with the unfulfillability of the ethical demand, which unfulfillability they find incompatible with their understanding of how to be themselves. Thus, existential loneliness undercuts the power to be oneself.
- Increased insecurity is, on both Merleau-Ponty and Løgstrup's accounts, intelligible as consequent upon each of the experiences we have just summarised.
- These accounts alone, however, cannot explain how individuals are able to *continue* to be themselves despite a collapse in the everyday ability to be oneself.
- We therefore need to distinguish between an everyday power to be oneself and a second-order power to be oneself, the latter of which is exercised in conditions under which the former is undermined.

4. The Phenomenology of the Second-order Power to be Oneself

a) The first-person perspective: Martin Heidegger

Martin Heidegger's ***Being and Time*** offers an account of what he calls 'self-constancy' (***Selbstständigkeit***). For Heidegger, the constancy of the self should not be understood as the persistence of certain character traits over time. On the contrary, '"Self-constancy" signifies nothing other than anticipatory resoluteness'.[35] Moreover, Heidegger holds that anticipatory resoluteness allows one to take up one's 'fate', which he describes as a 'powerless superior power' in the face of adversities.[36] These terms no doubt need some explaining. But, even just on the face of it, it seems that Heidegger meant to articulate a connection between powerlessness and the power to remain self-constant in the face of threats to oneself.

In this section, we shall first provide a sketch of what Heidegger means by 'anticipatory resoluteness' before turning, more directly, to his answer to the question of how it is possible to maintain self-constancy in the face of threats to oneself. As we shall see, this will help us to understand the second-order power to be oneself from the perspective of the first-person.

Heidegger holds that we work out who we are by taking up practical possibilities open to us within our environments. He calls this, 'pressing into existentiell possibilities'. For example, upon hearing of his mother's sudden deterioration in health, Cash might set to work upon building a coffin. In so doing, he would be undertaking a possibility

[35] Heidegger, H.322. Following convention, 'H.' references refer to the original German pagination of ***Sein und Zeit***, retained in the margins of the two major English translations. All quotes are taken from the Macquarrie and Robinson translation.
[36] H.385

open within his environment. Just as you might come to understand just what kind of friend you are through living out your relationships with your friends, so too Cash would come to understand himself through taking up the possibility of working on the coffin. This is part of the force behind Heidegger's claim that we ***are*** our possibilities: we work out who we are through taking up possibilities open to us within the environment.

There are, however, various ways in which Cash could understand himself as a carpenter and son. He could, for example, do so in such a way that he makes sense of himself as radically free to abandon his carpentry and to forget all about being a good son, should he wish. In that case, he might undertake his work with his mind turned to the things he could do in a distant city. Alternatively, he could make sense of himself as rigidly determined in his action by forces beyond himself. If he were to do so, he might conduct his work without paying much or any attention to other possibilities that could arise. In both cases, Cash would understand himself as a carpenter. But there is a difference in the way in which Cash comports himself in the world through his work. In Heideggerian terminology, Cash 'discloses' himself differently in each case, that is, the cases differ in the way that Cash makes sense of what he ***is***. In the first case, he understands himself to ***be*** utterly free, unconstrained by history. In the second case, he understands himself to ***be*** utterly determined in his actions. Each case exemplifies a different understanding of ***what it is to be a person***, rather than who he is. In this way, Heidegger distinguishes between working out ***who*** one is (pressing into existentiell possibilities) and making sense of ***what*** one is (disclosure), the latter being worked out through the course of the former in the way in which one goes about things.[37]

'Resoluteness' is Heidegger's term for the form of disclosure through which you make sense of yourself as what you really are, without self-deception.[38] As we shall see, this means making sense of oneself as being constitutively limited in certain key respects and, thereby, accepting that one is powerless in particular ways. There is a great deal to say about Heidegger's concept of resoluteness and we shall only be able to scratch the surface here. We can turn to a particular example of a notable ***failure*** to

[37] This formulation may ring some rather loud alarm bells for readers of Heidegger. After all, Heidegger explicitly denies that Dasein—his name for the entity that each of us is—is a 'what'. By this, however, Heidegger means to emphasise that we cannot make sense of the being of Dasein using the same categories that we might use for impersonal objects. Dasein is not a 'what' but always a 'who'. The difference we are pointing to here, however, is exemplified in the distinction between Dasein and any particular person. One can give an account of Dasein—the kind of entity any particular person is—without saying anything about any particular person's personal history and circumstances. The distinction we are pointing to here, then, is roughly that between trying to figure out who one is in the world—which might be exemplified by difficult decisions over one's relationships—and trying to make sense of what marks out beings like us from other beings—which might be exemplified by refusing to simply buy into popular messages about our freedom, for example. To be sure, to make sense of what one is in a non-self-deceptive way, by Heidegger's lights, one would have to avoid understanding oneself as being just like occurring objects. But this would be in service of attaining a truer understanding of one's being, that is, of what one is.

[38] In Heidegger's words, resoluteness is a way of understanding which gives one the possibility of 'dispersing all fugitive Self-concealments' (H.310) and 'brings one without Illusions into the resoluteness of 'taking action'' (ibid.)

be resolute, however, to begin to draw out some of the most salient features in connection to our concerns.

Consider Tom Hardy's character in the recent film, ***Locke***.[39] Ivan Locke has had to leave a construction site in the middle of the night and drive somewhere. It transpires he has left the site on the eve of a complicated concrete pouring, which he is supposed to supervise. We discover that he is on the way to a hospital, where a woman is giving birth to a child he has fathered. But we also find out that he is married, apparently happily, and expected at home that night. The action of the film consists in Locke's attempt to manage the logistics of concrete pouring, save his marriage from collapse, and stay informed of the progress of the birth of his child, all by making phone calls while driving down the motorway. Locke believes that there ***must*** be a way of doing right by the woman giving birth and their unborn child, ***and*** fulfilling his duty as a civil engineer, ***and*** maintaining the possibility of a life with his wife.

By Heidegger's lights, Locke fails to be resolute, in this case, because he exemplifies a closure to the possibility that in pursuing one way of understanding himself he might have to let go of others. In Heideggerian terms, Locke is trying to work out various forms of self-understanding in such a way that he does not make sense of himself as the basis for shutting down possibilities: as far as Locke is concerned, it is in principle possible to do everything at once, if only he could find the way. But, Heidegger holds, we ***are*** the basis for shutting down possibilities; in his terminology, we are the 'basis of a nullity'.[40] By this he means that in undertaking to understand oneself in one way, one necessarily rules out understanding oneself in another way. For example, if Cash were to understand himself as a travelling singer, he might not be able to understand himself as a loving son. This would be the case if the former brought with it a commitment to travelling and the latter brought with it a commitment to staying home and building a coffin. He would not be able to understand himself as both because he would not be able to practically live out the commitments involved in understanding himself as both. Thus, on Heidegger's account, in being closed to the possibility that he might not be able to fix everything, Locke is kidding himself, ontologically speaking. Thus, Locke is 'irresolute', for he does not make sense of himself through his action as what he really is.

Locke would begin make sense of himself as what he really is, however, if he were prepared to allow possibilities to collapse if they were found to practically conflict with his commitment to being a good father. For being prepared to allow possibilities to collapse in the face of incompatibilities would manifest an understanding of himself as being such that to take up any possibility is to close off indefinitely many others. But this is only part of the story, for, according to Heidegger, we are not just the basis for shutting down possibilities: we are also what he calls the ***null*** basis for shutting them

[39] ***Locke***, dir. Steven Knight, feat. Tom Hardy, Olivia Coleman, Ruth Wilson (IM Global/Shoebox Films, 2013)
[40] H.283

down.[41] This means that one not only closes down other possibilities, but that one finds oneself always already understanding oneself in some way that shuts down possibilities without it being the case that one has ever chosen to understand oneself as such. In other words, one cannot create oneself ***ex nihilo***; everyone has a history they have not chosen. Because one cannot get one's history into one's power, one is not the basis for the way in which one is already shutting down possibilities. For Locke to be resolute, then, he would also have to make sense of himself ***as such*** in the way he went about things. How might this play out?

While Locke would be making sense of himself as a basis of shutting down possibilities by being prepared to allow possibilities to fall by the wayside, he would not be making sense of himself as the ***null*** basis of this if he acted as though he had a radically free choice over which possibilities he will take up and, thus, which he will nullify. He would understand himself in this way, for example, if he took himself to be faced with possibilities with which he could indifferently choose between, as if his history didn't shape what possibilities are open and important to him. If he were to act in this way, he would be understanding himself as being such that he could 'get his basis in its power', that is, as being able to step out of his history and chose who he is without historical constraint. By Heidegger's lights, however, one can ***never*** step out of one's history in this way. This is just what it means to be the null basis of ruling out possibilities. For this reason, to project upon one's being a ***null*** basis would be to acknowledge one's powerlessness over one's history in the way in which one undertakes to be bound by possibilities. That is to say, it would be to ***submit*** to being bound by a way of understanding oneself that already claims one.[42]

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[41] 'In being a basis—that is, in existing as thrown—Dasein constantly lags behind its possibilities. It is never existent before its basis, but only from it and as this basis. Thus "being-a-basis" means never to have power over one's ownmost being from the ground up.' (H.284)

[42] To some readers of Heidegger, this claim will seem controversial. Stephan Käufer, for example, claims that resoluteness opens up new possibilities, rather than pushing one back into possibilities that were already there (Cf. Käufer p.467). This is a delicate issue that we shall not try to fully resolve here. But there are reasons to support the reading we have offered. Käufer's reading is supported by the following passage:

> one would completely misunderstand the phenomenon of resoluteness if one should want to suppose that this consists simply in taking up possibilities which have been proposed and recommended, and seizing hold of them (H. 298)

By this, however, Heidegger means that how one choses to commit oneself cannot be determined prior to the decisive commitment. In Heidegger's words 'To resoluteness, […] indefiniteness […] is something that necessarily belongs' (ibid.) By this he means that it is only through resolving to commit that the commitment is decided; one cannot fob off responsibility for making a resolution to anything else. Consider, for example, Locke's choice to commit to either being a father to his new born child or doing right by his family. By Heidegger's light's only the resolution to commit can decide which way Locke will go; he would not be being resolute if he tried to act according to a pre-existing plan. As Heidegger makes clear immediately after this remark, however, the possibilities one must resolve to decide between are not brand new but, rather, already available in the situation: 'The resolution is precisely the disclosive projection and determination of what is factically possible at the time' (ibid.) So in saying that resoluteness is not a matter of taking up possibilities that have been proposed and recommended, he means only that in resolving one is not following through a pre-existing proposal, as if there were any way of figuring out how to commit except

There is more to resoluteness than we have been able to view in this brief sketch. But we have seen enough to draw out the main points of interest for us. In order to be resolute, a person would have to allow herself to be bound by some way of understanding herself that already claims her, such that she is prepared to let incompatible possibilities fall by the wayside. In this way, she would be making sense of what she is without self-deception, for she would be reflecting what she really is in the way she works out who she is.

We have been sketching Heidegger's concept of resoluteness in order to get a grip on his distinctive interpretation of self-constancy. For, as we noted at the outset, Heidegger holds that ***fate*** is the 'powerless superior power' of self-constancy, which he understands to be nothing other than anticipatory resoluteness. We have seen something of what Heidegger means by resoluteness. But what does he mean by adding the qualification that it is ***anticipatory***, and how is this supposed to account for self-constancy?

As we have seen, to be resolute means to make sense of what one is without self-deception. One does this by allowing oneself to be bound by ways of understanding oneself that already claim one. Otherwise put, making sense of what you really are means accepting that being human involves having particular limitations. Firstly, one accepts that one is limited with respect to the ***past***, for we can never get behind our histories and make ourselves over from scratch. Secondly, one accepts that one is limited with the respect to the ***present***. For undertaking one possibility means ruling out another; you cannot have your cake and eat it, existentially speaking. Death presents us with an obvious limit with respect to the future. As Heidegger puts is, death is the permanent 'possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all'. That is to say, it is the constitutive futural limit to possibilities: they are not limitless because one's existence is always possibly impossible. Resoluteness is ***anticipatory*** insofar as one acts in light of this further limitation, that is, the limitation placed on the future by the fact of one's anticipated death.[43]

Heidegger holds that in light of one's own death one finds that one can only make sense of oneself as what one is by taking up those possibilities that are open to one ***now***. In his terms, against the permanent possibility of death we find that we are such as to be 'free for [our] death and can let [ourselves] be thrown back upon [our] factical "there" by shattering [ourselves] against death'.[44] To see what Heidegger is getting at, we might consider the young Augustine's famous prayer 'Grant me chastity

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through resolving to commit. This decision is made between 'what is factically possible at the time', that is, possibilities that are already open for one to commit to within the situation in which one finds oneself having to resolve.

[43] Heidegger's discussion of death has inspired many different, and differently compelling, interpretations. Here we do not intend to take a position in that debate. That is to say, we do not intend to take a stand on what death is, for Heidegger, besides its being the necessary possibility of the impossibility of existing, which possibility can only ever be anticipated, insofar as its actualization would amount to the impossibility of existence. The point to emphasise here is that death is that aspect of our finitude that pertains to the future.

[44] H.385

and continence, but not yet'.[45] In uttering such a prayer, Augustine recognises that he should be bound by his commitment to Christ. But he also presumes that he will have a future. On the basis of this presumption, he asks for his salvation to be postponed while he enjoys himself. Heidegger would hold that Augustine's prayer thus fails to express the fact that, for beings such as ourselves, death is necessarily always possible (a point not missed by Augustine's older self, who presents the prayer with obvious irony). Since postponement involves a presumption of the future, to rule out such a presumption means that one cannot postpone. To acknowledge one's death is precisely to rule out the presumption of limitless possibilities. Thus a proper acknowledgement of death would throw one back onto the present situation as that in which one must make sense of what one is. Thus, for Heidegger, in anticipating one's death one is forced to make sense of what one is ***now***, among those possibilities that are already alive for one.

Anticipatory resoluteness, then, is that form of self-disclosure through which you make sense of what you are without illusion. It involves reflecting, in how you make sense of who you are, your understanding of yourself as constitutively limited in three respects: you are limited with respect to the present, insofar as you cannot do everything at once. You are limited with respect to the past, because you cannot create yourself from scratch. And you are limited with respect to the future, because possibilities are not limitless. Why does Heidegger think that ***this*** is what self-constancy really amounts to?

Heidegger denies that the 'self' is anything like a substance that underlies our engagement with forms of self understanding. In Heidegger's terms, the being of the self is, rather, 'care'; that is, an ability to take up forms of self-understanding from a present situation one has inherited from a history into which one finds oneself 'thrown'.[46] Since, for Heidegger, the self is the ability to engage with forms of self-

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[45] Augustine, p.139

[46] If the ontological constitution of the self is not to be traced back either to an "I"-substance or to a 'subject', but if, on the contrary, the everyday fugitive way in which we keep on saying "I" must be understood in terms of our authentic potentiality-for-being, then the proposition that the Self is the basis of care and constantly present-at-hand, is one that still does not follow. Selfhood is to be discerned existentially only in one's authentic potentiality-for-being-one's-self—that is to say, in the authenticity of Dasein's being as care. In terms of care the constancy of the Self, as the supposed persistence of the subjectum, gets clarified. But the phenomenon of this authentic potentiality-for-being also opens our eyes for the constancy of the self in the sense of its having achieved some sort of position. The constancy of the self, in the double sense of steadiness and steadfastness, is the authentic counter-possibility to the non-self-constancy which is characteristic of irresolute falling. Existentially, "self-constancy" signifies nothing other than anticipatory resoluteness. The ontological structure of such resoluteness reveals the existentiality of the Self's Selfhood. (H. 322)

With this passage in mind one might worry that, on Heidegger's account, hardly anyone at all is ever a self. Käufer has, however, compellingly argued that this passage does not imply that selves are rare creatures. According to him:

'In turning to authenticity, Heidegger's point is not that only authentic Dasein has a self, or that only an authentic Dasein is a person. The point is rather that questions about selfhood and personal identity are

understanding, its stability cannot be understood on the model of the persistence of an entity such a stone, which is what it is without being ***able*** to be a stone. Consequently, we need an understanding of constancy that is appropriate to the specific being of the self as an ability to come to understand itself.

It is for this reason that Heidegger holds that the stability or constancy of the self consists in holding fast to a particular ***manner*** of undertaking ways of understanding oneself: namely, anticipatory resoluteness. Because the self is a way of coming to be oneself, for ***it*** to be constant is to be stable in the manner in which one comes to be oneself. Specifically, Heidegger claims that your self is constant through holding fast to working out who your are in such a way that your make sense of what you are without illusion; the self is constant in anticipatory resoluteness. Otherwise put, one remains a self, constantly, through being true to being a self, as it were, where this means reflecting what it is to be a self in how one works out who one is. Thus, Heidegger refuses to identify the constancy of the self with the continuation of certain character traits. Nor does Heidegger identify self-constancy with holding on to certain forms of self-understanding, such as being a good friend. Rather, the self attains constancy if it commits to undertake forms of self-understanding (whichever forms these may be) ***in such a way*** that it discloses itself to itself without illusion.

In summary, Heidegger holds that anticipatory resoluteness is self-constancy. The self is constant through reflecting what one really is in the way in which one works out who one is. But why does Heidegger claim that ***fate*** is the 'powerless superior power' of self-constancy?

As we have already seen, self-constancy involves making sense of oneself as powerless across three dimensions: you are powerless with respect to the past, because you always already understand yourself in certain ways you have not chosen; you are powerless with respect to the present, because you cannot undertake all available ways of understanding yourself; and you are powerless with respect to the future, because possibilities are not limitless. You have a fate, in Heidegger's special sense, precisely for this reason: you are powerless over the historical situation in which you find yourself already working out who you are. Your fate is not some pre-determined end, in the sense in which a hero of a fantasy novel might be fated to die while slaying a dragon. Rather, how you understand yourself ***becomes*** your fate insofar as you project into that self-understanding in such a way that manifests your understanding of yourself as powerless with respect to your historical situation. It is because your fate is powerless over what it will become, since you are powerless over the historical situation, that Heidegger claims that your fate is powerless.

But why does Heidegger think that one's powerless fate is nonetheless a ***superior power***? To what is it superior? To conclude this section, we shall propose that Heidegger means that by accepting one's fate—that is, through being anticipatorily

about the kind of entity that is most genuinely grasped based on the phenomenology of authentic existing, while the analysis of everyday Dasein threatens to mislead the inquiry. It is basically a point about method.' (Käufer, p.463)

resolute—one can remain self-constant despite the collapse of any particular way of understanding oneself. Thus, Heidegger's point is that ***self-constancy*** is superior to any particular way of understanding oneself, such as being a friend, teacher, manager, etc.

We have seen that, for Heidegger, it is possible that one could remain self constant despite a radical change in those forms of self-understanding one undertakes, for the constancy of the self is not to be identified with any particular form of self-understanding, but rather how one undertakes whatever forms of self-understanding one is working through. Indeed, Heidegger claims that being self-constant means being prepared to let go of, ***inter alia***, commitments that are ruled out by changing circumstances.

Heidegger, in fact, has a specific term for this. According to him, it is part and parcel of being self-constant that one 'holds oneself free for taking it back'. By this he means that one does not 'remain rigid' with respect to the changing circumstances one finds oneself. Thus, it is not just that one has act in light of being such that one cannot but shut down other ways of understanding oneself; one also has to act in light of one's understanding of oneself as being such that one can have one's possibilities taken away from one by a changing situation.[47] These reflections offer us a tidy answer to the question of over what fate has power: fate is a 'superior power' over any particular way of understanding oneself, insofar as to live as fated is to be prepared to let go of those ways of understanding oneself that become impossible to live out, either though being incompatible with another way of understanding oneself, or through being ruled out by the situation.

To sum up, on Heidegger's account the second-order power to be oneself from the first-person perspective is an ability to make sense of yourself as the being you really are. This means, inter alia, reflecting, in how one works out who one is, that one is constitutively limited with respect to past, present, and future. Thanks to these limitations, we are powerless over the historical situation in which we find ourselves living. We are, thus, 'fated' to be who we are. In accepting that we are fated, we attain the 'superior power' of self-constancy insofar as, among other things, we are prepared to allow commitments to fall by the wayside, should they be ruled out either by other commitments or changes in the situation. Self-constancy has, thus, a superior power over any particular way of understanding oneself, precisely because through exercising one's ability to be self-constant one is prepared to surrender any particular possibility.

Before we move on to discuss the second-order power to be oneself from the second-person perspective, we shall pause to reflect on the radicalism of Heidegger's

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[47] As fate, resoluteness is freedom to give up some definite resolution, and to give it up in accordance with the demands of some possible Situation or other. (H. 391)

[Dasein] simply cannot become rigid as regards the situation, but must understand that the resolution, in accordance with its own meaning as disclosure, must be held open and free for the current factical possibility. The certainty of the resolution signifies that one holds oneself free for the possibility of taking it back. (H.307-8)

account. According to Heidegger, attaining self-constancy is not a matter of remaining the same 'who', but of continuing to manifest what one is in the way in which one's practical identity changes through collapsing possibilities. On Heidegger's account, then, if one is to be self-constant in the face of an inability to be oneself, one ***should not try to remain oneself***, where this involves forcibly holding on to a particular way of understanding oneself. By Heidegger's lights, such an attempt would manifest an understanding of oneself as having control over what ways of understanding oneself are open to one. Rather, one should surrender the desire to be oneself for the sake of reflecting what it is to be ***a*** self in the way in which one works out who one is. This would mean, in part, accepting that one is powerless to control which ways of understanding oneself are open within the situation. Of course, it may well be that one can carry on understanding oneself in ways in which one had understood oneself before, if these possibilities are still open for one. But, on Heidegger's account, one could only grasp these possibilities from a position of self-constancy if one were ***prepared*** to discover that they were no longer possible. In a word, Heidegger holds that if one is to remain self-constant in the face of the loss of the ability to be oneself, one should give up trying to be oneself and, instead, allow oneself to become who one is fated to be. Before we move on, we shall briefly sketch an example of Heideggerian self-constancy.

Consider a woman who had been very active and independent, albeit quite private and reserved, up until an accident which forced her to use a wheelchair. She responded to the changes in her condition by letting go those ways of understanding herself that had been ruled out by the change in her capacities. Instead, she kept herself open to undertaking new possibilities that the changing situation presented her with. For example, she enlarged her circle of friends as part of learning to accept help from others, thereby acknowledging her vulnerability. She would be self-constant, by Heidegger's lights, since she is not self-deceived about what it is to be a person; she accepts that she is powerless over the situation through which she finds herself having to work out who she is. She is prepared to continue working out who she is in the radically changing circumstances rather than, for example, trying to forcibly undertake ways of understanding herself that are practically impossible to pursue.

Mid-Section Summary:

- Heidegger argues that the self is an ability to make sense of what and who it really is.
- Heidegger calls the ability to make sense of *what* one really is 'anticipatory resoluteness'.
- The self remains constant insofar as it continually exercises this ability.
- One exercises this ability insofar as one reflects, in how one works out who one is, that one is constitutively limited in three respects:
    - with respect to the **past** (for one cannot create oneself from nowhere)
    - with respect to the **present** (for one cannot do everything at once)
    - with respect to the **future** (for possibilities are not limitless).
- Heidegger calls power of self-constancy 'fate'. One is fated insofar as one is powerless over the historical situation in which one is able to make sense of what one really is.
- Fate is 'powerless' in the sense that one is powerless over what one's particular fate will be.
- But fate is a 'superior power' in the sense that through being self-constant one is prepared to surrender any particular way of understanding ***who*** one is for the sake of keeping true to ***what*** one is.
- Self-constancy, thus, has a superior power over any particular way of understanding who one is.
- Thus, on Heidegger's account, the second-order power to be oneself is the power to remain true to being a self in the face of the possibility that one can no longer understand oneself as one had previously.

b) The second-person perspective: Max Scheler

In discussing Løgstrup and existential loneliness, we saw that moral crisis is a common dimension of experiences of powerlessness from the second-person perspective. For example, parents might be racked with guilt with respect to their actions during the illness of their child. In 'Repentance and Rebirth', Max Scheler focuses on the possibility of remaining oneself in the face of moral crisis.[48] He allows us to understand two ways of exercising the second-order power to be oneself, despite the experience of being unable to be oneself in the face of experiences of remorse and guilt, respectively. Thus, his account is particularly well-placed to explain how it might be possible to continue to be oneself despite the kind of collapse of self often experienced from the second-person perspective in cases of moral crisis.

Scheler begins his discussion of repentance by working through the arguments of his contemporary dissenters. He denies that repentance shackles us to the past, burdening us with old wrongs we would do well to forget all about. Far from it; repentance actually ***frees*** one from one's past. There are two steps to his argument.

[48] Scheler (1972), p.39. While Scheler is clearly writing from a theological context, he emphasizes that ***Reue*** has a 'purely ethical aspect'. In this connection, one might just about translate the term as 'remorse' rather than following the translator's 'repentance'.

First, he argues that ''historical reality' is incomplete and, so to speak, redeemable'.[49] For this reason, it is always possible to change the 'meaning and value' of one's past actions. Secondly, repentance allows one to undergo a profound change in character, which changes the meaning of one's wrongdoing such that one is freed from guilt over the wrongdoing.

In Scheler's terms, the 'meaning and value' of any action is not separable from an action but is rather 'woven' into it.[50] By this Scheler means that we cannot understand what any particular action ***is*** unless we take into consideration what that action ***means***. For instance, one cannot understand what it was for the Good Samaritan to help the man by the side of the road outside of what it meant within its historical context. Seeing it within that context, we are able to see it for what it was: a remarkable rejection of societal convention in the face of the needs of another human being. Moreover, Scheler holds that the meaning and value of any action is a function of what one makes of it. Rather as the memory of a politician's election campaign may take on a certain irony over his time in office, Scheler holds that the meaning and value of any action can only be gleaned in context of the individual's life as a whole. But as there is always more to make of any action so long as one remains alive, Scheler reasons, the meaning and value of past events remain open up to the point of death.[51] For Scheler, this means that it is possible for past wrongdoings to be redeemed, for the 'wickedness' of an act is not a fact of 'material reality' that cannot be changed but, rather, a provisional quality of the meaning of an act, open to revision in light of future acts.[52]

Having argued that the meaning of a person's actions is not closed until the point of her death, Scheler then argues that repentance changes the meaning of actions by removing the 'wickedness' of wrongdoings:

> Repentance genuinely extinguishes the element of moral detraction, the quality of 'wickedness', of the conduct in question, it genuinely relieves the pressure of guilt which spreads in all directions from that wickedness, and at the same time deprives evil of that power of reproduction by which it must always bring forth more evil[53]

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[49] Scheler (1972) p.41

[50] ibid.

[51] He adds that the further assumption of an after-life allows the consequence that no experience is ever fixed in its value and meaning. Pasolini has something like this in mind when he comments: 'By living, every one of us (willing or not) performs a moral action whose meaning is suspended. Hence the reason for death. If we were immortal, we would be immoral, because our example would never have an end; therefore, it would be undecipherable, eternally suspended and ambiguous'. (Pasolini, p.248).

[52] In this connection, Scheler's point is close to Freud's account of trauma, as discussed by Michael Kober: 'Neither in the case of Emma nor of the Wolfman have the different scenes, considered in isolation, a traumatic content. As they happened, neither the sexual attack of the shopkeeper on Emma nor the Wolfman's parents having sex were understood as being of a sexual nature. Furthermore, the later scenes in the clothing shop and the Wolfman's dream had no sexual content at all. It is rather the connecting of the two experiences or events that turns the shopkeeper's attack and the sight of the parents having sex into a traumatic cause. The earlier events exist as causally efficient ones only in their later effects.' (Kober, p.27)

[53] Scheler (1972) p.44

Scheler is not claiming that wrongdoings necessarily cease to be wrongdoings through repentance. Rather, he is claiming that repentance changes what it means to have committed a wrongdoing. It does this through freeing oneself from the character out of which one acted such that one loses the attendant guilt. For example, if one were to feel repentant over an action, then that action may take on the meaning of being the point at which one pulled one's life together. The action would remain a wrongdoing, but it would take on a new meaning in the context of the person's life.[54]

The crucial move depends on a distinction between the 'permanent personal self' and its various 'concretions' throughout time as different 'outlooks' or 'intelligible characters'. Scheler does not think that the 'permanent personal self' is a kind of ***deeper*** character, of which the particular character we form in the world is a better or worse approximation. For him, the 'permanent personal self' is not a substance at all but, rather, the constant form of the unity of various intentional experiences:

> '*the person is the concrete and essential unity of being of acts of different essences* which in itself […] precedes all essential act-differences'[55]
>
> '[The identity of the person] lies solely in the qualitative direction of this pure becoming different.'[56]

As the intentional acts and experiences an individual undergoes vary, to that degree the person changes. But the person is constant, according to Scheler, in the qualitative manner in which she undergoes the acts. In this respect, Scheler holds that the person is rather like a permanent style of experience.

To explain the point, he compares the identity of a person to the frequency of the oscillation of a wave. He might also have drawn a comparison to acceleration. A satellite in stable orbit is constantly changing its velocity insofar as its vector is never the same. The rate of change of its velocity is constant, however; this is just what it means for its acceleration to remain stable. By such appeals, Scheler argues that one can think of a constant manner of change without implying a further substance beyond the changing entity. As Scheler has it, then, while the experiences of a person might change from moment to moment—such that 'the whole person "***varies***" in and through every act'[57]—she nonetheless remains constant in the 'qualitative direction of this pure becoming different', that is, the ***way*** she undergoes different experiences.[58]

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[54] This is not to say that a person may not come to understand her action differently such that it no longer appears as a wrongdoing. The point is, rather, that the meaning and value of the action may change without losing its status as a wrongdoing.
[55] Scheler (1973) p.383
[56] op. cit. p.385
[57] ibid.
[58] Manfred Frings summarises this point as follows: 'what we call "person" is a constant flow of acts such as the ones mentioned and many more. When we are in a wakeful state we find ourselves always" acting out

By transposing these remarks into our discussion, we can see a little more clearly how Scheler understands the difference between 'intelligible character' and the 'essential self'. As we have seen, Scheler holds that the person is the manner of the unity of different experiences. As well as undergoing experiences, every person has an 'attitude' or 'outlook'. By this Scheler has in mind the particular set of dispositions, commitments, attitudes, beliefs, hopes, fears, etc. that a person may have at any given time, what we shall refer to as one's 'character'.[59] This character may change over time, however, such that a single person can come to have radically different beliefs, commitments and so on. The person who undergoes changes in character would remain identical, however, insofar as throughout these changes she expresses an idiosyncratic manner of changing experience.

For example, a person might grow up to believe that there is nothing morally problematic with being a hedge-fund manager and consequently work her way into that profession. Concomitant with the profession are certain beliefs, attitudes and dispositions. For instance, she might see an opportunity for profit where others might not. She might, however, come to realise that her actions as a hedge-fund manager have caused misery around the world. This realisation might have profound consequences for her. For it might be that she finds that she can no longer countenance high-finance. She may give up on that profession and the attitudes that she took as the norm and try her hand at revolutionary communism. This new commitment would bring with it concomitant beliefs, attitudes, and so forth, incompatible with those she had previously held—for example, a positive sense of urgency to the overthrow of global capitalism. But, on Scheler's account, though her contingent ***character*** would have changed, her 'permanent personal self' need not have. One can, for example, imagine her undertaking radically new commitments in an idiosyncratic way, with the same energy, intensity, and dedication.

Scheler frames his discussion of guilt and repentance in terms of the distinction between the contingent formation of character and the permanent personal self. For Scheler, guilt is the perception of wrongdoing within a prevailing commitment to the character out of which the wrongdoing was performed. So, for instance, a banker who perceived her actions to be morally egregious would feel guilty, on Scheler's account, if she remained committed to being a banker despite that perception. For this reason, Scheler thinks that guilt is often a form of pride. For the guilty person often affirms the worth of her contingent character despite the recognition that her character inclines her towards wrongdoing. Thus, Scheler holds that repentance is only possible for one with the virtue of humility:

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such acts. There are two basic states of affairs implicit in this view. On the one hand, human persons share the same types of acts (for instance, we all think, will, perceive, feel, etc.) but, on the other, the ways we act out these acts are individually different. The way person. X thinks is different from those of person Y. While this is a simple matter of fact hardly worth mentioning, it has great bearings on the individuality of the person. Each person possesses his own peculiar ways of acting out acts, making every individual person unique and irreplaceable.' (Frings, xviii)

[59] Scheler (1972) p.45

> Readiness for repentance is impossible in the absence of ***humility***, which works against the natural pride ensnaring the soul in the focal here-and-now of the active Self. It is only possible when humility, resulting from steady self-reform, inspired by that clear idea of absolute good which we know to measure our inadequacy, dispels the repressive, hardening and obdurative tendencies of pride and the active Self, which pride had isolated from the dynamic of the life-stream, once more in a fluid relation with this stream and the world. Man is rendered obdurate far more by pride and presumption than by the fear of punishment born of his concupiscence, and the more deeply guilt is embedded in him, the more it has become, as it were, ***part*** of him, the greater is his obduracy. It is not confession, but the initial surrender of himself, which is so difficult for the hardened impenitent. He who repents his deed and overcomes himself—overcomes even the shame which would close his lips at the last moment.[60]

Thus repentance presupposes a cultivation of readiness to surrender the 'hardening obdurative tendencies' of the 'active Self'—that is, the contingent character formation that inclines one towards the specific wrongdoing—and thus requires an ongoing commitment to self-overcoming in light of the recognition of wrongdoing and its connection with one's character. ***Repentance*** is the mode of the recognition of one's own wrongdoing of someone prepared to surrender her character in light of the recognition of the wrongdoing that was made possible by that character.[61]

> Schopenhauer in particular used to stress that the deepest sense of repentance is not expressed in the formula 'Alas! what have I done?' but in the more radical 'Alas! what kind of person I am!' or even 'What sort of person ***must*** I be, to have been ***capable*** of such an action!'[62]

This is why Scheler describes repentance as following upon a kind of ***surrender***. One has to let go of one's attachment to one's character so as to allow for the possibility of being shocked at the person one has become.

According to Scheler, however, we can only really understand the true meaning of repentance within a Christian context, in which repentance is understood as restoring the possibility to love God. In this context, Scheler finds a role for the individual's agency in coming to humbly recognise the contingency of her character, but explains the transformation of that character by reference to the grace of God:

> man, after the spontaneous consummation of Repentance, and in growing awareness of forgiveness and sanctification, comes finally to the knowledge that he has received

[60] op. cit. p.44
[61] In this respect, Scheler anticipates aspects of Raimond Gaita's discussion of repentance. (Cf. Gaita pp.43-64)
[62] Scheler (1972) p.43

> strength for that consummation as a token of God's love and mercy. This he knows inasmuch as his loving approach toward God, rendered first possible in the process of Repentance, gradually restores his full capacity for loving God, and, through removal of his guilty limitations and the barriers guilt has interposed, effects his reconciliation and reunion with the Centre of things.[63]

Thus, on Scheler's account, the possibility of the transformation of one's character is prepared for by one's humble commitment to self-overcoming, but it is only brought about by dint of God's love.[64]

But must Scheler hold that such individuals have to ***change*** their character in order to overcome their sense of guilt? Is ***repentance*** really the only way to proceed? What about those who individuals who experience feelings of guilt but who have not done anything morally wrong? For example, you might feel extremely guilty for having caused your husband pain in the application of his bandages, despite the fact that you did nothing wrong. In this case, it would be far too extreme to demand that you surrender your character in order to overcome your guilt: your character is not to blame. In cases such as these, it would seem that individuals might need to recover their characters from the debilitating feelings of guilt. Can Scheler make room for a way of ***recovering*** your character from the feelings of guilt, bitterness and resentment that follow from the experience of illness, rather than surrendering it?

As we have seen, Scheler holds that one feels guilty insofar as one finds oneself committed to a character which one understands as inclining one towards wrongdoing. We have also seen that one way to overcome guilt would be to change one's character, through feeling repentant. But another way out of guilt, for the Schelerian, would be to gain a different perspective on the relationship between the action and one's character. There are at least two ways of coming to gain a such a new perspective, within the Scheler's framework.

First of all, one could work on overcoming one's sense of having committed a wrongdoing in the first place. As we have seen, Scheler holds that the meaning and value of any action is always provisional. One way to overcome your sense of guilt for having caused pain in the application of bandages would be to gain a view on that action such that it is no longer seen as a wrongdoing, thereby changing the meaning and value of the act. For example, one might come to reflect on the kindness expressed in that act, rather than fixating on your husband's pain. Thus, one would

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[63] op. cit. p.65

[64] If the possibility of undergoing a radical change in one's character while remaining the same person is dependent on God's love, however, then Scheler's account may offer little consolation to secular readers. Is it really the case that one can only ever exercise the second-order power to be oneself in the face of moral crises through developing one's love for God? Of course, Scheler's commitment to the spirituality of the second-order power to be oneself is not by itself reason to reject that account. But we might still want to investigate further to see if there is a way of understanding the second-order power to be oneself without reference to the divine. We shall return to this issue in the concluding section of this paper.

address one's guilt by changing one's understanding of what it is that one did. In acting in this way, you would be able to recover your character from the attendant feelings of guilt; you would come to see that your character is not responsible for a wrongdoing, for no wrongdoing was done.

Alternatively, one could come to see one's action such that it is no longer understood as essentially connected to one's character. For example, you might come to understand your occasional outbursts at a person with advanced dementia as resulting from the kind of pressures that you were under. That is, you might come to see that ***anyone*** could have acted in that way under those circumstances. Thus, the link between the character and the action could be severed by shifting the responsibility for the wrongdoing onto one's humanity, so to speak, rather than one's contingent character. This would free the individual to ***retain*** her character while overcoming her guilt, precisely because the individual would no longer see the wrongdoing as flowing from her character. In these ways at least, then, Scheler has a way of describing the possibility of ***retaining*** one's character in the face of experiences of guilt.

We are now in a position to summarise Scheler's account. individuals can feel unable to be themselves during moral crises occasioned by the experience of illness in another. Such moral crises may be occasioned by a genuine transgression or, as is more likely, they may be occasioned by the mere perception of having done something wrong. Scheler helps us to understand how one might exercise a second-order power to be oneself in both sets of circumstances.

According to Scheler, guilt is the sense of having done something wrong while remaining committed to the character out of which one could have acted in this way. Repentance undercuts one's feeling of guilt, in the case of genuine wrongdoing, by freeing one from the guilty character.

> Repentance kills the life-nerve of guilt's action and continuance. It drives motive and deed—the deed with its root ***out*** of the living centre of the self, and thereby enables life to begin, with a spontaneous virginal beginning, a new course from the centre of the personality which, by virtue of the act of repentance, is no longer in bonds.[65]

Thus the 'lost powers' of the soul, lost through proud attachment to a guilty character, are those through which one is able to ***develop a different character***. Repentance restores these powers by reminding a person that any particular formation of her character is contingent. It thus draws the person back to her permanent personal self, that is, the manner in which she can undergo different experiences. In this respect, repentance reminds the individual of the possibility of being otherwise, thereby freeing her up to be herself by allowing her to become a different character.

Scheler also helps us understand how one might overcome guilt upon the mere perception of having done something wrong. Firstly, one could come to stop seeing

[65] op. cit. p.42

one's actions as wrongdoings. One would thus sever the link between one's character and wrongdoing by undercutting the sense of having done something wrong. Secondly, one could come to see one's actions as the understandable behaviour of a human being in a difficult situation, rather than the expression of a wicked soul. One would thus sever the link between one's character and the wrongdoing by linking the wrongdoing to one's humanity, rather than one's contingent character.

In both cases, then, Scheler helps us to understand the second-order power to be oneself from the second-person perspective. This is because he helps us understand how one might overcome the guilt that stops one from being able to be oneself.

Mid-Section Summary:

- Scheler distinguishes between one's 'essential personal self' and one's contingent character.
- The former is the idiosyncratic style of the unity of one's intentional experiences; the latter is the set of dispositions, inclinations, motivations and so on that one lives with at any given time.
- Repentance frees one from a particular, contingent character formation insofar as it
  - Reminds one of the distinction between one's personal self and one's character
  - Opens one to the possibility of becoming different.
- Alternatively, one can recover one's ability to be oneself from guilt if one can either
  - Come to stop seeing one's actions as wrongdoings; or
  - Understand one's actions as intelligible
- The second-order power to be oneself is, thus, the ability to become a different character through an act of repentance, prepared for by a commitment to humble self-overcoming, but enacted through God's love.

5. Conclusion

In this Green Paper we have reviewed a number of phenomenological resources that may help us understand the connection between the main features of experiences of powerlessness that we identified in our previous Green Paper and the loss of the power to be oneself.

Merleau-Ponty helped us to understand the connection between a loss of bodily familiarity within one's environment and the loss of the power to be oneself. Løgstrup gave us a way of understanding why carers and next-of-kin may feel powerless in conditions of existential loneliness. Thus, we saw a way of understanding the loss of the power to be oneself from the first- and second-person respectively. However, these accounts alone cannot fully clarify the power to be oneself, insofar as it is possible to exercise that power in light of a collapse of the everyway ways in which one is able to be oneself. For this reason, we turned to the work of Martin Heidegger and Max Scheler, both of whom present versions of what we have called the second-order

power to be oneself, that is, the power to be oneself despite a collapse in the everyday power to be oneself. Heidegger helped us to understand the exercise of the second-order power to be oneself from the perspective of the first-person, while Scheler helped up to understand the exercise of this power from the second-person.

As stated in the introduction, our aim here has not been to decide between these various and varyingly incompatible phenomenological accounts. In conclusion, we shall highlight an issue that has been raised by our investigation into the second-order power to be oneself.

As we have noted, authors have observed that individuals are able to become 'empowered' insofar as they are able to become a 'same and yet different' person. On this understanding, the somewhat slippery notion of 'empowerment' is understood as the successful exercise of the second-order power to be oneself. Most authors, however, restrict their focus to a description of empowerment ***subsequent*** to the experience of powerlessness.

It is a consequence of both Heidegger and Scheler's positions, however, that the work of empowerment should not begin upon the diagnosis of an illness. For Scheler, one can only exercise the second-order power to be oneself upon a collapse of the first-order power to be oneself (in the case of genuine wrongdoing) ***insofar as one is already humbly committed to the process of self-overcoming***. In other words, one has to be ***open*** to surrendering one's character, should it be revealed to be the source of wrongdoing, in order to undergo a change in character upon repentance. For Heidegger, anticipatory resoluteness involves being ***ready*** for the collapse of ways of understanding oneself, should they turn out to be impossible to live out. Being self-constant means, in part, 'holding oneself free for taking it back', as Heidegger puts it. It is only in this way that we work to manifest the way that we are in the way that we act.

Thus, for both Scheler and Heidegger, the exercise of the second-order power to be oneself is not restricted to those contexts in which the first-order power to be oneself has broken down. For both, one also exercises this power in the manner in which one is ***prepared*** for the collapse of the everyday.

This reflection raises some immediate questions. Evidently, Scheler and Heidegger hold that there are certain virtues associated with a preparation for experiences of powerlessness. Scheler emphasises humility and love and discusses these virtues within a theological context.[66] Heidegger focuses on the somewhat less orthodox projecting-oneself-upon-one's-ownmost-being-guilty-and-doing-so-reticently. But are really virtues of powerlessness? Are the virtues Scheler identifies necessarily ***theological***, or can they be understood in secular contexts? If so, are they the only virtues of powerlessness? If not, what other virtues are viable candidates for helping to prepare one for this kind of experience? We submit that these questions are of the first

[66] These considerations bring Scheler into proximity with discussions over the 'art of dying' (cf. Vogt, 2004), in which philosophers have discussed what is involved in preparing oneself for death.

importance, given the plausibility of the notion of the second-order power to be oneself. We shall therefore take up these questions in future research.

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