Old Testament Scholarship and the Religious-Philosophical Sense of “Life” in Ordinary Language

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ABSTRACT

The word “life” appears in a variety of contexts in Old Testament (OT) scholarship. Included are the use of non-technical senses from ordinary language and the associated folk-philosophical assumptions implicit therein. This article investigates whether and to what extent the recent history of interpretation reflects what the philosopher of religion Don Cupitt refers to as the “turn to life” in everyday speech. To test the hypothesis, samples of the relevant data are selected from the related second-order discourses of popular Bible translations and prominent theologies of the OT. The analysis shows strong correlations in terms of quantitative and qualitative conceptual-historical diachronic variability. Thus, it is concluded that the emergent quasi-religious sense of “life” in ordinary language is also a supervening folk-philosophical concept, concern and category in contemporary OT scholarship.

Keywords: Old Testament scholarship, Life (ordinary language), Life (Old Testament scholarship), Life (philosophy of religion)

A INTRODUCTION

In Old Testament (OT) scholarship, the word “life” is both a term of art and a fuzzy concept, the meanings of which vary in different contexts of discourse.

1) In the first-order religious language of the OT itself, a long, rich and complicated conceptual-history lies behind the most familiar Hebrew word in different worlds of the text.2

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1 This contribution is dedicated to Gerrie Snyman in celebration of his life and in honour of his life’s work.

2) In the second-order discourse of the various interpretative approaches in OT scholarship, the concept is polytypical and its nuances as many as the multiplicity of senses encountered within the different auxiliary disciplines informing them.\(^3\)

In ordinary language use, a familiar concept is that of life as a whole and of one’s own life in relation thereto. According to the philosopher of religion Don Cupitt, this sense of “life” and “my life” is, however, a relatively recent yet very significant development in conceptual history.\(^4\) What Cupitt calls the “turn to life” has occurred in both religious and secular everyday speech. In this view, we have come to think of life and our own lives in cosmic and existential folk-philosophical ways, comparable to how people of earlier times used to speak of their relationship to “God” or “Ultimate reality.” Examples of the reification, personification, objectification and universalisation involved include popular phrases such as “To love life,” “Such is life,” “How’s life treating you?,” “Life has a way of,” “Life has taught me,” “Life is good,” “Life is sacred,” “Life is not fair,” “The best things in life are free,” “It’s my life,” “True to life,” “What do you want from life?,” “Don’t waste your life,” “Life’s great mysteries,” “Get a


life” and many more (including the way the verb “live” and the adjective “living,” all part of what are now very serious manners of speaking).\(^5\)

Though making general claims about how “we” think nowadays, Cupitt acknowledges the historical and cultural relative nature of his Western/English “take on life” and its religious-philosophical sense. Perhaps that is why, extending the tradition of Nietzsche (genealogy), Wittgenstein (ordinary language philosophy) and Foucault (archaeology) on the value of micro-histories of concepts, Cupitt writes:

> Before long, someone must attempt the first history of life, reviewing the manifold ways in which people have seen life and their own lives in different periods and under different systems of thought – how people feel about life as a whole, and about their life in particular is different from certain related ideas.\(^6\)

What is in view here is clearly different from writing a scientific narrative about the origins and development of life as told from a cosmological or biological perspective. It is also not to be confused with anthropological and sociological accounts of different forms of human life or culture over time. In the context of OT scholarship in particular, such an inquiry is related to but ultimately not the same as traditional linguistic, literary-critical, comparative-religious, religious-historical and theological perspectives of the concept. On the one hand, Cupitt’s perspective would have us consider the ways OT scholars have used of the word “life” in the recent history of OT interpretation. On the other hand, of interest would be whether and in what ways the ordinary language of life in our second-order discourses might have come to mirror the “turn to life” as a religious-philosophical concept, concern and category.

**B RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research problem identified in this article is constituted by the lack of OT scholarship on the relation of its second-order discourses to the conceptual-historical changes outlined above. The corresponding research question involves asking if and how the words “life” and “my life” in its religious-philosophical sense appear within the contexts of specific interpretative approaches. The hypothesis of this study is that the recent history of OT scholars’ recourse to ordinary language is likely to reflect an increased quantity and quality of the associated folk-philosophical presuppositions, problems and perspectives on

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\(^5\) Cupitt, *The Way to Happiness*, 2-3. Philosophically and historically, Cupitt’s method involves mixing elements from similar concerns in the writings of Western male philosophers like Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Foucault and others (including non-philosophers). Constructively, Cupitt goes further to provide other prescriptive conclusions incorporating also Derrida, Rorty and Zen Buddhist philosophical ideas.

\(^6\) Cupitt, *Impossible Loves*, 47.
“life” as a religious-philosophical concept, concern and category. The method adopted for the purpose of application and illustration will be that of a descriptive (rather than critical) meta-commentary operating in tandem with historical and comparative varieties of philosophy of religion. The objective of the study is to determine the nature and scope of any apparent conceptual-historical correlations within selected samples of data. As will become apparent in the discussion to follow, the research presented here relates to other intra- and interdisciplinary discussions of “life” in and the OT (scholarship) in a variety of supplementary and complimentary ways. In these variables of the research design lies its originality, relevance and actuality.

C RESEARCH SAMPLES

Since it is impossible to analyse all potentially relevant data, the samples selected for this preliminary investigation will come from two contexts where the word “life” (in different configurations) and any related conceptual-history changes are likely to be present. This includes the second-order discourse at the most basic level of analytic interests (i.e., references to “my life” in Bible translations) and on the highest level of attempts at conceptual synthesis (i.e., references to “life” in OT theology). Any findings pertaining to the partial set of samples that could be accommodated from these dense and complex domains of discourse are limited in scope and do not warrant untested generalisation or extrapolation.

1 “My life” and the meta-languages of some popular translations of the OT

In the context of Bible translations, the preliminary inquiry focuses on samples from one older and one more recent version, namely the KJV and the NRSV. The general philosophical background contexts of both versions are well known. The references to “my life” listed correlate with texts in the MT of BHS based on verbatim occurrences of the common masculine plural noun חַיָּי in the construct state with first person singular suffix (חַיָּ֑י). Further qualifications and acknowledgements related to grammar, semantics and pragmatics are provided in the subsequent comments.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT (BHS) (21)</th>
<th>KJV (44/43)</th>
<th>NRSV (80)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Gen 27:46</td>
<td>Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life.</td>
<td>Gen 12:12 Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.”</td>
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<td>2. Gen 27:46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?</td>
<td>Gen 19:19 your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life.</td>
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<td>3. Gen 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.</td>
<td>Gen 19:20 Look, that city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!”</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Gen 47:9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.</td>
<td>Gen 47:9 Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women such as these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?”</td>
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<td>5. Gen 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,</td>
<td>Gen 48:15: For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Judg 12:3 And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day, to fight against me?</td>
<td>Gen 44:32 For your servant became surety for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I will bear the blame in the sight of my father all my life.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. 1 Sam 18:18 And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?</td>
<td>Gen 47:9 Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The years of my earthly sojourn are one hundred thirty; few and hard have been the years of my life. They do not compare with the years of the life of my ancestors during their long sojourn.”</td>
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<td>8. 1 Sam 20:1 The Friendship of David and Jonathan David fled from Naioth in Ramah. He came before Jonathan and said, “What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin against your father that he is trying to take my life?”</td>
<td>Gen 48:15: He blessed Joseph, and said, “The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,</td>
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<td>9. 1 Sam 20:1 And David gave Saul a family in Ramah, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,</td>
<td>Gen 48:15: When I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hand, and crossed over against the Ammonites, and the Lord gave them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day, to fight against me?”</td>
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<td>10. 1 Sam 22:23 Stay with me, and do not be afraid; for the one who seeks my life seeks your life; you will be safe with me.”</td>
<td>Gen 12:12 Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. 1 Sam 24:11. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life.</td>
<td>Gen 19:19 your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. 1 Sam 24:11. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life.</td>
<td>Gen 19:19 your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life.</td>
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"Life in Ordinary Language," OTE 36/1 (2023):265-284
1. Ps 29:9 And the woman said up unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

2. 1 Sam 28:9 And the woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land. Why then are you laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?"

3. 1 Sam 28:21 The woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified, she said to him, "Your servant has listened to you; I have taken my life in my hand, and have listened to what you have said to me.

4. 2 Sam 1:9 He said to me, 'Come, stand over me and kill me; for convulsions have seized me, and yet my life still lingers.'

5. 2 Sam 16:11 David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "My own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord has bidden him.

6. 1 Kgs 1:29 The king swore, saying, "A snare for Saul's life, who has saved my life out of every adversity,"

7. 1 Kgs 19:4 "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."

8. 1 Kgs 19:10 He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

9. 1 Kgs 19:14 He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."

10. 2 Kgs 1:13 Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. So the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and entreated him, "O man of God, please let my life be preserved in your sight."

11. 2 Kgs 1:14 Look, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty and their fifties; but now let it be given me to take it away."
| 19. | Job 10:1 “I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. |
| 20. | Job 10:20 Are not the days of my life few? Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort |
| 22. | Job 33:28 He has redeemed my soul from going down to the Pit, and my life shall see the light.” |
| 23. | Ps 6:4 Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love. |
| 24. | Ps 7:5 then let the enemy pursue and overtake me, trample my life to the ground, and lay my soul in the dust. Selah |
| 25. | Ps 17:13 Rise up, O Lord, confront them, overthrow them! By your sword deliver my life from the wicked, |
| 26. | Ps 22:20 Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! |
| 27. | Ps 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long. |
| 28. | Ps 25:20 O guard my life, and deliver me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. |
| 29. | Ps 26:9 Do not sweep me away with sinners, nor my life with the bloodthirsty, |
| 30. | Ps 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? |
| 31. | Ps 27:4 One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, and to enquire in his temple. |
| 32. | Ps 31:10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of my life. |

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<tr>
<th>verse</th>
<th>translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>272</td>
<td>mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Ps 31:13</td>
<td>For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.</td>
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<td>34. Ps 38:12</td>
<td>They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.</td>
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<td>35. Ps 42:8</td>
<td>Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.</td>
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<td>36. Ps 64:1</td>
<td>To the chief Musician, A Ps. of David.][Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.</td>
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<td>37. Ps 88:3</td>
<td>For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.</td>
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<td>38. Ps 143:3</td>
<td>For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground;</td>
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<td>39. Isa 38:12</td>
<td>Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life.</td>
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<td>40. Lam 3:53</td>
<td>They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me.</td>
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<td>41. Lam 3:58</td>
<td>Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.</td>
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<td>42. Jonah 2:6</td>
<td>yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.</td>
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<td>43. Jonah 4:3</td>
<td>Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.</td>
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<td>50. Ps 39:5</td>
<td>You have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight. Surely everyone stands as a mere breath.</td>
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<td>51. Ps 40:14</td>
<td>Let all those be put to shame and confusion who seek to snatch away my life; let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt.</td>
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<td>52. Ps 42:8</td>
<td>By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.</td>
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<td>53. Ps 54:3</td>
<td>For the insolent have risen against me, the ruthless seek my life; they do not set God before them. Selah</td>
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<td>54. Ps 54:4</td>
<td>But surely, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.</td>
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<td>55. Ps 56:6</td>
<td>They stir up strife, they lurk, they watch my steps. As they hoped to have my life</td>
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<td>56. Ps 59:3</td>
<td>Even now they lie in wait for my life; the mighty stir up strife against me. For no transgression or sin of mine, O Lord,</td>
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<td>57. Ps 63:9</td>
<td>But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth;</td>
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<td>58. Ps 64:1</td>
<td>To the leader. A Ps. of David. Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint; preserve my life from the dread enemy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>59. Ps 70:2</td>
<td>Let those be put to shame and confusion who seek my life. Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire to hurt me.</td>
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<td>60. Ps 71:10</td>
<td>For my enemies speak concerning me, and those who watch for my life consult together.</td>
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<td>61. Ps 86:2</td>
<td>Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God;</td>
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<td>62. Ps 86:14</td>
<td>O God, the insolent rise up against me; a band of ruffians seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.</td>
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<td>63. Ps 88:3</td>
<td>For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol.</td>
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<td>64. Ps 102:24</td>
<td>“O my God,” I say, “do not take me away at the midpoint of my life, you whose years endure throughout all generations.”</td>
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<td>65. Ps 109:20</td>
<td>May that be the reward of my accusers from the Lord, of those who speak evil against my life.</td>
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<td>66. Ps 116:4</td>
<td>Then I called on the name of the Lord: “O Lord, I pray, save my life!”</td>
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<td>67. Ps 119:88</td>
<td>In your steadfast love spare my life, so that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>68. Ps 119:109</td>
<td>I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.</td>
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Ps 119:149 In your steadfast love hear my voice; O Lord, in your justice preserve my life.

Ps 119:159 Consider how I love your precepts; preserve my life according to your steadfast love.

Ps 143:3 For the enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, making me sit in darkness like those long dead.

Ps 143:11 For your name’s sake, O Lord, preserve my life. In your righteousness bring me out of trouble.

Ps 146:2 I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Isa 38:12 My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd’s tent; like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he cuts me off from the loom; from day to night you bring me to an end;

Isa 38:17 Surely it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but you have held back my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.

Jer 18:20 Is evil a recompense for good? Yet they have dug a pit for my life. Remember how I stood before you to speak good for them, to turn away your wrath from them.

Lam 3:58 You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life.

Jonah 2:6 at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God.

Jonah 2:7 As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

Jonah 4:3 And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

To be sure, correlation does not mean causation and numbers are not in themselves meaningful. That being said, it cannot be denied that within this data set there is clearly a statistically significant variation in both the quantity and quality of the ways in which the words “my life” appears. Whereas the MT only has 21 instances of the noun, as constructed above, the KJV has 64 references to “my life” and the NRSV which is the more recent 80. Though there is a slight variation in the versification of the Hebrew and English at some points, the only texts where “my life” appears in all three contexts, i.e., the MT, KJV and NRSV are Gen 27:46; 47:9; Isa 38:12; Pss 7:5; 23:6; 26:9; 27:1, 4; 31:10, 13; 42:8; 64:1; 143:3; Lam 3:58; and Jonah 2:6; 4:3. Double occurrences involving the MT and at least one or the other English translation but not both include 1 Sam 18:18; Ps 38:12; Isa 38:12; Lam 3:53 (MT and KJV) and Ps 146:2 (MT and NRSV).
Of potential significance and interest also is how, on several occasions, the expression “my life” appears verbatim only in the English translation (Gen 32:30; 1 Sam 20:1; 20:23; 26:24; 28:21, 9; 2 Sam 16:11; 1 Kgs 19:4, 10; 14; 2 Kgs 1:13; Esth 7:3; Job 7:15-16; 9:21; 10:1; 13:14; Pss 27:1, 4; 31:10, 13; 88:3). Sometimes, only one of the three versions of the OT (HB) has the associated wording, e.g. the MT in 2 Sam 19:34 and Jonah 4:8, the KJV in Gen 19:19 and by far the largest number of cases is in the NRSV (Gen 12:12; 19:20; 44:32; 1 Sam 24:11; 26:21; 2 Sam 4:9; 1 Kgs 1:29; 2 Kgs 1:14 (2); Jonah 2:7; Job 6:11; 7:7; 10:20; 33:28; Pss 6:4; 17:13; 22:20; 25:20; 35:4, 7, 17, 38:12; 39:4, 5, 54:3, 4; 56:6; 59:3; 63:9; 70:2; 71:10; 86:2, 14; 102:24; 109:20; 116:4; 119:88, 109, 149, 159; 143:11; Isa 38:17; Jer 38:20).

One way to account for the diachronic discrepancies is of course to note the more dynamic equivalent styles of translation in the NRSV in relation to the KJV. However, this would only confirm the supervening influence of the folk-philosophical assumptions about life in ordinary language as being meaningful to the implied reader. Another obvious reason for the quantitative differences is later developments in associated research. An example of this would be when “my life” became the terms of choice for rendering other Hebrew words like נַפְשִּׁי, previously translated as “my soul” under the influence of Greek Christian philosophical-anthropological assumptions. Though not the only explanatory framework that can account for the new references to “my life” in the NRSV compared with the KJV, the conceptual-historical “turn to life” cannot be ruled out as one sufficient reason that it would have seemed fitting to choose “my life” rather than, for example, “me,” “myself” or other overlapping alternatives.

2 “Life” in the second-order discourses of OT theologians

The concept of “life” is also popular at the broadest level of synthesis in OT scholarship, namely OT theology. Here, the OT scholar can easily include, more than anywhere else, a variety of senses from both popular ordinary-language and second-order uses of the word “life.” As with the remarks on trends related to “my life” in translation, it is impossible to do justice to the sheer quantity of data available. Many scholars’ writings relevant to this section therefore could not be included. Fortunately, only a sufficient number of samples is required to

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8 For the variety of presuppositions, problems and perspectives that have characterised the discipline towards the end of the 20th century, see, inter alia, Gerhard F. Hasel, Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate (Revised and expanded third edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); James Barr, The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

demonstrate the plausibility of the hypothesis in the present context. Being a comparatively younger discipline featuring more idiosyncrasies than translations, the samples will be limited to classic 20th century and popular 21st century publications.10 Though some cases listed may seem *prima facie* trivial or even “biblical,” the question is whether it might turn out on closer inspection that some additional religious-philosophical sense has been imported into even the most familiar expressions.

To start with, the English translation of the German original two-volume publication of Walther Eichrodt contains over 400 occurrences of the word “life” in the first volume, and over 800 in the second.11 Though some of these appear in the context of quotations from the OT itself or relate to the usual anthropological-ethical concerns, the nuances of meaning (despite some verbal overlap) include more than those of the OT’s first-order religious language. Included are repeated references to, among others, “individual life,”12 “personal

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10 In contrast to the previous section, the present one will not focus on the first-person perspectives of “my life” but on “life,” the primary broader term Cupitt mentions as point of orientation in the inquiry. One reason for the switch is that “my life” is usually not standard in the OT theological meta-language as it is in translation. Moreover, while Cupitt notes the first stirrings of the turn to life in the early modern period, the most noticeable increase in associated phrases and idioms in English can only be dated from the second half of the 20th century to the present. For that reason, the translations of the KJV and NRSV sufficed for the intended purpose whereas here, with OT theology only becoming a separate discipline later, the data set from which samples will be drawn will commence with the so-called classic period associated with the writings of German scholars like Walther Eichrodt and Gerhard von Rad onwards. In the discussion to follow, instead of merely noting the usual concerns with life in publications dealing with conceptions of the person or life as a divine attribute, gift or such, the focus will be on those elements in second-order discourse most related to the ontological and axiological dimensions of the religious-philosophical turn to life in contemporary ordinary language.


13 Ibid., 345.
14 Ibid., 9.
16 Ibid., 45
17 Ibid., 47.
18 Ibid., 64.
19 Ibid., 69
20 Ibid., 294.
21 Ibid., 87.
22 Ibid., 146.
23 Ibid., 35
24 Ibid., 151.
25 Ibid., 55.
26 Ibid., 56.
27 Ibid., 160.
28 Ibid., 158.
29 Ibid., 174.
30 Ibid., 175.
31 Ibid., 208.
32 Ibid., 233.
33 Ibid., 84.
34 Ibid., 251.
35 Ibid., 261.
36 Ibid., 259.
37 Ibid., 359.
38 Ibid., 401.
39 Ibid., 419.
40 Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 2 vols, passim. It would be impractical to list all the page numbers of every occurrence of each of these words and phrases in the footnotes to this study. There are just too many. A word search on an electronic version of the publications will identify the exact page numbers for anyone interested in further details.

In the English translation of Preuss’s OT theology, the word “life” appears 117 times in Volume 1 and 269 times in Volume 2. 87 Despite continuing use of certain from-critical and biological/theological/anthropological/sociological/psychological concepts, new phrases and distinctions are attested. Though sometimes mimicking the interests or first-order religious language of the text, again a subtle variation in associative meaning can be detected and correlated with folk-philosophical categories of ordinary language. Included are familiar and idiosyncratic references to “actual life,” 88 “dimensions of its life,” 89 “foundation of their life,” 90 “signs for life (law as),” 91 “instruction for life,” 92 “lifelessness,” 93 “non-political life,” 94 “enjoyment of life,” 95 “diminishment of 96

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71 Ibid., 224.
72 Ibid., 214.
73 Ibid., 190.
74 Ibid., 251.
75 Ibid., 273.
76 Ibid., 37.
77 Ibid., 279.
78 Ibid., 282.
79 Ibid., 458.
80 Ibid., 370.
81 Ibid., 379.
82 Ibid., 384.
83 Ibid., 418.
84 Ibid., 455.
85 Ibid., 456.
86 Ibid., 458.
88 Preuss, Old Testament Theology, Vol I, 8.
89 Ibid., 59.
90 Ibid., 85.
91 Ibid., 87.
92 Ibid., 91.
93 Ibid., 108.
94 Ibid., 132.
95 Ibid., 230.
the power of life,” “structures of life,” “this life,” “earthly life,” “future life,” “life embedded in the flow of time,” “Eastern life” and many more.

In the OT theology of Walter Brueggemann, the word “life” appears even less—only 92 times—yet again with over and underlapping relations to earlier usages. Thus, we find “modes of mediation and life with Yhwh,” “all that diminishes life,” “back to real life,” “all life – cosmic, political, personal,” “candid as life itself,” “an ordered life,” “large as life,” “gratitude that life is,” “the sacramental freightedness of all of life,” “the mystery of life,” “makes life possible,” “the dailiness of life in all of its density,” “close to its own life,” “defeat, loss and forfeiture of life” and “event in the life of this community.” Others are “practice life of faith in exile,” “life with Yhwh,” “life that endures,” “life that resumes,” “daily life,” “every sphere of life,” “its own life,” “zone of life,” “what makes

96 Ibid., 224.
97 Ibid., 235.
98 Ibid., 228.
99 Ibid., 252.
100 Ibid., 262.
101 Ibid., 225.
102 Ibid., 296.
103 Preuss, Old Testament Theology, 2 vols, passim.
106 Ibid., 661.
107 Ibid., 332.
108 Ibid., 611.
109 Ibid., 661.
110 Ibid., 133.
111 Ibid., 661.
112 Ibid., 156.
113 Ibid., 745.
114 Ibid., 156.
115 Ibid., 31.
116 Ibid., 81.
117 Ibid., 746.
118 Ibid., 435.
119 Ibid., 429.
120 Ibid., 435
121 Ibid., 483.
122 Ibid., 149.
123 Ibid., 599.
124 Ibid., 133.
125 Ibid., 288.
life possible,” “guarantee of life,” “mediation of the ordinariness of life,” “all of life constitutes an undifferentiated arena,” “public life,” “reduction of all human life to technique,” “life in relation to Yhwh,” “issues in Yahweh’s life,” “life beyond abandonment,” “definitional life of the system,” “authorising the life of these partners,” “basis for life in the world,” “life of vulnerability,” “sovereign ordering of life,” “left much of life unaccounted for,” “life-space,” “Israel’s life as theological enterprise” and others.

The second volume in John Goldingay’s OT theological trilogy has “Israel’s life” as part of its title. In this book, the word “life” appears 89 times. Examples include “life in relation to God,” “purpose of life,” “life is worth living,” “life is short,” “the good life,” “the right kind of life,” “life in community,” “full human life,” “family life,” “given up life,” “outward life,” “what counts in life,” “the complexities of life,” “permanent feature

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126 Ibid., 31.
127 Ibid., 28.
128 Ibid., 688.
129 Ibid., 600.
130 Ibid., 77.
131 Ibid., 263.
132 Ibid., 324.
133 Ibid., 222.
134 Ibid., 22.
135 Ibid., 556.
136 Ibid., 722.
137 Ibid., 202.
138 Ibid., 385.
139 Ibid., 16.
140 Ibid., passim.
141 Ibid., passim. Though Brueggemann’s choice of second-order religious language includes many idiosyncratic expressions, it cannot avoid recourse to the idiomatic framework of the philosophy of life in everyday speech.
143 Goldingay, Old Testament Theology Vol 2, 16.
144 Ibid., 323.
145 Ibid., 637.
146 Ibid., 423.
147 Ibid., 323.
148 Ibid., 912.
149 Ibid., 395.
150 Ibid., 634.
151 Ibid., 602.
152 Ibid., 457.


153 Ibid., 349.
154 Ibid., 46.
155 Ibid., 29.
156 Ibid., 46.
157 Ibid., 36.
158 Ibid., 160.
159 Ibid., 630.
160 Ibid., 638.
161 Ibid., 613.
162 Ibid., 802.
163 Ibid., 361.
164 Ibid., 74.
165 Ibid., 30.
166 Ibid., 682.
167 Ibid., passim. See footnote 10 on further details for page numbers.
170 Ibid., 310.
171 Ibid., 93.
172 Ibid., 326.
173 Ibid., 126.
174 Ibid., 130.
175 Ibid., 367.
176 Ibid., 311.
177 Ibid., 157.
178 Ibid., 193.
179 Ibid., 412.
180 Ibid., 367.

The associated content from these samples appears indicative of an increased correlation with the “turn to life” on a qualitative rather than a quantitative level. Newly emergent religious-philosophical senses are clearly correlated with corresponding changes in ordinary language over time. Second, popular ways of phrasing ordinary language and its folk-philosophical framework seem to be taken for granted, i.e., “life” as an acceptable and unproblematic religious-philosophical concept, concern and category. This is evident from its location not only in discussions of topics the focus of which lies elsewhere but also from its inclusion in titles, forewords, tables of contents and indices. This includes “life” as somehow a sacred human and divine attribute, function and relation (and of extensions of the divine e.g., the divine spirit). Subsequent references to life are subsumed under traditional loci, e.g., creation, blessing, governance, providence and so forth. Interesting is the ongoing tradition of referring to “the life of Israel” and other “non-living” social entities in ways that have some influence of the folk-philosophy of life in ordinary language as one of the conditions of possibility for its meaningfulness.

D CONCLUSION

From the samples discussed, the following conclusions may be drawn from the preliminary findings. Both the selected Bible translations and samples from popular OT theologians offer traces of second-order discourse featuring the religious-philosophical sense of “life” and of (my) life in ordinary language. This in turn confirms the hypothesis of this study i.e., that the “turn to life” in the
corresponding conceptual history of everyday speech can be positively correlated to those contexts of OT scholarship included in the analysis. In other words, the emergence of “life” as religious object, as noted by Don Cupitt, also has its counterpart as a popular supervening folk-philosophical concept, concern and category in OT scholarship.

E BIBLIOGRAPHY


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