UNDERSTANDING A SUGGESTION OF PROFESSOR CAVELL'S:
KIERKEGAARD'S RELIGIOUS STAGE AS A WITTGENSTEINIAN "FORM OF LIFE"

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to follow a lead of Prof. Stanley Cavell's in his paper, "Kierkegaard's On Authority and Revelation." The lead is: "to understand an utterance religiously you have to be able to share its perspective . . . The religious is a Kierkegaardian stage of life; and I suggest it should be thought of as a Wittgensteinian form of life." I try to present "form of life" as a larger picture sometimes necessary for understanding language-games, and to suggest that what counts as a form of life will depend upon what particular language-game one is trying to understand. Sometimes then, a person's religious belief might figure into this process as a relevant form of life. I then try to represent Kierkegaard's religious stage by discussing three related concepts: paradox, ideal interpretation, and subjectivity. Paradox is one criterion for marking off the religious stage from the ethical and the aesthetical stages. In the religious stage, the talk of believers about God is such that it interprets the events in one's life according to that belief. In calling this an "ideal interpretation" Kierkegaard is calling our attention to the difference between this and the scientific talk of hypothesis, observation, and evidence. The religious stage is subjectivity--a way of life. In it, the truth of what one says is measured by how one lives in relation to it. This, I suggest, is quite close to Wittgenstein's idea of a form of life being important for understanding the language used within it. My conclusion is that Prof. Cavell's suggestion is a helpful lead in thinking about the connection between Wittgenstein's "form of life" and Kierkegaard's religious stage.
Understanding a Suggestion of Professor Cavell's:
Kierkegaard's Religious Stage As A Wittgensteinian
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In his paper, "Kierkegaard's On Authority and Revelation", Professor Stanley Cavell writes: "... to understand an utterance religiously you have to be able to share its perspective ... The religious is a Kierkegaardian stage of life; and I suggest it should be thought of as a Wittgensteinian form of life."¹ My aim in this paper is to provide an understanding of what this idea might come to. A large part of this undertaking will involve an attempt to work with Wittgenstein's concept of a "form of life." While Professor Cavell's eloquent paper is rich with other suggestions on understanding connections between Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein, I am presently interested in this particular one by itself.

In its context, Professor Cavell's remark is a part of a larger attempt to identify a "philosophically correct" procedure which Kierkegaard uses to show the meaning of Christian concepts. The procedure, as it is described, is strikingly like that of Wittgenstein's, in that it places the language in question back into the context where it is used. And such religious language, he reminds us, is not used here and there by everyone but rather in the life of a religious person. It is the whole life, and not simply the single instance of its use which forms the background for understanding this language. Professor Cavell writes "... in that life, and for that life, the Christian categories have their full, mutually implicating meaning, and apart from it they may have any or none."² Whether they have any or none, I take it, will be a function of whether or not they involve what Kierkegaard calls "Paradox" and of what context they do arise in.


²Cavell, p. 170.
In this section of his paper, Professor Cavell is also sensitive to the philosophical mistakes about religious language which Kierkegaard's work might help to dispel. For example, that such language is metaphorical. It is with reference to this particular point--namely, that religious utterances are not metaphorical--that he offers his suggestion about Wittgenstein's concept of a "form of life." In light of the Positivist's challenge that such language is not cognitive and consequently not meaningful, metaphor has been held out by some as a way of characterizing religious language. To this Professor Cavell makes the grammatical remark that speaking metaphorically, unlike speaking religiously, is to use a "definite form of language for some purpose." Whereas to speak religiously is to speak from a particular perspective and to understand that speech is to share that perspective. It is in explaining these grammatical remarks that Professor Cavell suggests that the religious life is a Wittgensteinian "form of life." And this is what I intend to understand. I will begin by trying to offer some help with the expression "form of life."

Wittgenstein's expression "form of life," in spite of his rare use of it (certainly less than ten times in all of his works) has become a term, even a piece of jargon, in explaining his contributions to philosophy. That a word or expression should come to be used as a term is not in itself unfortunate, but in this case it makes it look as if something rather definite is being referred to when it is not. A term might be leading and misleading in what it suggests. If misleading, one might puzzle over how to replace it with another term which avoids those misleading features. But with the expression "form of life," replacing it will only breed the same confusions and indefiniteness that presently surround it. The real task in understanding the expression is to get a feel for the work Wittgenstein wanted it to do.

In order to make this task a bit easier and to help in making "form of life" less of a term, I have assembled a list of expressions taken from On Certainty which I believe were intended to do some of the same work as "form of life." The expressions taken together create an impression of their own--one I believe that shows Wittgenstein struggling with a difficult idea. The section number where the expression occurs is listed before each one.
As one can see from this list, Wittgenstein sometimes worked with the idea metaphorically and sometimes directly. The

expression which seems most direct to me is "the foundations of our language-games." The expression reveals the problem that Wittgenstein must have felt in working with his central idea of a language-game. I would like to try to give my interpretation of the background to that problem.

The idea of a language-game arose for him, I believe, out of thinking of language in units of single sentences--propositions. It seems likely that the Tractatus is a series of numbered propositions--not simply because Wittgenstein admired aphoristic writings, which he may well have--but because it symbolized what the book and that whole era took to be the basic unit of language: the proposition. The introduction of the language-game in the Blue Book represents the dawning of the idea with Wittgenstein that propositions have a place and picturing them in their place is essential to understanding their meaning. Until he saw this, meaning had been limited to the picture which the proposition created by itself. One might understand the language-game then, as an expanded picture. It is an answer to the question: What all is involved when this sentence or expression gets used by particular people doing particular tasks with language?

I believe that what entrapped Wittgenstein in the Tractatus was that a proposition by itself, unlike most single words, can create a picture with related parts. This advantage which the propositions had over a word, suggested that the proposition was the basic element in language and that language then could be seen as sets of propositions--complexes of these elementary units. But an isolated proposition, one imagined apart from a speaker with a purpose, allows a minimal picturing at best. What is one to do with it? Is it a joke? --part of a description? --a hypothesis to be tested? --a translation of something? --part of a prayer? Here the reader may recognize this list as taken from Wittgenstein's list of language-games in the Investigations (#23). These questions provide illustrations of how one might fill out a larger picture for the picture of the proposition to fit into. And now it may turn out that the first picture created by this isolated proposition was completely different from the one that emerges out of a provided home in a language-game.

My point in representing Wittgenstein's discovery of a language-game as an expanded picture is that I believe one might understand his wrestling with "form of life" as a part of this expansion. Just as his language-game was his working out the need for an expanded picture to understand
the proposition, the language game too sometimes needs something larger to contain it—something to help in picturing what the speaker is up to in engaging in it. The needs for expansion in each case are not exactly the same and I fear there is a lot to mislead one in my suggestion. But I believe it might be the beginning of an explanation of why Wittgenstein attempted to work with the concept.

A language-game is particular—almost as particular as a proposition. One can date a language-game, and locate it. "We talked as we walked to lunch last Wednesday. I told her then . . ." Providing these surroundings, builds the picture one needs to understand the proposition. "I'm tired of living the way I do, I said, I can change I swear." And now you have gotten a lot of the picture for yourself: Two lovers meeting at their lunch break, walking close together, oblivious to the crowded streets around them. How could there be anything missing from this? For certain purposes there is nothing missing. One could find such a passage in a novel or overhear it on the street and understand it just fine—perhaps be pleased by it. But consider how much is being taken for granted in such understanding and how much we do not know about the conversation. If passed on the street we have no idea who these people are. We take them for ordinary employees on a lunchbreak, lovers, Americans, English speakers, capable of a full range of human emotions, plan makers. . . . How can one complete such a list? And in what sense can we be said to "take" these two speakers for all these things? It is not as if we say all or any of this as we pass by. And yet if someone asked if we took those two for employees on a lunchbreak, we might well answer "yes."

These things and much more are a part of the background for the above sentences. And their language fits into and is a part of this background. Surely these particular sentences would need more surroundings, in addition to all of the things that we would justifiably presuppose, if one were vitally connected to the people. What does it mean when he says that he can change?—change from what to what? How does he regard marriage? What does he believe in? One might imagine our job here as something like that of a novelist who is left to create a character. We have a scene and some dialogue, and we have to work these into a whole story about someone's life. And now it is the whole life that provides the context for what is said and done. If, as novelists, we created completely different characters to speak these sentences, we might give them correspondingly different meanings.
But this expanding of the picture becomes very unsettling, more unsettling than that of a language-game. Wittgenstein was fully aware that "language-game" was not a precise term (P.I. 65f), yet it held together in allowing him to talk about what more was needed to understand an expression or sentence. With the language-game concept one came to see that a context needed to be provided and that there was usually more language to the game than a single sentence. The language-game happens at a place and time which are at least roughly identifiable. The language-game is a "chunk" of language—enough for one to make sense out of what is being said. But this concept which has come to be called "form of life" has not even that much definiteness to it. It is not a "chunk" of language. It can hardly be said to have happened at a particular time. In fact, it does not "happen" at all. It is not only used to refer to a single person's life, but seems to be applicable to whole groups of people, humanity in general, animals, primitive tribes, and extra-planetary life. Anywhere that one can imagine a language, Wittgenstein writes, one must imagine a "form of life" going along with it (P.I. #19).

Consider how diverse such imagining might be. In On Certainty Wittgenstein regards all of those things that Moore says he "knows" not as knowledge but as a part of his "inherited background" and as what is used as a basis for distinguishing true and false (#94). Such an inherited background would include, presumably, that he had two hands, that he had never been to the moon, that the earth existed before he was born, that he was a man and not a woman. He also regarded certainty and testing hypotheses as based in a system. The system of a science holds fast in order that the hypothetical propositions can be tested against it (#105, 446). The principle of induction and the testing of empirical propositions are not something established by reasons or even first principles, but are "an ungrounded way of acting." (#110f). We accept a scientific world view rather than a magical one. The scientific world view is not proved but is what is used to prove hypotheses within it. We can imagine a magical world-view in which oracles are consulted for the weather and special men can make it rain. This is to imagine another form of life. These suggestions in On Certainty begin to give one a feel for many different forms of life or foundations which support language-games.

The industrialized world shares a scientific foundation, yet we might imagine a group of space travelers who share a different scientific system. Tribes and other groups of people in the non-industrialized parts of the world have differing magical foundations. Within these differing bases one would expect to find considerable agreement in judgments
and in the ability of speakers to understand one another. We would even expect and find that problems in translating from one language to another within one such base (e.g., the tribes of a river region in Africa) to be minimal, whereas translating from one base to a very different one would present more difficult problems.

But how are we to know where to make the divisions between these sets of people? How does one decide when any group shares a form of life? Within a certain tribe, one can imagine complete agreement in judgments about magical powers and religious beliefs. But they may differ from another tribe who shares a similar economy with them. With respect to stalking game and family division of labor they act and think much alike, while differing in religious and magical practices. Within European, industrialized society we have a great deal of agreement in many sorts of judgments—a common scientific system being a major source of agreement. Yet there are varying cultures within European countries which exhibit striking differences in religious practices and family relationships. And there is not common agreement among the people of a given country or subculture on religious judgments. We might even come, as Prof. Cavell has, to talk about religiousness in a person as a form of life. As there are different religions, one would have to distinguish different forms of religious life. And if religion counts as a distinguishing feature of a form of life, should not a naturalist, a skeptic, a Marxist, all be regarded as having different forms of life as well? There can be as many distinctions here as one wants to make. The question which preserves the concept of a form of life is: Why does one want to make such distinctions?

This question brings us back to the point of what work Wittgenstein was trying to do with the concept. That work, as I have been suggesting, is expanding the picture for a language game, or in the words of On Certainty, providing a "foundation for language-games." This task gives one limits and specific direction to asking about form of life. The point of asking will be to remind oneself of the larger picture surrounding the language-game in order to get clear on how one is to understand it. One does not then get an endless list of presuppositions, foundations, and other items that form the background for language-games, but rather, only enough to remind us of how the context fits into a life. So it is as if one, a philosopher, forgets who is using a "chunk" of language—forgets that it has a home in the life of a speaker. And this language might begin to look mysterious or it might just appear to be nonsense. The result is that the language then appears to
stand in need of some kind of explanation. If it is a piece of moral or religious discourse, it may appear to need a theory of meaning or simply be called nonsense. If it is a strange piece of discourse from a remote tribe described by an anthropologist, it may prompt one to formulate a theory about "primitive thinking" or to judge it inferior over against one's own language and form of life.

Directing one to a form of life then, can be seen as another of Wittgenstein's reminding techniques. We forget how a bit of language works. We forget where it belongs. And in examining it in isolation, we get the wrong picture of it—or even no picture. The way back to seeing its sense is to remind ourselves of its place and its work in that place. There may be various things to recollect about such a piece of lost language. The guide in these recollections will be: do we have enough of the surroundings of this language to see the sense in it? What is relevant to this task will determine how much of the background is needed and how we shall distinguish forms of life from each other.

If the above is an adequate beginning on an account of the general sort of job that "form of life" and equivalent expressions were meant to do, then the next step in coming to understand Prof. Cavell's remark is to consider what is involved in the first part of his sentence: "The religious is a Kierkegaardian stage of life . . ." This is not an easy task, for it requires, in a sense, the reduction of something close to poetic expression to something less so. Kierkegaard wrote to work a particular kind of effect on his reader, and he must have feared that summarizers and explainers such as this writer, might undo that effect by writing: "what he said was . . ." But if my account helps in showing something for contemporary readers, then perhaps I might be partially excused.

The religious stage in Kierkegaard's works is not presented in several books as the other stages are. It is essentially connected with all of his works and so may require some organization to explain briefly. I believe that the essential aspects of it might be organized under three headings: i) "paradox"; ii) "ideal interpretation"; and iii) "subjective truth." These are all Kierkegaard's expressions and the concepts in each overlap with those of the others. Each one shows an important aspect of the religious life.
1. Paradox

The aesthetic stage and the ethical stage in Kierkegaard are presented in their relationship to each other through the characters in Either/Or and Stages On Life's Way. Aspects of one or the other are discussed at length in Fear and Trembling, Repetition, Postscript, Purity of Heart. In these works a stage is described in its idealized form. Johannes, the seducer; the anonymous A, who is capable of both the "Rotation Method" and "Diapsalmata"; Judge William, the defender of marriage; the tragic heroes of Fear and Trembling; both the young lover and Constantine in Repetition--all of these characters--are involuted thinkers pressing the logical limits of their respective stages. They are not real people, but they represent what real people might come to if they took their lives seriously. They represent the stage in the way that an Ivan or an Alyosha represent a whole framework in which a life can be pictured.

The stage is idealized in the sense in which the ethical life is idealized in Kant's Groundwork. Kant's concern there was not that of a conscientious anthropologist, but of one who would set down the essential description of a category. That no one ever lived who equaled the ideal was quite beside the point for Kant. His descriptions are those of what it would take for there to be a moral life at all. I suspect that Kierkegaard admired several aspects of the Groundwork and others of Kant's works. The descriptions of what the moral life requires in Fear and Trembling and Purity of Heart are noticeably similar to Kant's.

The essential mark of the ethical stage is that one should have the purity of heart to will one thing—the good. The good is rationally attainable and expressible in language. That language is public in the sense that if it makes sense for someone, it will make sense for anyone. An ethical judgment is universal in this respect. The task of one who would live in this category is to will the universal for himself and never make an exception of himself. The ethical life is conceivable only under these terms, for to recognize a universal ethical judgment as having binding force in one's case and not to will it is to break with the good, i.e., to break with the ethical stage.

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The seriousness of such a "teleological suspension of the ethical" is that it is the ethical stage and its willing one thing which unifies a personality and saves one from the life of Johannes the seducer, or the writer of "Diapsalmata." Johannes is a master of developing pleasure for himself. His brilliance in psychological insights affords him pleasures with Cordelia that compares to the gourmet's art of cooking and tasting. And yet there is no nourishment. It is with Johannes, as Bob Dylan, the poet of our age has sung it: "Where another man's life might begin, that's exactly where mine ends." With Johannes, nothing is built to last beyond the moment. This is largely why the image of seduction is used for the aesthetic stage. There is nothing in his seduction of Cordelia which can protect him from the despair which grips A in the "Diapsalmata": "My life is absolutely meaningless. When I consider the different periods into which it falls, it seems like the word Schnur in the dictionary, which means in the first place a sting, in the second, a daughter-in-law. The only thing lacking is that the word Schnur should mean in the third place a camel, in the fourth, a dust-brush." The ethical stage with its passionate willing of one thing holds out hope against this fragmentation and against the despair which lies at its base. It promises unification of purpose and hence personality. It promises initial contact with the eternal, which would fill the emptiness in Johannes' life.

For these reasons, the ethical stage is always treated with respect and admiration by Kierkegaard. Judge William's letters, the various tragic heroes, and the monologues of Johannes de Silentio—all ethical characters—are expressive of what one could expect from thoughtful and serious, in short, the best representatives of that stage. I want to say, they are Kierkegaard's representations of the work of human reason at its highest. If Kant had written a novel to depict the one who would live the rational life described in the Groundwork, he could have easily taken one of these characters as his model. And yet the ethical stage is not what Kierkegaard's works are all about. It is a stage, the understanding of which, would prepare one for seeing the religious life for what it is, and the living of which might become an intermediate step towards the religious life.

What the Christian religious life as a stage retains


from the ethical stage is the purity of heart to will one thing, what it changes is the one thing which is willed. The good whose form is the universal ethical judgment which provides the means for explanation and reason giving is replaced by God. That which Socrates feared in Euthyphro's answers and Kant feared in the "Holy One of the gospel" is explicitly used by Kierkegaard to elucidate the religious stage. Abraham lives in fear and trembling because he would teleologically suspend the ethical, he would go beyond where he could talk.

The paradox of the religious life is not that one, like Abraham, should be put to a horrifying test, but that he is categorically unable to explain himself. What the Christian believes is not a complete set of true propositions about the world and God which are truth-functional derivatives of elementary propositions and facts. It is as though someone thought that religious beliefs were like such a scientific system and Kierkegaard intends to remind him through Abraham and in other ways that this is nonsense. In effect he says to those who would attempt the religious stage: In the face of any sensible questioning of what you believe, either by others or yourself, appreciate the question and remain silent. The very attempt to provide an answer or the basis for an answer will, in itself, take you out of the category. One either appreciates what he is up against or he does not. The attempt to do theology at this point is to reduce everything to nonsense. It is not insignificant that Kierkegaard distinguishes between incomprehensibility—a paradox to the passionate thinker, but "nonsense" is reserved for those who would talk about Christianity as if there were no paradox—as if it could all be explained without essentially changing it into something else. Some seventy years later, Wittgenstein came to appreciate something of the same distinction, though by way of different interests, when he ended the Tractatus with Proposition #7: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."

7 v. Plato's Euthyphro, 1. 10af. and Kant's Groundwork, Ch. II.


2. "Ideal Interpretation"

This is an expression which Kierkegaard uses in his "The Absolute Paradox" chapter of Philosophical Fragments. Coming to see its use there is an essential part of seeing the "Absolute Paradox" in the religious stage. If the Absolute Paradox requires silence of a would be systematic thinker, then it does so because the facts that might seem to be relevant must be grasped through an ideal interpretation. This is a way of saying that talk about God is not a hypothesis, that is, it is not formulated by observation and not entitled to require certain facts and to rule out others. Such talk, rather, is the development of a presupposed ideality, or, one might say, form. Such a form can be developed in a way that new and projected facts can be knitted on to it. How the world is will make no difference for such a form, yet that one holds this form will make a difference for his world. Here again, the distinction between paradox and nonsense is present, for if the form made no difference for one's world, then it would be a piece of nonsense.

Again, in the Tractatus, Wittgenstein comes remarkably close to this same idea: #6.432 "... God does not reveal himself in the world." Where does he reveal himself then if not in the lives of those who believe in Him? And now, the sense of "belief" here is not that which is proper to one who has gathered evidence from the world. If I understand Wittgenstein's point it is that God is not an object about which propositions of science can be formed. The word "belief" therefore, has a different use than it would in the context of a scientific investigation. Further, the words "hypothesis," "evidence," and "opinion" have no use at all in it. They are out of place and belong to a different area of discourse. In the "Lectures on Religious Belief" he is reported to have said that it would even be too much to consider it a "blunder" if the word "evidence" were used to describe the holding of a religious belief. Repeatedly in his writings Kierkegaard stressed this negative aspect--Christianity is not like science, nor is it like history which also had been taken for a science. It

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11 Kierkegaard, Fragments, p. 52.

is incomprehensible, and when put in the objective language of science, becomes nonsense. What gives it sense is its development inside the framework of the one who believes it. The framework here is another expression for "ideal interpretation" and I would think that either might be helpful ways of replacing "form of life" as Prof. Cavell would have us apply it to Kierkegaard.

3. Subjectivity

Although Socrates could not be a model for the religious stage insofar as his way lacked the "Absolute Paradox" of Christianity, he could serve as a model for one who would have harmony between what he understood and the way he lived. Throughout the Philosophical Fragments and the Postscript, Kierkegaard continually uses Socrates to illustrate this aspect of the religious stage. In the former, he refers to Socrates' harmony as an artistic expression: "In light of this idea it becomes apparent with what wonderful consistency Socrates remained true to himself, through his manner of life-giving artistic expression to what he had understood." Over and over, Kierkegaard illustrates what is lacking in objective Christianity through allusions to Socrates' way of life. His maieutic techniques, his refusal of payment, his refusal of Alcibiades, the ironic treatment of Meno and Euthyphro, his acceptance of death, his walk with Hippocrates, his understanding of the Delphic oracle—each of these episodes and facets of Socrates' life were calculated to show what it would be like to take an idea seriously. Each episode is a piece of art—a creation designed to show, but not just show—to instantiate, an idea. Before the episode the idea was cheap, in a sense it did not even exist. And then afterwards, it does exist and has been paid for. Meno and Alcibiades are stopped for the moment, brought up short. Theatetus really does give birth. Hippocrates is encouraged to pursue his right idea in the wrong direction.

Kierkegaard wrote for people and an age which had become intellectualized—the same sort of age that Socrates wrote for. Both had some sense for what could happen with abstract thinking when particulars were not provided, and both had a sense of humor. Given Kierkegaard's training in classics, it would have been surprising for him to have failed to appreciate Socrates and to so use him to draw out the irony of intellectualized, i.e. objective, Christianity. C. S.

Kierkegaard, Fragments, p. 12.
Lewis relates in his autobiography that he was once rebuked by a colleague when Lewis referred to philosophy as a "subject." The colleague quipped: "It wasn't a subject to Plato, it was a way."\(^{14}\) This strikes me as precisely what Kierkegaard saw in Socrates. And just as Lewis was moved from his "idealistic slumbers" by this remark, Kierkegaard attempted to use its power in much the same way. Dialectically, Christianity had already been consumed by Hegelian idealism. To free it, he moved outside of Christianity to Socrates with whose help he could attack from within philosophy. The attack was double edged: not only was Christianity not philosophy, but philosophy was a way.

If Socratic philosophizing was a way, then Christianity could hardly be anything else. Socrates was not saddled with an "Absolute Paradox." He could have set his thoughts down in systematic fashion, introduced his assumptions, defended his claims, provided universals to explain his actions, explained himself. Whether and when he did any of these things was a function of his attempt to make it a way. But with Christianity one is cut off not only from science, as Socrates attempted to do for himself, but also from these objective moves that Socrates had access to. Kierkegaard's work then might be understood to be raising the question: What else could Christianity be then but a way? The question is pushed negatively through his efforts to show the absolutely paradoxical nature of Christianity. Positively, the example of what a way would be like is presented through Socrates. Later in his less indirect religious writings, Kierkegaard drops Socrates and explores concepts in the Christian way itself, e.g., what does it mean to love one's neighbor, to be like the lilies of the field, to suffer patiently, to keep silence?

Kierkegaard's expression for this idea of a way was "subjectivity." In the Postscript, one chapter is called: "The Subjective Truth, Inwardness; Truth is Subjectivity." Here he explores an aspect of the grammar of "truth" reminding the reader of two senses in which one can be in possession of the truth. The first is that one has come to hold the correct propositions to describe the object of interest. The second is that one has come to develop in himself a particular way of living in relation to that object. If the way is appropriate to the object, then the possessor of the way is also the possessor of the truth. In this second sense, to be in possession of the truth is the exact opposite of having pretensions. To have a pre-

tense to the truth would be to make believe that one held propositions to be true when he did not. The exposure of make believe will lie in how one really behaves in connection with what he says, and that is precisely what having the appropriate way will come to. And so truth, genuineness, the lack of pretension figure into subjectivity. Subjectivity is a way of not making believe—of being genuine.

The rebuke of Lewis's friend that philosophy was a way, was elliptical for "philosophy was a way of life." And here we have an expression whose form and use is quite like that of "form of life." Philosophy for Socrates was a form of life. What he said and did, as recorded in the Dialogues, are to be understood as a part of the larger picture of his whole life and how he had come to understand it. This is not to say that philosophy in itself is a form of life nor that it is a form of life for every philosopher. For philosophy to become a form of life for someone, its task would have to be conceived as making abstract thought particular. Otherwise, it could not become a way of life as no one lives in the abstract. With the right imagination, such a life might well be conceived humorously, as particularizing the abstract could be a form of comedy (e.g., O. K. Bouwsma). It would have to drop all pretensions which by definition could not be subjective truth. In this connection, one might think of Wittgenstein's writings and way of life. Attention to particulars and rejection of pretension were driving forces in him. His writings and life show, and he need not have written in On Certainty: "Pretensions are a mortgage which burden a philosopher's capacity to think." 15

In Kierkegaard's writings, one does not have the option of regarding Christianity as a way or not. It is either a way or it does not exist: "It is subjectivity that Christianity is concerned with, and it is only in subjectivity that its truth exists, if it exists at all; objectively, Christianity has absolutely no existence." 16 "Subjective" and "objective truth" is philosophical language. "Way," "truth," "life," is Scriptural language. Kierkegaard has put in philosophical language nothing other than what Scriptures already say: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." ('. . . it is only in subjectivity that its

15Wittgenstein, On Certainty, #549, p. 72e.
truth exists.') "... if ye have known me, ye should have known my Father also." ('objectively, Christianity has absolutely no existence."

My hope is that the above ways of characterizing Kierkegaard provide a way of understanding Prof. Cavell's suggestion that the religious stage is a Wittgensteinian form of life. That his remark has other interpretations or that it could be misleading, I do not deny. (That I should have turned out one such suggestive sentence in exploring his, is a pleasing idea to me.) Because Wittgenstein uses "form of life" and various related expressions in such different ways, a number of those different ways could be chosen which would not fit well with the details of Kierkegaard's religious stage. The various needs one has in choosing the limits of a form of life will make some such forms vastly different from Kierkegaard's religious stage. Many of the needs for a broader picture of the topics discussed in On Certainty, for example, would produce different limits and accounts of a form of life. And surely, within religion one would expect to find significantly different forms of life than the one Kierkegaard has described. Perhaps even within Christianity as Kierkegaard has described it, one might want to focus in on one aspect of it--such as prayer--and regard that as a form of life. The criterion will be that whatever larger picture one needs to understand the way a piece of language is being used might be regarded as a form of life. And here it becomes clear that the expression is not important, but only the work it is meant to do.

In Professor Cavell's quote, the suggestion about form of life is preceded by this remark: "... to understand an utterance religiously you have to be able to share its perspective." And his concern in this section of the paper was to show how both Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein avoided, even clarified, the difficulties which contemporary philosophers of religion have fallen into. Understanding an utterance religiously comes to acquiring the skill of picturing the form of life in which it occurs. Prof. Cavell's remark is carefully put. It does not say, as I feel it would be a mistake to say, that one must share the form of life with the speaker in order to understand it. This would make of religious language a kind of magically coded language which became lucid in the presence of genuine belief, but otherwise not. He only says that one must share its perspective. Neither does this mean that the language is without paradox. The paradox, in fact, will be more clearly seen and more keenly appreciated.
when the perspective is shared. Finally, the remark does not suggest a theory, and in fact, shows that no theory was ever needed. Positivist theories of meaning suggested that other theories of meaning were necessary to understand religious language. Theories and the felt need of still another were the source of the problem, not the solution. The solution, or rather dissolution as it is said, lay in nothing new, but in being reminded of what is involved in talking within a religious perspective.

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